

Stephanos Nirmalendra Ghosh Lectures (1948-49)

THE DYNAMICS OF FAITH

(COMPARATIVE RELIGION)

BY

KHAGENDRANATH MITRA

EMERITUS PROFESSOR, CALCUTTA UNIVERSITY

FORMERLY SENIOR PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY

PRESIDENCY COLLEGE, CALCUTTA



UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA

1952

In Memory of
U Mya Kyaing (a) Walter L Eng Chye
Donated by
Wife Daw Betty (a) Tan Hui Cheng,
Son Dr Victor Paw Hoon Li and
Dr Tania Li
Grandchildren Nicky-Simon & Allanah
of Halifax
Canada

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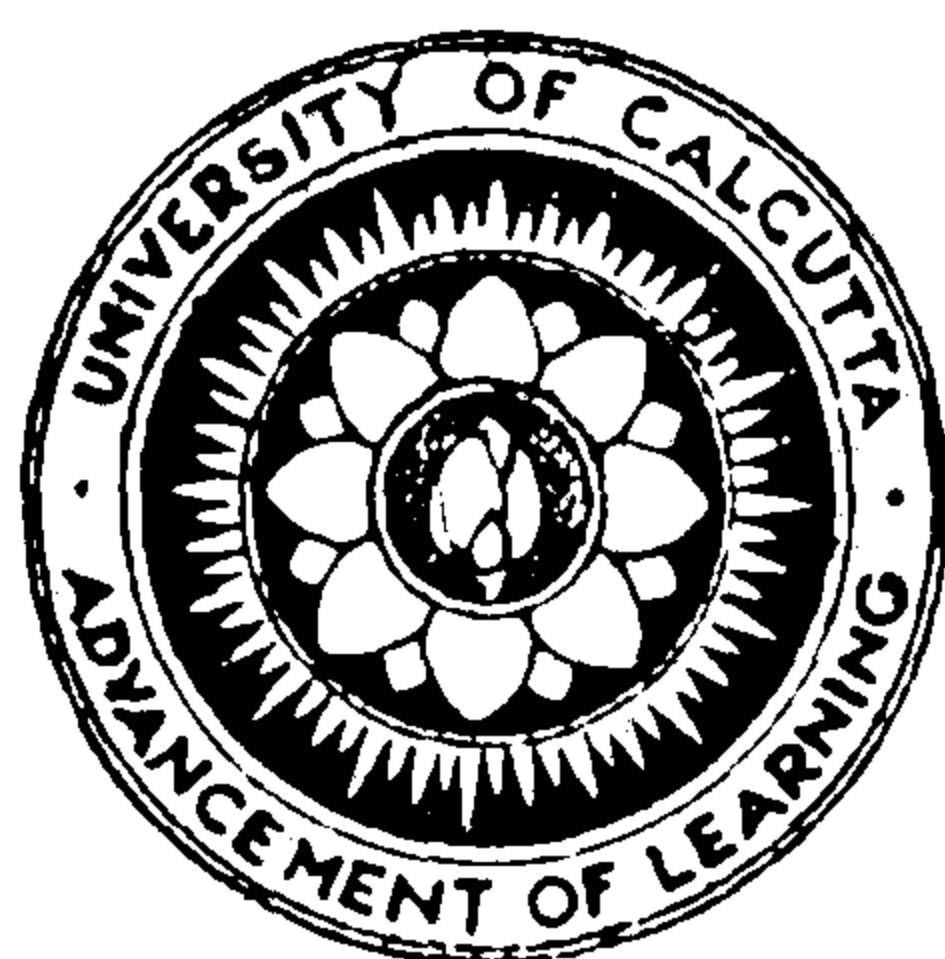
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ॐ सह नावतु सह नौ भुनक्तु सह वीर्यं करवावहै ।
तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु मा विद्विषावहै ॥

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः

MAY God protect us (teacher and the taught—speaker and audience), may He enable us to enjoy equally the fruits hereof. May He make both of us of equal (spiritual) vigour, may He make the things read by both of us equally powerful, let us not envy each other. Peace. Peace. Peace.

—*Vedic Prayer.*

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PREFACE

In 1936 I attended a meeting of the World Congress of Faiths held in London and at the request of Sir Francis Younghusband who was the principal organiser of the Congress had to take a little active part in it. I was glad to be associated with the leaders of thought from many countries who had assembled there and contributed to the discussion of religious problems which agitated human minds after the devastating World War of 1914. The movement, noble in itself no doubt, sought to discover the essential elements of unity among religions which might provide a basis for fellowship and peace. That such discovery was not successful in preventing war was proved by the world conflagration which followed not many years after the London session.

The study of the religions of the world however seems to have received additional stimulus from the fact that mankind is now poised on a precipice when the slightest disturbance of equilibrium is almost certain to send it hurtling through space into the jaws of destruction. It is no longer a matter of mere speculation, but a grim reality. 'Can humanity be saved?' is the question which is agitating the minds of the thoughtful.

The forces that have contributed to the intellectual and moral advancement of man are collectively spoken of as Culture. The dominant force in human culture whether we admit it or not, is religion. Religion again is a matter of the soul. As such it expresses the quintessence of all that is highest and best in man. Religion is not Christianity, Buddhism or Islam, but that expression of man's inner worth without which man would sink into the depths of barbarism and brutality.

Despite what religion has achieved to advance the cause of culture, there is a great deal of barbarism and brutality in the world and it is feared, with the ties of religion loosening, man is gravitating more and more into the primitive condition. It can be definitely said that the spiritual values

in human life have ceased to inspire. The world is passing through a condition which may be figuratively called 'Eclipse of Faith.' The figures of a Buddha, Zoroaster or a Christ are fading more and more into distance and the tendency of the present day does no longer make it possible for those noble apparitions to reappear on the horizon of human destiny. Are not these the men who made history, who laid the foundation of culture and chalked out the Path for man to tread? This is the Path of God.

Of course man has differed and will differ in the matter of cultural and religious values, so long as the different races of man continue to pursue their own method of realising the spiritual life. This, however, constitutes the variety and beauty of the mosaic of human history. A train carries thousands of passengers but they are not all booked for the same destination. The central idea is advancement, expansion, progress—and progress along the right path; what does it matter, if a rigid mechanical uniformity is not visible in the goal of human aspirations?

I believe that all religions lead to truth. The Hindus believe that different religions are like so many streams which ultimately fall into the sea. Whatever be the creed, it spreads its chastening effect upon man's ephemeral outlook. In the morass of worldliness, religion opens up a vista of hope and confidence. The encaged soul opens its wings and tastes what it never tasted before—*viz.*, the ambrosia of freedom. Freedom from fear brings joy. This is man's birthright and until this is secured the human soul moves in a restless world running after shadows and chimeras. This restlessness can be cured only by self-control. There is no peace in *Samsāra*, *i.e.*, the world of vanishing values. *Samsāra* literally means that which is moving, that which is changeful. The soul moves from one state to another and then to a third in the endless chain of life and death, birth and decay—a plaything of sensations and desires. Unless therefore you can put a stop to this eternally shifting experience, there can be no peace, no rest. True happiness is the offspring of peace. The moment this is realised, religion begins to dawn upon the mind. The soul gets sick of the tumult of passions and seeks rest. So long as

Pravṛtti rules, self-indulgence prevails, the true meaning of life is missed. Hence the need for knowledge, contemplation and meditation. This enables the world and its flitting pleasures to be seen in their true perspective. When the noise and tumult of earthly passions are hushed into silence in the contemplation of the spirit, Reality is seen in its true majesty. Then is realised the meaning of Christ's admonition 'Sell what you have and come to me.' The Vaishnavas say that in the course of pursuing our selfish ends, the soul comes to have a glimpse of the light—a taste of God's presence and at that moment he renounces the world and throws himself unreservedly at the mercy of his God. But in order to find Him, one has to seek. In order to love Him, one has to free himself from the octopus-like tentacles of the world. The sages of India renounced the world before they became possessors of the sacred lore; the Jewish prophets lived and moved and had their being in God. Christ claimed that he and the Father were one, the Sufis lost themselves in their soul-consuming passion for God. In fact people of all ages and climes have proclaimed the supreme worth of spiritual values. Even now, here and there may be seen teachers who have suddenly seen the Light and proclaimed the news among their people. Some have heeded and others have passed by.

There seems to be a divine providence which does not allow the fountain of spiritual consciousness to dry up. All I have pleaded in these brief lectures is that the stream which has so long supplied the vital current to the history of mankind should not be allowed to be choked. The evils of the world's history in modern times can be directly traced to the loss of those spiritual values which have borne us above the tide from the dawn of our history. The numberless failures together with the inevitable sense of despondence and frustration which has been pursuing us everywhere in all spheres at the present day is due definitely to our forsaking the Path of religion, to our forgetting that one half of the essence of man belongs not to the material world.

The object of the Founder of these lectures Mr. G. C. Ghosh was to show that the highest ideal of man lay in love

and service to his fellow men. He was a Christian and the teaching and life of Jesus Christ—the essence of which consists in unselfish love and service to his fellow men—impressed him greatly and his idea was to inculcate this ideal through a triennial course of lectures under the auspices of the Calcutta University. The Donor subsequently modified the terms so as to enable the followers of other religions to participate in the scheme. He felt that truth was not the monopoly of any particular religion. “It is found” he observes in his letters regarding the endowment created “that centuries of schools of thought and religious discussions have resulted only in hatred and persecution of those who have sincerely differed from the views dominant at the time, instead of producing love and sacrifice which only are acceptable offerings to God.” The object is not to show the superiority of a particular religion but to show that in the dealing out of man’s unselfish love and service to man, *i.e.*, in living the religion of love constitutes the highest advancement of his personality.”

The history of religions shows not infrequently that religion has often been invoked to defend injustice and to justify a social order based on prejudice, selfishness and oppression. Christianity at one time justified slavery. Even now, Christian people are perpetrating unthinkable injustice on their fellow beings in America which boasts of its democratic ideals and in South Africa which is proud of its European civilisation. Democracy and civilisation indeed!

In the following lectures, I have tried to keep before my mind these words of the Donor and to show that the essence of every religion tends to lead its followers towards the goal of love and sacrifice. And in so far as it does so, its goal as a religion is fulfilled. I have accordingly refrained from criticising any of the religious systems of the world with which I have dealt. I have sought to bring into prominence the good features it possesses and to explain them where necessary according to my light. In dealing with the different religions I have not been able always to follow the chronological order. For example, Hinduism which is the oldest religion, being even anterior to Buddhism

which flourished about the same time as, if not earlier than, Zoroastrianism.

I cannot conclude these lines without recording my acknowledgments to the many authorities from whom I have received help in the preparation of these lectures. I have tried to acknowledge my indebtedness in proper place, but far too often I may have forgotten to do so. So I take this opportunity to record my grateful appreciation to all whose works I have consulted and from whom I have borrowed. The works of my friends Professor Haridas Bhattacharyya (Foundations of Living Faiths) and His Excellency Sir S. Radhakrishnan (all his books, far too many to be mentioned) have been particularly helpful.

I take this opportunity of expressing my gratitude to my friend and pupil Dr. Syamaprasad Mookerjee, M.A., D.Litt., LL.B., Barrister-at-Law, M.P., but for whose inspiring encouragements, this work would never have been undertaken.

University of Calcutta,

KHAGENDRANATH MITRA

FEBRUARY, 1950

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INTRODUCTORY

I wish to offer my thanks to the Calcutta University Senate for the very great honour they have done me by selecting me to deliver the Stephanos Nirmalendu lectures for the year 1948-49. I feel all the more grateful when I remember that my predecessors have all been distinguished savants whose fame is not confined to this country.

At the outset I must tell you that I have no pretensions to speak on Philosophy or Theology. Beyond taking a general interest in both these subjects, I have had no opportunity to specialise in either. But as a man of common sense, I have approached the various problems in connection with religion which confront a modern man and I venture to place before you the processes of my thought together with the conclusions which have forced themselves on me. If the offerings which I bring to you are disappointing, no one will be more grieved than I.

If it is permissible to indulge in a little autobiographical digression, I may just mention here that when I changed from the Professorship of Philosophy in Presidency College to one of Bengali literature in the Calcutta University, I was delighted. Not that I felt a sense of relief in that I put my philosophic sword in the scabbard but that I could bring my study of Philosophy and religion to the service of my mother tongue. It may not be known to outsiders that ancient and medieval literature in Bengal is almost inseparable from the religio-philosophical background against which it must be studied.

It was, therefore, nothing short of a sense of jubilation that I experienced when I was offered an opportunity to make a special study of Comparative Religion under the auspices of this lectureship. When the diversified religions of mankind are made to pass before one's eyes like cinematograph shows, one cannot fail to be impressed with the pageant of the undying glories of civilised man. One is filled with an overwhelming sense of wonder and reverence when one contemplates how mankind has put brick upon brick and built the noblest edifice of culture which is worthy of

the gods to see. It may be said without fear of contradiction that while 'other aspects of human life have indeed been important, yet the pre-eminently noble characteristic of man throughout his entire history has been his religion.'

Religion in the sense of belief in some god or gods has not only given a new meaning and importance to human life, but has raised the cultural level of man in general. If culture means the aggregate of mental, moral and spiritual efforts, achievements and aspirations of man, then its source must be found nowhere but in religion.

The growth of religious consciousness can be traced to a sense of dependence on supernatural powers. When man was overawed by the vastness of Nature and the relentlessness of its laws, man began to think and religion was the result.

'In the history of mankind there never has been a tribe of man without some form of religion.' The higher we ascend in the scale of civilisation, the greater the conviction in a moral governor of the world and the closer the feeling of association between the human and the divine.

"Religion has been one of the most powerful factors in human history." Whatever the faith, races of men have clung to it with all the might, all the passion and all the fervour of which they are capable. This shows the dynamic aspect of religion more closely than anything else. It is just for this indescribable dynamism of faith that we find even today so many living religions claiming the allegiance and devotion of millions and millions of men.

But before I proceed further it is perhaps necessary to explain what exactly I mean by Dynamics of Faith. The word 'Dynamic' comes from the Greek word *Dynamis* meaning 'power.' This has more usually to do with physical forces which are discussed in Natural Science. From this physical sense it has come to mean moral, spiritual power. Just as it has been customary for scientism to view the material universe as constituted by physical force, so philosophically the moral universe may be regarded as organised immanently by spiritual forces. But minds imbued with the ideas of physical force find it difficult to believe that spiritual forces are no less powerful in the economy of the universe as a whole. Ideas are not always the inventions of idle brains but are sometimes pregnant with great dynamic

possibilities. Leibnitz reduced the universe into monads which are minute points of force. These monads are not particles of inert matter but are indivisible centres of force or energy by virtue of which they develop themselves.¹

Human souls are repositories of almost unlimited energy. Hence human culture is 'nothing but the dynamic process and product of self cultivation of human nature in order to attain individual and social ends of living,' and religion as the self-expression of the human mind at its best is a dynamic reality which enables man to transcend the limits of his immediate needs and personal losses and gains.

To a mind that is not influenced by religion, all the interests are confined to the finite world of the senses, and all the values are related to the content of man's immediate experience. But there is something in the nature of man which does not allow him to remain content with the contemplation and satisfaction of immediate needs. There is something in man's nature which makes him look beyond, to something which is not here and now, to something of more permanent worth.² Oswald Spengler observes that "there is in our nature an unconscious impulse, an inner urge to come to terms with and adjust oneself to something altogether different which may shortly be called the universe." That I am but an infinitesimally small particle in the universe, a mere 'particle of dust in the balance,' and there rolls beyond me a vast sea of Reality, which stretches to infinity, is an innate conviction or feeling in man. This feeling mixed with wonder and awe is the inner spring from which religion flows. It is the unconscious or semi-conscious urge which compels man to transcend the pleasures

¹ "The simple idea of a force, Leibnitz terms a monad; and consequently instead of an atomic theory of the universe, we have a system of monadology, based upon the fundamental conception of dynamic."—J. D. Morell: *History of Modern Philosophy*, p. 224.

² Cf. *Bhagabad Gita* (Song of the Lord).

यं लब्ध्वा चापरं लाभं मन्यते नाधिकं ततः ।

यस्मिन् स्थितो न दुःखेन गुरुणापि विचाल्यते ॥

(That immeasurable happiness) which, when he has gained it, he thinks there is no gain beyond it, and abiding in which he is not shaken by heavy pain—Trans. by Dr. E. J. Thomas.

and pains of the immediate present and to seek that which is supersensible and eternal. We can very well refer to Rudolph Otto, who starts with a hypothesis that man is endowed with a *sensus numinis*—that is a sense of awe—“an innate characteristic revealing itself in a longing for the ‘otherworldly,’ the ‘sacred’ or the divine which is altogether different from man.”¹

Otto accordingly holds that religion begins of itself. That is, if man is left to himself and contemplates the world with an unsophisticated mind, he cannot help turning to a supernatural power who has created all this diversity of beings and manifold of things and has still made them hang together like pearls in a necklace.²

But religion in the modern world may be said to be steadily declining. The history of religion does reveal from time to time periods of inertia and stagnation. In fact the course of human history has not always followed a straight line, but very often shows ebb and flow, advance and retardation. At one period religion shows great vigour, but in course of time it is apt to decay. For example, Buddhism as a religion declined in India, after reigning supreme for long centuries. From the reign of Harsavardhan Siladitya it began to show signs of decay until the Mohammadan invasion gave it a final blow. When the Buddhists began to turn the wheel as a means of salvation, or to swallow pieces of paper containing Buddhistic formulae, the rot may be said to have set in. Its counterpart Jainism is still alive but by no means in a condition of exuberant vitality. In Europe the religions of Greece, Rome and Egypt which once influenced large masses of people exist now but in name. The religion of the Hebrews is not dead, but where is that inspiring faith which once made a whole nation God-intoxicated?

The age of active faith now seems to have passed. Among many peoples, the religious spirit has either totally evaporated or is in a condition of suspended animation.

¹ Rudolph Otto: *Mysticism, East and West*.

²

मयि सर्वमिदं प्रीतं सूत्रे मणिगणा इव ।

—God is the thread which strings together all the things of the Universe like pearls—Bhagabad Gita, VII.

In my study of comparative religion, I have kept this aspect of the question in view. I shall try to show in the course of these short lectures that the decline in faith is contemporaneous with the plethora of ills, discontent, suffering and sense of frustration which we witness everywhere today.

Rousseau said that man was born free but is everywhere in chains. Whether it is true or not, the path which mankind is following is not certainly the path of freedom. Man, so far as he is a part of the material world, is not free. He is subject everywhere to cold material laws. It is only the spirit that is free. But modern civilisation has auctioned away spirit in exchange for tinsel. Ours is a mechanical age and we have made machine our idol. We seem to have forgotten that strength comes not from physical capacity but from spiritual nature, not from hydrogen atom bombs but from man's indomitable will.

Freedom does not rest on power; Peace does not rest on material prosperity. There is a polarity in human nature. Power and prosperity are at one pole, and peace and freedom are at the other pole. I shall now try to enumerate briefly the circumstances which have disturbed the normal polarity of man's nature.

During the last few centuries, it is the Western civilisation which is dominating the modern world. The old civilisations are mostly decadent, for example, the Chinese, the Zoroastrian and the Hebrew civilisations. They had each its day when they brought into this world vast reservoirs of moral and spiritual forces. But since the 14th and 15th centuries, the nations in Europe and lately America are the winning hands. They are laying down the standard of living and dictating the norm of conduct. So all eyes are turned towards the West. The main current of civilisation may, I think, be said to be now flowing from the West to the East after long centuries.

The reasons are not far to seek. The suppression of the East by the West has been possible owing to the tremendous advance made in Natural Science by the Western world. Natural Science has, by her astounding discoveries in almost every field of nature, placed the reins of Nature in the hands of man. It has proved to be a veritable Aladin's Lamp and things which remained

beyond the wildest dreams of man have been accomplished. So much so that at one time it used to be said that "the heavens declare no glory but that of Newton and Kepler." It is said even now that science has killed God.¹

Science in the West has wrested the secrets of Nature, often from her unwilling hands, and invented various mechanisms which have effaced time and annihilated space. These unprecedented and spectacular gains in the domain of scientific knowledge have revolutionised man's mental and spiritual outlook. This is largely the contribution of the West.

While the achievements of theoretical science have been enormous, their application in practice has opened up still greater possibilities in the department of industry, displaying a revolutionising tendency in human relations. Means of easy transport and elaborate technological advance have changed the face of the earth. Although it is a fact that many countries are still agricultural in their outlook, the tendency is unmistakably towards industrialisation. In the United States of America, industrial areas are the most prosperous, and populous. In this age of mechanisation, technological discoveries are coming more and more to be the determining factors in social economy and human progress. Power is the fundamental requirement of life in the modern world. The developments of commerce and industry have resulted in the apotheosis of power. In the Middle Ages, the idea of 'divine power' was the most potent factor in social and ethical life. But since the beginning of the seventeenth century, the mechanical power is gradually supplanting the divine in the minds of many people, and with the power of religious sanctions steadily declining, religious and ethical order is giving place to utility, expediency and moral bankruptcy. As one writer pertinently remarks, "Law would disappear as theory or *a priori* principle and give place to force. Morality would become police."²

This makes for the power-loving persons seizing political power and turning the cherished social order and all that it

¹ Cf. *Nietzsche*: 'Modern science proves the non-existence of God.' See A. E. Taylor: *Does God Exist?* p. 8.

² Quoted by Lewis Mumford: "The Condition of Man"—*Conflicts of Power*, p. 56.

stands for, upside down. When Hitler defended the blood purge of 1934 before the German Parliament, he is reported to have said, "In those twenty-four hours the fate of the German nation was in my hands; therefore in those twenty-four hours, I was the Supreme Court of Germany." The question is if power is the keynote of modern culture, how can the world be prevented from the same drama being re-enacted of atrocities and race-animosities which was enacted with such wanton disregard of all cherished moral principles and deep-rooted convictions?

Every one still remembers with a shudder what a tremendous calamity was wrought by an ordinary man intoxicated with power. Hitler was no more than an ordinary man but within the space of a few years, he converted the German people into a military machine of diabolical strength and efficiency which made a bid for the hegemony of the world. And this strength was nothing but a product of science harnessed to the service of power-politics. Peace and Power like God and Mammon cannot be served at the same time. Because power can only be secured by force, by armaments manufactured on a competitive scale, by atom bombs and peace is a coy maiden, coaxed with difficulty, by persuasion, by self-restraint and reason. Every one seems now to be convinced that war is the only means of preventing war. Armed conflict is unavoidable to establish peace in this world. It is a paradox, but like most paradoxes it contains some measure of truth.

How is science, it may be asked, responsible for so much restlessness and aggression? Well, science by its startling discoveries has unhinged the minds of men. It has been installed in many minds in the place which used to be occupied by a righteous God. Science, in the sense of physical sciences, brings us directly into contact with nature. "Science insists," as a writer puts it, "upon a naked contact with the universe, with no intermediate agency." It is said that the knowledge of God, future life, and all that appertains to them is tinged with a personal colouring; it is mixed up with our wishes, prejudices, crochets, fancies and dreams.¹ Our understanding is drugged by dogma in religion—says the

¹ Natural Theology by the author of *Ecce Homo*, p. 9.

man of science. "Science protests against the idols or delusions of the human intellect, in order that it may substitute for them the reality of Nature; religion sacrifices all those idols to the greatest of them all which is God."¹

"Science opposes to God Nature." It aims at building up knowledge by interrogating Nature and it cannot be denied that this has been the most fruitful method by which civilisation in the modern sense at any rate has advanced by leaps and bounds.

But the character of this civilisation is somewhat different from the older pattern. Scientism or Naturalism showed the road to power and pelf, but that road led inevitably to a blind alley.

Social life also has been profoundly affected. Whatever may be the destiny of man, there is no longer that dependence on Divine Will which tended to make men feel helpless in his struggle with the forces of Nature and appeal for Divine help. There is no doubt that in the first flush of self-assertion, mankind awoke in a real sense to the belief that man was the architect of his fortune. Every teacher, every writer, every talker emphasised the importance of individualism and freedom. Age-old slavery and sense of submission to the laws of Providence came to an end and man quickly changed from the position of prayerfulness and self-surrender to that of an arrogant master and ruler. And the social structure with its solidarity and co-operativeness began to crumble.

In this new planning, economics has come to play the role which was played formerly by Ethics and Theology. In Europe in the Middle Ages, for instance, people only thought of Scripture and man's conduct towards his neighbours and were never tired of writing elaborate commentaries and textual exegesis on the sacred books, but now a major change has taken place in the placid stream of human existence. Money which was once regarded, under the influence of religious zeal, as 'the root of all evil' has come to possess a new significance. It is an almost all-important factor in social life; for the filthy lucre' of high

¹ Natural Theology by the author of *Ecce Homo*, p. 9.

philosophy is now looked upon by many people as the panacea for all ills.

However much one may long for the good old days, when plain living and high thinking or an ascetic view of life was looked upon as the pre-requisite for attaining man's highest goal, in the shape of things to come, economic progress and financial self-sufficiency have come to have the topmost priority. The result was that every other consideration was subordinated to it, creating new loyalties, new hatred and new jealousies.

Science has given a new impetus to industry by the development of new technologies. H. G. Wells tells us that this has given currency to a new term in America *viz.*, "technocracy."¹ Every branch of industry is controlled by technological experts and energy is looked upon as the new currency. "Every power station became a mint and every waterfall a potential gold mine."²

In this way a new social order has arisen with a complete programme of converting life to a purely business proposition. The value of a peaceful rural life is at a discount and the tendency is to concentrate in big towns. Hence we find that already congested towns are being more and more congested. In America incredibly large towns have already grown up, and other countries are following suit. In consequence of the in-flow of money in those countries, the standard of living has gone up considerably, no doubt, and generally speaking the condition of masses has to a very large extent levelled up.

But the phenomenal growth of industry is going to change the face of the earth both physically and metaphorically. It is an irony of fate, however that when some economic problems are solved, others of greater magnitude and import loom large. Money is being secured in incredibly large quantities, but it is concentrated in some places rather than in others and amassed by some people rather than others. So there is a clash between the owners of money and the toilers, the capitalist and labourer, between 'have's and

¹ The Shape of Things to Come.

² *Ibid.* p. 274.

'have-not's. Just as industrial population is growing, this class-war is becoming more and more acute.

This has given rise to a philosophy which is calculated to overthrow completely the old world-order and bring in a condition of society in which every body will claim equality, so far as wealth is concerned. That there is great disparity no one can dispute. It is also a fact that such inequality has existed from time immemorial. But the increasing struggle for existence in this age of machine-made civilisation has brought this inequality with its squalor, misery and degradation into lurid light. The sense of injustice, frustration and inhumanity is growing everywhere in the world along with the increase in the number of landless working population in mills, factories etc.

From the earliest times men's minds have been exercised over the inequalities between man and man. Philosophers and statesmen have grappled with the problem and suggested various devices by which man can have equal opportunities and equal measure of minimum comfort.

Plato's views are well known in this matter. "The individual should have no interest apart from the State. For in the society as it is constituted, the conflict of private interests with those of the society is inevitable. The individual therefore should have no property either in material things, or in the members of his family. This involves the community of goods, community of wives and the state ownership of children from their birth."¹ In the fifth century of Christian era, Mazdak,² a follower of Mani an arch heretic in the eyes of the Zoroastrians, who founded the religion known as Manichaeism, preached "the ideas of extreme socialism and an absolute community of goods which he extended to the sharing of wives in common."²

¹ See The Republic of Plato.

² Jackson—Zoroastrian Studies, p. 176.

Perhaps Communism was not unknown to India when family ties were unknown and wives were shared, until a certain Rishi (sage) made marriage a sacred and inviolable institution. Mahabharatam—(Poona, 1929), Adiparva, Chap. 122.

पुराणमृषिभिर्दत्तं धर्मविदभिर्महात्मभिः ।

अनावृताः किल पुरा स्त्रिय आसन् वरानने ॥

—There it is said that this freedom was still in existence in Uttar Kuru.

The modern communists hold that so long as the capitalists remain, there is no escape from slavery, oppression and misery for the proletariat. Capitalism is at the root of all evils. The State is under the thumb of the capitalists, so there can be no compromise with the modern State. The State should in every country—and if possible simultaneously—be overthrown by armed revolution.¹ In the language of Hegel, it is only by negation that assertion is to come. By revolution, murder, assassination—by every means, the capitalist-dominated State-machinery should be destroyed. There is no other way by which the communist organisation can secure its rights. But it may indeed be doubted whether the method of violence is ever the midwife of Justice. That wrong can be wiped out with wrong is a gospel to which it is difficult to give assent.

The communists believe in revolution and not evolution, in wiping out and not compromise, as a means of securing their objective, *viz.*, to free masses from oppression and suffering. They assert in no uncertain terms the futility of the *modus operandi* which has from early times actuated large groups of people in history *viz.*, appeal to nationalism, patriotism, religious and social reform etc.

Nationalism should be avoided because it is contaminated by the virus of capitalistic exploitation. Patriotism is a fetish; the communists belong to no country in particular. The whole world is their field of operation. Love of freedom is good but in the modern society it means freedom for the favoured few. All these should be avoided. In this way the communists have introduced a great change in the standard of values and engage in activities which have always been regarded as anti-social and anti-religious.

Dr. Needham thinks, on the contrary, that the doctrine of the Communists can be described as the highest form which religion has yet taken, a form in which it negates itself and must necessarily be at war with all previous forms of religion.²

We may here recall Plato's mystic apologue in which the gods are described as creating all animals out of the elements and then handing them over to Prometheus and Epimetheus to endow them with the qualities needed for their preservation. Epimetheus distributed all the qualities such as strength, swiftness etc., but he had none left for human beings, who were left helpless and unarmed. Prometheus

¹ See Lasky: Communism.

² Faith and Fellowship. World Congress of Faiths held in London in 1936, pp. 135-36.

then came to the rescue and stole fire from heaven—and the arts that work by fire, as well as the art of weaving. (These are the two important differences, between man and the lower animals—use of fire in cooking food, etc., and use of clothing to cover their nakedness). But even then men were left without the political art, *i.e.*, the art of living together. Consequently they were continually fighting. But Zeus, fearing that the entire race would be exterminated, gave them reverence and justice. These became the ordering principles of cities, and bonds of friendship and conciliation. They are not inherited by individuals as talents, but are shared in common by all men. Civil society must be protected by the law that he who has no part in justice or reverence shall be put to death as a plague in the state.¹

There are many sincere men and women who support the communist theory and accept the Marxist bible for their sole guidance. They are seriously convinced that in all their organised movements they are trying to bring about the economic salvation of the world. “The only people in the world, it would seem” says the defender of communism quoted above, “who take the Gospels seriously, are just they who declare themselves the enemies of all religion.”

He quotes from the Bible “He that despiseth man despiseth not man but God.”²

But the communist creed seems to be too simple to be successful in solving the problem of maldistribution and poverty. “From each according to his capacity and to each according to his need” may sound quite plausible but so long as ‘capacity’ is an unknown quantity and ‘need’ remains elastic, its practical application is of doubtful wisdom. Unless the elementary right to freedom is denied to man, it does not seem possible to bring all mankind or any large section of it under a hide-bound rule. We have to remember that man is born and a citizen is made. By systematic training, a nation can be brought up in such a way that, provided its food is ensured, it will consent to part with any of the freedoms which an ordinary man enjoys and without which in the opinion of many, life will not be worth living.

¹ See Caird's *Evolution of Greek Theology*, Vol. I, pp. 83-84.

² Dr. Needham in *Fellowship of Faiths*—London, 1936, p. 135.

Communism whether ancient or modern seems to be based upon some sort of assumption that every man is equal. When it is asserted that every one should have the same opportunity and share in the same measure the goods of this world, it is taken for granted that men have identical interests, identical capacities and identical tastes. But this cannot be accepted as axiomatic. It has still to be proved that children brought up in the same environment and with identical educational facilities grow up in the same manner and with the same feelings and at least similar wants and habits. Heredity, social environment and the organisation of the physical framework are the main factors which produce difference between man and man.

The much abused caste system of the Hindus definitely rejects this theory of equality. Martin Luther who was a reformer of a revolutionising type seems to have been unable to accept it. "An earthly kingdom" he says "cannot exist without inequality of persons. Some must be free, others serfs, some rulers, others subjects."¹

St. Paul who democratised Christianity to a large extent could not assert the unqualified independence of man. He says, "Let every soul be subject unto higher powers. For there is no power but of God. Whosoever therefore resisted the powers resisted the ordinance of God."²

The Bhagabat Gita, by making a distinction between the three qualities of *Sattwa*, *Rajas* and *Tamas* upholds a fundamental difference between man and man. It seems that men are born with different constitutions. In the nature of some men the qualities of light or good qualities predominate (*Sattwa*), in others qualities of darkness or bad qualities predominate (*Tamas*) and in others again, light and darkness, good and evil (*Rajas* and *Tamas*) are mixed. This is by no means a fanciful division. It is supported by personal and historical evidence of an overwhelming nature that human nature is fundamentally different. If communistic training can so change human nature as to make all men alike, it, of course, remains to be seen.

¹ Tawney: *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism*, p. 29.

² St. Paul—Epistles to the Romans.

For man is not merely a product of physical nature as science would have us believe, nor are lust of power and hate the only motive forces which actuate him. He is a free being and is what he is largely owing to the physical, intellectual and spiritual forces he can bring into play by his own efforts in the particular environment. He is in a very real sense the architect of his fortune. This fact seems to be forgotten in treating all men as possessing equal capacities and needs. The needs are mostly our own creation. A tendency to emphasise only the physical needs is to take a one-sided view. But unless the spiritual needs of man are attended to, there can be no true fulfilment of his destiny as man. We may say in the language of the Bible, "What if we gain the whole world and lose the soul?"

A spirit of irreligion is abroad. Among the Science-minded as I have pointed out before, Nature has come to replace the supernatural. The class-conscious workers in industrial concerns are fast losing faith in a moral government of the society in consequence of glaring injustice in the distribution of wealth. The ever increasing millions of unemployed are swelling their ranks. The communists have persuaded themselves that religion being in the main a creation of the capitalist class is bound to support that class in its machinations to oppress the masses. As soon as the capitalist class is rooted out from the face of the earth, religion will no longer have any legs to stand upon. The communists think therefore that "a classless communist civilization will have no religion, but it will have a spiritual culture and an integral philosophy of life."¹ But moral and spiritual culture in our history is so closely bound up with

¹ Hecker—Communism and Religion:

"During the last 15 years half the Russian Churches have been closed or utilised for other purposes. In another generation Religion as organised at present is doomed to disappear."

But Professor Jorgensen of Denmark who came to India to attend the Pacifist Conference at Santi Niketan (December, 1949) assured us in a speech delivered at the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal that the Churches which had closed down between 1928 and 1932 (?) were reopening and they were now crowded. Has reaction set in so soon?

religion, even in its varied forms, that it is not easy for us to visualise the one without the other.

For example, what about the spiritual values which have made human culture what it is? As religion is fading away, the values in human life—which constitute the essence of human progress, *viz.*, justice, truth, non-violence, toleration, etc., are gradually vanishing. As a matter of fact the eclipse of faith which is becoming more and more complete makes the survival of spiritual values a matter of extreme doubtfulness. When the spiritual values are gone, there will, I am afraid, not be much left in human culture worth having. This is worrying many thoughtful minds and the question is not, Does modern civilisation need religion? but the question is: Will modern civilisation survive at all?

In this atomic age, every country is anxiously turning its gaze towards the sky for a sign of the radar or atom bomb-throwing aircraft. There is no knowing when it may come and from which quarter. If it comes, there is no protection—at least no antidote has yet been discovered. Will atomic or bacterial warfare wipe out mankind?¹

“The present manifestations of power” says one writer, “have become terrifying to behold and their portents for the future are staggering to the imagination.” The nations of the earth are vying with each other to be the first to get hold of the secrets of destruction. It may therefore, be taken as certain that a catastrophe of unprecedented magnitude is not far off. In times of old the Jewish prophets proclaimed the approach of doom and warned the sinful world to mend its ways. Almost three thousand years have passed by and their prophecy is about to be fulfilled now; we are face to face with a dire calamity of man’s own making, but alas! there is no prophet to warn mankind.

The scientific discoveries instead of giving us pause to think are hurrying us with infallible steps into the jaws of the Moloch of war. Bertrand Russell says, ‘I am fully persuaded that nothing short of an imminent threat of war during the next few years will persuade Stalin to allow the

¹ Bertrand Russell thinks that some men may still survive here and there. See *Conflicts of Power*.

human race to go on existing.”¹ The world is already divided into power blocks and they are arrayed against each other for war. Everybody is thinking of the approaching war, and passions are running high. According to politicians and experts in State craft, war is inevitable. Unbridled passions are starting the blaze, and science and technology are supplying the fuel. Now a small spark is needed to set the whole world ablaze.

This then is the position. The question of questions today is: Will civilisation survive another World War? People will say perhaps that this matter does not properly come within the jurisdiction of Comparative Religion. It does not. But can one afford to fiddle with Nero when Rome is burning? The problem of civilisation in the rapidly changing circumstances of the world is as much a problem for religion, as for politics and economy.

The point I wish to make is that it is through the revitalizing influence of religion that the soul of the world can yet be saved. If negation has become necessary, affirmation is not very far off. If winter comes, spring is not far behind. Both thesis and antithesis, let us hope, will be reconciled in a higher and more fruitful synthesis and the blemishes of the past will be forgotten in a glorious future for the yet unborn soul of the world. But for the present, the prognosis seems to be very gloomy. Human personality is just now like a flickering lamp under the crushing weight of a machine-made civilisation backed by breath-taking discoveries of modern science and spurred on to sinister activities by the Great Hunger. So much so that people are beginning to seriously ask: Does modern civilisation need religion at all?²

Now an answer to this question depends upon the view one takes of religion. We need not go back to the etymology of the word in order to see that of all the ties that bind man with man, religion is the greatest and the most powerful.

Religion in the sense of the worship of the supernatural has moulded the civilisation of man by supplying an ideal—an ideal which inspires and infuses into human nature an

¹ Conflicts of Power—A symposium.

² This is the title of Neihbur's Book.

enthusiasm as nothing else in the world perhaps does. It takes away the barriers with which the self is hedged in, and sets free those springs of action which enable man to realise kinship with the whole universe. By restraining the passions, ennobling the impulses and widening the horizon of vision, religion gives a new meaning to life and enlarges the bounds of fellowship between man and man. The glorious past which the civilised man has inherited has been recorded by men of religion,—all people of God,—pointing towards a goal which is by no means the advancement of one's self-interest. Every country, every branch of the human race has evolved a religion and worshipped an ideal which has marked a definite advance in the expansion of self or emancipation from Egoism.

In religion, the human mind is awakened to a sense of the universal. The laws of conduct which are based upon the individual's relation to the immediate surroundings are universalised and the individual self bursts its bounds to merge in the flood of Universal Being. The self loses its temporal existence, limited on all sides, in the infinite. This leads inevitably to mysticism. That is, religion reveals a reality part of which is comprehended and part remains incomprehensible. But that which is incomprehensible to the intellect or reason becomes comprehensible to the inner sense which only deep spiritual conviction engenders.¹

The Mussalmans call their religion Islam which means submission, *i.e.*, surrender to the will of Allah. The Vaisnavas also emphasise 'Saranagati' which also means submission.² The Hindus take Dharma as the equivalent

¹ Cf. The Upanishads:

यस्यामतं तस्य मतं मतं यस्य न वेद सः ।

अविज्ञातं विजानतां विज्ञातमविजानताम् ॥

He who thinks that he does not know Brahma knows Him and he who thinks he knows Him does not really know. The wise men know Brahma to be unknowable and those who are ignorant consider Him to be knowable.

² Saranagati is of six kinds: (1) to resolve to do what is agreeable to God (2) to reject everything that is disagreeable to Him (3) Belief that God will protect; (4) to accept Him as the sole saviour (5) Self-surrender (6) humility or self-effacement.

of Religion. Dharma in Sanskrit is used in different senses. But in one of its senses, Dharma means religion : that which binds all men.¹

The Jainas regard religion as that which puts an end to the worldly woes and leads to the highest bliss.² The Jainas do not believe in God.

The Vaishesika system of Philosophy almost echoes this view—Religion is that which brings a sense of elevation—joy—in this life) and achievement of the *summum bonum* (both in this life and in the next).³

Religion is sometimes called “the way.” Christ has called himself ‘the way,’ ‘the truth’ and ‘Life.’ Tao, in the Chinese religion of Taoism, means the way. Buddhists speak of the Eightfold Path. The Sufis also speak of ‘the Path,’ i.e., the way of God. Religion is the way of God, the way of righteousness, the path that leads man to the goal of salvation. This is also the way of Peace, Freedom; and of Happiness.

It is said in the Upanishads ‘one who has seen (realised) the highest Truth has all his doubts resolved and all his worldly ties loosened.’⁴ There is no other way.

आनुकूल्यस्य संकल्पः प्रातिकूल्यस्य वर्जनं
रक्षिष्यतीति विश्वासो गोप्तृत्वे वरणं तथा
आत्मनिक्षेपकार्पण्ये षड्विधाः शरणारतिः ॥

—Ahirbudhnya Samhita

1

धारणाद्धर्म इत्याहु धर्मो धारयति प्रजाः

—Santi Parva—Mahabharata

i.e., what holds together all beings and preserves all mankind is called Dharma.

There is also another derivation according to which whatever protects from sin is Dharma. Two other meanings of Dharma are Laws and Nature. Now on a closer view, that which is the nature of things is also that which takes place according to the ‘Laws’ of Nature and Laws of Nature are nothing but Laws of God.

2

संसारदुःखतः सत्त्वान् यो धरत्युत्तमे सुखे । —Samanta Bhadra

3

यतोऽभ्युदय-निःश्रेयस-सिद्धिः स धर्मः ।

—Vaishesika Aphorisms—Sutra.

4

भियते हृदयग्रन्थिच्छिद्यन्ते सर्वसंशयाः ।

क्षीयन्ते चास्य कर्माणि तस्मिन् दृष्टे परावरे ॥

—Mundaka Upa. : 2 : 8.

If we ponder carefully on the constitution of man, we will find that one half of man is animal; and it is the animal in man which is far too powerful in him. In Christianity, the 'old offending Adam' is responsible for the downfall of man. Man is eternally condemned for his sinful nature. It is only the Divine Mercy taking shape and form in Jesus Christ that works out his redemption. The drama which started in the beginning of creation with the tragedy of man's eternal separation ends happily with his reconciliation with God in Jesus. The long and short of the story is that man's salvation lies through Divine Mercy, through religion. In Buddhism, man's destiny weaves an unending net of suffering by his works in this world. Existence is an evil, man's life is full of suffering; the only way to get out of the meshes of trishna (desire) is knowledge, knowledge of Truth. Here also the goal lies in spiritualising the animal or material elements in man.

The Bhagabad Gita is never tired of insisting on self-control, and emphatically declares that the three impulses, *viz.*, anger, desire and greed are the three gateways to hell. These hostile elements should therefore be got rid of.¹

This, therefore, is the Path and this Path has been trodden by men who have made history for man. The question is: Should we abandon the Path and try a new one?

We should approach the question with all humility. For it is not by logic alone that the problems of such enormous consequence and import can be solved. 'Light of lights' comes through those immortal characters who illumined the world in the past—Buddha, Zarathustra, Christ, Confucius, Mohammad and a host of other God-intoxicated saints and sages who have always been ready to help mankind with their guidance. Guidance comes through grace.

In this scientific age, the supernatural has almost faded behind the horizon. Physical science in its arrogance has

Which means,

The knot of the heart is loosened

All doubts are cut off

And one's deeds (karman) cease

When He is seen—both the higher and the lower.

—Hume's Thirteen Upa., p. 373.

¹ Bhagabad Gita, Chap. XVI, 21.

pushed religion from its legitimate sphere. But in our practical experience, do we not see the natural and the supernatural intertwined at every step? We cannot explain the nature of the universe without postulating the forces of attraction and repulsion which, as their name connotes, are not altogether material. In fact, one Greek Philosopher went so far as to identify the fundamental forces at work in the material and spiritual kingdom with the human feelings of Love and Hate.

The experience of scientists also is not incompatible with the admission of a supreme Mystery which builds a bridge between Science and Religion. Sir James Jeans declares that the universe begins to look 'more like a great thought than a great machine.' Sir A. S. Eddington was impressed with the immaterial nature of the world stuff. "I regard consciousness as fundamental," he says, "I regard matter as derivative from consciousness." Einstein declares "I believe in God who reveals himself in the orderly harmony of the Universe."¹

From this and other testimonies, it appears that the attitude of science towards religion should be one of friendly co-operation and not one of uncritical alienation. Time will come when Science and Religion, both imperfect in our present state of knowledge, should walk hand in hand, so that the whole universe, mind and matter, may be viewed as a well-ordered spiritual whole.

But it is one thing to diagnose the disease and quite another to discover the therapy. I am deeply convinced that it is by tapping the spiritual resources that mankind may be saved. The Hindus believed in periodical Avatars or incarnations of God who came to this earth when His world was in danger of being peopled by the wicked and religion in danger of being overwhelmed by un-righteousness.² The Jews and Christians have dreamt of the advent of a Messiah who will set all matters right. But in the present sceptical world, it is idle to talk of such expectation of Messianic advent to set right the wicked world. But we can

¹ See Modern Review (Calcutta), July, 1936, by Sunderland—
'Is Modern Science outgrowing God?'

² Bhagabad Gita, Chap. IV, 7.

certainly speak of reviving the spiritual forces and religious convictions which served our forefathers well during their critical hours of trial and tribulation and enabled them to carry forward the torch of culture through centuries in spite of occasional lapses and drawbacks. Lapses and drawbacks there have been in the history of religions—and this is one of the reasons why men have often lost faith in spiritual values. There have been ruthless persecutions and mass massacres in the name of religion. Still it may be said, man in general has never ceased to think in terms of spiritual values.¹

I firmly believe that if we had as assiduously pursued the study of spirit as we have pursued the study of matter, we would have succeeded in discovering spiritual truths and laws capable of solving many problems which baffle our efforts today. As one scientist has opined “I think the greatest discoveries will be made along spiritual lines. . . . Then the scientists of the world will turn their laboratories over to the study of God and prayer and the spiritual forces which as yet have been hardly scratched.”²

Thomas E. Dewey writing in the *Christian Herald* says that the most important shortage in modern times is the shortage of spiritual resources. He says, “With all our knowledge, we urgently need to gain sufficient understanding to recognise that there is an inescapable, cause and effect relationship between these mounting failures and our diminished faith.”³

That this is no idle speculation can be proved by reference to history, and, if you pardon me, by our personal experience. Did we not see with our own eyes what a tremendous effect could be wrought with spiritual force or the weapon of Ahimsa (non-violence)? The indomitable tenacity of Mahatma Gandhi and the wonderful magic of his soul-force won the battle against brute force—the most powerful in the world in those days, *viz.*, the armed might of the British

¹ See the present writer's article on “The Theory of Value”—Proceedings of the Philosophical Congress, Bombay, 1927.

² Dr. Charles Steinmetz—Reader's Digest, November, 1948, p. 119.

³ *Ibid.*

Empire. "Force had to bow down before heroic gentleness."¹ In this epic struggle between spirit on the one side and governmental power and brute force on the other, the spirit came out victorious, crowned with undying glory. The secret of Gandhi's success lay "in his infinite patience, unbounded love and a faith in God" which no amount of suffering or calamity could curb.

We have seen this and, although the memory of it will soon be relegated to past history, the unforgettable experience will shine like a star to guide people who wish to tread in the path of spiritual progress. It will enable men to assert the claims of the spirit to ascendancy over body through self-control, suffering and sacrifice.

But although a living memory with us, the phenomenon wonderful as it is, is by no means unique. Did not Jesus of Nazareth exemplify the same principle in his life? By sacrifice and suffering he accomplished a spiritual conquest of the world and proved for all time to come, in which direction the highest destiny of man lay. Death was robbed of its terror and a crown of immortality was placed on it, the splendour of which lapse of time has not been able to efface or dim. One of the early fathers of Christian Church, Ignatius of Antioch, was condemned to death and thrown to the wild beasts in a Roman amphitheatre by Emperor Trajan. He died but his spirit lived to inspire thousands of Christians who came after him and courted martyrdom. All the cruelties which "the Inquisition Dogs and the Devil-doms of Spain" could invent failed to damp the enthusiasm of the men of faith.

Even here in India did we not see in the heroic struggle of the Sikhs the other day, the wonderful dynamic of faith? When the British Government took up the cause of one of their sections against the Akalis—another section—who wanted to purify their sanctuaries, the Akalis resolved to sacrifice themselves. Every day twenty-five youngmen proceeded towards Guru Ka Bagh only to be bayoneted by the Government Police. These youngmen took the vow to remain true to the principles of non-violence in thought and action until they fell down dead or unconscious. "A new kind of

¹ Mahatma Gandhi—Romain Rolland, p. 19.

heroism, stilled by suffering has risen, a war of spirit " wrote Mr. C. F. Andrews—a great friend of our beloved poet Rabindranath.

This is what I mean by the dynamic of faith. There is no harm in my confessing that these phenomena have suggested to my mind the subject of my lectures. I firmly believe that the present materialistic culture contains in itself the principles of its own dissolution. The trend of machine-made civilisation has reached a stage when man should pause and, if possible, retrace his steps. The Gospel of power should cease. Ideal of material comradeship must be replaced by spiritual fellowship, and competition in modern armaments of inevitable destruction be replaced by the spiritual weapons of truth, patience and peace.

The remedy therefore lies in strengthening the resources of faith and making it a real dynamic force in human life. I propose therefore to examine the history of different religions in order to show how they rose and how they gradually declined and how again they—some of them at any rate—were re-invigorated through the transfusion of new spiritual blood. I shall institute a comparison among the faiths which have guided the destinies of mankind through the ages.

Through faith only can humanity rise to its full stature and in this India has a great contribution to make. Because India never set material well-being as the goal of life. India has never worshipped at the altar of power and domination. India perhaps of all countries in the world knows the great value of suffering and sacrifice.

I would like to quote one of the earliest of the Upanishads where it is said:

ईशा वास्यमिदं सर्वं यत् किञ्च जगत्यां जगत् ।

तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्यश्चिद्भनम् ॥ —Isa 1.

By the Lord (Isa) enveloped must this all be
Whatever moving thing there is in the moving world
With this renounced, thou mayest enjoy
Covet not the wealth of any one at all.

—Hume's Translation. See Thirteen Upanishads.

In other words, know thou that this evanescent world is enveloped by God; so live by sacrifice; do not covet the riches of other people; for the only permanent thing, the only reality is God.

THE GROWTH OF RELIGIONS

The antiquity of religion takes us back to prehistoric times. Nobody can say when religion first originated and at what stage of man's history. But probably religion is as old as human history.¹

The question is: What is the meaning of religion? Various definitions of religion have been given, but none of them seems to be adequate to comprehend all the phenomena to which the term applies.²

I have said in my first lecture that there is in human nature an inherent tendency to look beyond itself. This latent impulse was probably awakened in man by the mystery of death. The difference between sleep and death, for example, must have been one of the earliest phenomenon to strike the imagination of primitive man. Thus was sown the seed of the Supernatural in his mind. The dead were regarded with awe and as possessed of supernatural powers to do good or to cause mischief. Hence the desire to propitiate the dead by offerings. The graves of primitive people in various lands are found to contain relics of these offerings.

Gradually dead ancestors came to be worshipped and the relics of this worship may be traced among some tribes even at the present day.³ In China, ancestor worship prevailed on a large scale and practically constituted their domestic religion. The Chinese Emperor publicly worshipped the High Heaven or Shang-ti or Tien on behalf of the people of the Chinese Empire which to the Chinese in those

¹ Sir John Lubbock is of the opinion that there was a time when man had no religion. But Flint in his antitheistic theories has disproved this view. Flint has tried to prove that religion was universal.

² John Morley in an article said that there were ten thousand definitions of religion. (Nineteenth Century, April, 1905)—*Quoted in Soper, op. cit.*

³ According to Herbert Spencer, Religion has developed out of the worship of departed ancestors.

days meant the whole world.¹ For the masses, domestic worship of dead ancestors constituted the religion of China.

Religion in the sense of man's relation with the supernatural took different forms in the early stages of civilisation with different tribes. Plants, animals, even inanimate objects—everything has at some time or other been associated with the supernatural. Animism, ancestor worship, totemism, fetishism—have each been suggested as containing the explanation of the origin of religion. Animism is the belief that all objects possess a vital principle or are endowed with indwelling souls. According to Tylor Animism is the original form of religion. Tylor means by religion simply belief in spiritual beings.² Totemism is the view that a special class of plants or animals are looked upon by certain people as special objects of reverence.³ According to some scholars, totemism represents a primitive form of religion.⁴

All these conflicting opinions prove that the history of religion cannot be traced down to its origin. But it may be surmised that, so far as we can deduce from the evidence available, man was never without a religion of some sort. Just like language, religion is a universal phenomenon. But as we can trace, however inadequately, the laws of the variation of language from country to country, from race to race, we cannot explain the causes of the divergences of religion. Among the great religions of the world, although there may be considerable resemblances in regard to the conception of God, practically no explanation is found as to why there should be so much divergence and discord between their followers, often living side by side, *e.g.*, Pagans and Christians, Moslems and Heathens, etc.

¹ The worship of Heaven took place on the occasion of the longest night of the year, under the open sky upon a circular terraced marble platform. Soper: *The Religions of Mankind*, p. 218. This was calculated to give an idea of the infinitude of the Supernatural.

² "Animism is, in fact, the ground of Religion, from that of savages up to that of civilised man." Tylor: *Primitive Culture*, Vol. I, p. 426.

³ It is believed that in consequence of transmigration of souls, ancestors are supposed to be incarnated in certain plants or animals.

⁴ R. Karsten: *Origins of Religion*, p. 143.

Of the eight important living religions¹ of the world, *viz.*, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Confucianism and Islam, as many as six originated from the spiritual vision of personal founders, *viz.*, Buddha, Mahavir, Christ, Zoroaster, Confucius and Mohammed. Judaism also may be said to have originated with a creative founder, Moses, who directly received a revelation from the God of the Jews—Yahweh. Hinduism claims to be a revelation from God—the Vedas are not the work of any man. It is called Sruti or that which has been heard from God direct.

Sometimes God communicated His message direct, and people who had ears heard that message as in the case of Hinduism and Judaism. Sometimes it was delivered to the world through God's chosen messengers like Zoroaster, Christ, Mohammed. But the method is different in every case. Zoroaster received the inspiration at a festival and from that time, he was a changed man. He at once believed that he had a divine mission and could not rest till, after waiting for several long years, he succeeded in catching the ears of the Persians. It is said that for ten years he preached in vain and succeeded in converting only one person. Christ was a divine person or divinity in human form.² He was an ordinary carpenter's son, but showed signs of greatness from his childhood. He came from Nazareth to the Temple of Jerusalem with his parents when he was twelve and at once recognised it to be his Heavenly Father's house, so much so that he forgot to accompany his parents when they started back for home. It was after a day's journey that his parents perceived for the first time that their son Jesus was missing. Then again when he went to John the Baptist for baptism, the Divine Light fell on him; the heavens were opened and a dove settled on his hand. The opening of the heavens was symbolic of divine inspiration and the dove symbolised the descending of the Holy Ghost or the Spirit of God. Thenceforward he claims

¹ Sometimes Shintoism, Sikhism and Taoism are also counted among the living faiths.

² Tennyson calls him Man in God or God in Man.

to be Son of God, sent by Him, to redeem the sinful world.¹

Mohammed was fairly advanced in years,—he was about forty,—when he received the Revelation. Mohammed does not claim any divinity like Jesus Christ, but does claim to be the Apostle of God and to have received direct communication from Him. The Koran² was revealed to Mohammed exactly as it is found today. In his case also, years elapsed before he could convert any one to his new faith except Khadija, his noble wife, and a few other good people. His kinsmen the Quoresh tribe were iniquical, and he had to repair to Medina where, however, he received a welcome and a following. Medina is just two hundred and fifty miles to the north. It was the city from which Mohammed's mother had come.

Mohammed preached strict monotheism like the Jewish prophets of old and warned about the Day of Judgment. Like the prophets of Israel, Mohammed was commanded by God to 'arise and warn.'³ It is probable that Mohammed derived his inspiration about the unity of God largely from the Jews and Christians with whom he came into contact early in his life and brooded over the gross idolatrous practices of the pagan population of Arabia. He began to preach therefore that God was one and warned people about the hell-fire which was awaiting them unless they heeded his warning.⁴

¹ Christianity is a religion of Redemption,—not from sin only, but from the world. Sydney Cave : *Redemption, Hindu and Christian*, p. 249.

² Koran means that which is recited. Like the Vedas, the Koran is claimed to be the work of no man. The word for revelation is 'Ilham' when the communication is direct from God to an individual and 'wahy' when the revelation takes place by messages communicated through the prophet.

³ The Prophet at first turned towards Jerusalem in saying 'qibla' (Prayers), but later on towards Mecca, which was the centre of his revelation. At first, fast was observed on the Jewish Day of Atonement, but later he fixed a special period for fast for his followers, viz., the month of Ramjan. His attitude towards the Jews also changed to one of persecution.

⁴ All the Semitic religions were monotheistic. But so far as the iconoclastic tendencies were concerned, Islam far surpassed Judaism and Christianity.

Although Buddha preached a religion in which God did not play any part, he felt in his soul an awakening, an upsurge of spirit within him which led him to renounce the world and retire into solitude. He formulated a religion of pure life of *ahimsa* or good will as the only means of salvation.

Now these awakenings of spirit are very important in the history of religion. If we miss their significance we miss a great deal of the dynamism of religion also, *viz.*, that indefinable creative force; *élan vital*, in the words of Bergson, without which it loses all its passionate appeal. Religion does not spring from mere rationalisation or philosophising although philosophy is its inalienable ally and not infrequently, its severe critic. Whitehead means by a rational religion 'religion whose beliefs and rituals have been reorganised with the aim of making it the central element in a coherent order of life.' But such ordering is perhaps never consciously set before the mind of its original founder. That is why Socrates was not the founder of any religion, while Christ was. Socrates, as we know, largely influenced the thoughts of man by his philosophical method. He also gathered a large number of disciples round him and they founded schools also, *e.g.*, the Academy, the Porch and the Garden. He purified men's minds by his ceaseless efforts to teach the correct method of approach in reaching Truth. Another point of similarity with Christ was that he also suffered for his conviction and chose a martyr's death rather than forsake his opinion. But Socrates, in spite of these striking resemblances, was a philosopher, not a prophet or Apostle, and Christ was what Socrates was not, namely God-inspired 'son of Man' as Christ often chose to call himself.¹

Take also the case of Sankaracharya, another very great man. He is remembered as the founder of Vedanta Philosophy—a monistic system which has a larger influence on the thoughts and speculations of India than any other school of thought. Sankara is often regarded, either on account of the similarity of name or of his founding the well-known

¹ See *Ecce Homo*, p. 91 sqq.

ten orders of Ascetics, who look upon Siva as their God, as the same as the God Siva himself. But although his philosophy is admired, and he is spoken of as an intellectual prodigee of surpassing eminence, he is not credited with the founding of a religion in the sense in which Christ, Buddha or Mohammed is a founder of faith.¹

Just as religion is not philosophy, so it is not morality either, although in all the great religions of the world, morality occupies a very prominent place. Buddhism makes morality the backbone of its creed. It makes the Eightfold Path of Righteousness the chief means of salvation. The Hindu speaks of the purification of the soul as the *sine qua non* of God-realisation.² The Zoroastrians made purification of character the essence of piety. The Jews speak of obedience to Divine commands as the essence of religion. They possess a high moral tone reached by few religions. The Christians are justly proud of the ethical character of their faith. The Moslems also insist on the strictest submission to the Divine Will which is free from all blemishes. Thus we find that the connection between morality and religion is most intimate.³ Still morality is not religion. Religion is certainly not possible without morality, according to the modern conception of it. But there can be morality without religion. As a matter of fact, modern science has, while making much of morality, cast doubt on the necessity of religion for modern civili-

¹ Sister Nivedita writes about Sankaracarya: We contemplate with wonder and delight the devotion of Francis of Assisi, the intellect of Abelard, the virile force and freedom of Martin Luther and the political efficiency of Ignatius Loyla, but who could imagine all these united in one person?—Quoted in *Vedanta Darsana*, p. 84.

² आहारशुद्धौ सत्त्वशुद्धिं सत्त्वशुद्धौ वा सृतिः

—The purity of the soul depends upon the purity of food and produces in its turn clarity of intellect and memory.

³ The religions of the Mediterranean region could not keep pace with the growth of morality and that is why they declined. 'The divinities of the Mediterranean had lagged behind man in ethical progress and were in no position to act as spiritual guides.'—Hopkins: *The Origin and Evolution of Religion*, p. 260.

sation.¹ Naturalism or Scientism has practically dispensed with God.

Whether the modern society has outgrown the need for religion is a disputed point,² but in the past it would not have been possible for man to make any advance whatever without religion. Literature, Music, Philosophy, Painting, Architecture, Sculpture—everything noble that man has produced so far bears unmistakable stamp of religion. Revelations have made religion, and religion has blossomed in all these invaluable ways. Philosophy has lighted man's path towards God, morality has guided his faltering footsteps, literature and art have been the bejewelled vehicles of Spirit. But Religion is not identical with any one of them.

Indeed we do not know how the religions were originated, what led to their rise and expansion and why they came like flood and spread fertility, solace and joy all round. Religious awakening is a unique phenomenon in the experience of man. It is not like anything with which we are familiar. Like a touchstone, it transforms the whole of our being—intellect, emotion and will in a flash of lightning, as it were, as nothing else does.

In fact, all our activities are comprehended by religion. Religion is morality but not exclusively so and does not consist in mere right doing. It is philosophy, but not the metaphysical glue which holds the things of knowledge together in an abstract incomprehensible unity. It is a new accent and this accent is the vital thing as Professor Radhakrishnan has said.³ Religion binds all beings with a golden thread and demands the utmost sacrifice of the self for the sake of religion and for God. So long as the accent is on the self, religion is absent. The Hindus therefore hold the view that asceticism which consists in rigid self-denial is an essential prerequisite of religious

¹ 'The story which so many insistent voices have for so many years been sounding in our ears is not merely that God is dead; it is that science has killed Him.'—A. E. Taylor: *Does God Exist?*

² See Mill's *Three Essays on Religion*, p. 70.

³ The Idealist View of Life.

devotion. On the other hand, many a European thinker has condemned asceticism,¹ with what result the last two world wars have shown. In their opinion, asceticism is a forlorn theory; they are, it seems, inclined to place the emphasis on 'commercialism'—mills, machineries and big business. They fan the flame of desire by 'wanting more wants.' The Buddhists went to the other extreme, when they renounced the world in quite large numbers and turned monks.

Asceticism or self denial is as much a phenomenon of volition as indulgence and enjoyment. The ordinary man desires to get pleasure and more pleasure but the religious man is happy when he sacrifices his enjoyment for the sake of the object of his love.² It is not only practised by some people as a symptom of saintliness, but also for the sake of purity which is so dear to God. Origen castrated himself in order to keep his life of chastity unimpaired.³ Suso a German mystic of the 14th century relates in his autobiography his nightly self-torture in order to keep alive in his mind the agonies which Christ had suffered on the Cross.⁴

Poverty is another form of asceticism and a very common form among the religious minded people. Christ, when approached by a rich young man said, "Go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor; . . . and come and follow me." He said, "Take no thought for your life. . . . Is not life more than meat and body, more than raiment? Behold the fowls of air . . . your Heavenly Father feeds them; consider the lilies of the field, how they grow . . . even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

¹ See '*Is India civilised?*' Sir John Woodroffe says, in reply to Mr. Archer, who does not see any special value in asceticism as practised by the Indians: "Most will agree, in theory at least, that desires should be controlled, because without some restraint the strength of natural passion is likely to lead to sin and crime particularly when we fan the flame of desire by 'wanting more wants'—p. 241."

² *Varieties of Religious Experience*—William James.

³ *Religio Medici*—Sir Thomas Browne.

⁴ Wm. James, *op. cit.*

Chaitanya preached in a similar vein. His two disciples Rupa and Sanatana held high offices under the Moslem King Hussain Shah of Bengal and, at the call of Chaitanya, left their pomp, wealth and all and repaired to Vrindaban where they slept under the shade of trees and lived by begging just enough food to keep their body and soul together. Many examples of poverty under the influence of religious conversion¹ can be cited. Hindu sadhus, Buddhist monks, Mohammedan fakirs unite with Jesuits and Franciscans in idealising poverty.²

I mention these matters in order to show that there is often a tremendous influence exercised by religious sentiment and herein lies the mysticism of religion. The mystic has expelled all sensations and inclinations from his mind and reinstated God and all that pertains to Him. He is dead to the material world but is wide awake to the spiritual. We may recall what the Gita says, the man who has controlled his passions is awake in the night when other beings are sleeping, and he is asleep when the others are wide awake.³ The mystic feels that all his activities are in abeyance and acts as if under the sway of a superior power. This is the feeling of ecstasy which is looked upon as the religious emotion *par excellence*, an emotion which is associated with God-realisation. "It is so unique, so unlike the other sentiments" says Fichte "that it is closely connected with that aspect of religion which is called mysticism."⁴

This is the true feeling underlying Religion and it is above all sectarianism, persecution and intolerance. Sectarianism and communalism spring from a 'fanaticism of perversity.'⁵ Mysticism is free from all parochial limitations and from all aggressive attitude. Its origin is

¹ Religious or moral conversion is a unique phenomenon which occurs when a man suddenly awakes to a consciousness of the highest ideal in comparison with which the previous life pales into nothing.

² Wm. James, *op. cit.*

³ Bhagabat Gita—Chap. 2, p. 69.

⁴ Fichte's Works—Lecture II.

⁵ Ramkrishna the Saint of Dakshineswar, illustrated this in his own life.

to be found in the inner well of being which has its existence somewhere deep down in human nature; it defies all attempts at psychological analysis. 'The central point of all life is Love' says Fichte. 'The true Life loves the One unchangeable and Eternal; the mere Apparent Life attempts to love the Transitory and Perishable.'¹ 'This Apparent Life is nothing but a mixture of Life and Death.' Its love also is a compound of self-surrender and egoism.

The truly religious man has very little interest in this world. This is the real crux of the situation. It is when our mind is divided between this world and the next that the life giving current of Faith is dried up and the worldly minded humanity moves aimlessly like a ship without a rudder on the ocean of life.

This is the reason why religion has ceased to inspire. The real meaning of life is missing—a meaning which can only be found outside the charmed circle of the present life.² And so long as this morbid condition persists, there is no chance of the steadying influence of religion which only can prevent war and all its horrors. So long as the gaze is fixed on ephemeral things such as power, wealth and pleasure, humanity will fall again and again into the burning cauldron of strife and death.

I shall now proceed to discuss the most important of the living religions and show how their dynamic element once a rushing and gushing current has gradually been lost or subdued by the pressure of the forces of materialism.

¹ Fichte, *op. cit.*, p. 393. Cf. Sandilya Sutra सा कस्मै प्ररम प्रेमरूपा ।

Bhakti or devotion is like the highest sentiment of love for some Being.

² "The present life cannot be rationally regarded as the sole purpose of my existence, or of the existence of human race in general; there is something in me, and there is something required of me, which finds in this life nothing to which it can be applied, and which is entirely superfluous and unnecessary for the attainment of the highest objects that can be attained on earth."—Fichte, *op. cit.*, p. 348.

ZOROASTRIANISM

Among all the ancient religions, Zoroastrianism has a true ring about it. It claims kinship with the other ancient branch of the Indo-Aryan religion, *viz.*, the Vedas and affinity with the Bible in many important points. Taking its stand on the most important ethical ground, *viz.*, the fundamental opposition in human nature between the good and the evil, this faith undoubtedly claims superiority to most of the religions of the world. Zoroaster elevated the struggle between the two ethical principles good and evil, which is happening all the world over into a cosmic conflict and made that the corner stone of his religion. Morality is the distinct feature of this religion. That the association of morality with religion is not a fortuitous connection is clearly proved by the early religions—Zoroastrianism and Judaism.

Zoroaster was an apostle of action and hence the universal moral struggle impressed him most. The Parsis are by nature men of action, as the Indians are naturally given to contemplation and speculation. Consequently “the religion of Iran developed towards ethical and practical and the religion of India towards pantheism and moral inaction.”¹ “In Persia the breezes are charged with moral vigour” says one writer. When this new religion pushed beyond the boundaries of the country of its origin, it met with a welcome almost everywhere. It reached towards the east as far as the Indus, and, towards the west, even Greece and Rome came under its influence.²

Zoroaster or Zarathustra or Zardusht flourished in Persia more than two thousand five hundred years ago—thus being a little older than Mahavira, the founder of Jaina religion, and Buddha, the founder of Buddhism. Zoroastrianism like Buddhism takes its name from the name of the founder and like its counterpart in the east, it

¹ E. D. Soper—Religions of Mankind, p. 139 Sqq.

² Jackson says that had it not been for Salamis and Platea, Europe would have been converted.—*Zoroastrian Studies*,

touches human nature at the most vital point so far at least as the moral tone is concerned. But unlike the Persian Religion Buddhism does not know any revelation.

God was revealed to Zoroaster during a religious festival. Just as Gabriel appeared before the prophet of Islam and revealed Allah to him, so Vohu Manah appeared to Zoroaster. The religion of Zoroaster falls therefore in the class of revealed religions.

Zoroaster was 30 when he received the Revelation but for 10 years he preached in vain, only one man, his cousin, becoming a convert. But the polytheistic nature-cult of Iran could not long withstand the dynamic impact of the new faith. Zoroaster repaired to the court of Kavi Vishtaspa, head of a small state in Persia at the bidding of Ahura Mazda, his God. At first there was some opposition from the high priests of the court and he was thrown into prison.¹ But by having cured the favourite horse of the King, he was not only reinstated in the favour of the King and Queen, but he made converts of them to his faith with their whole court.

Encouraged by this triumph, he began to see visions of making his religion universal. Zoroaster met his death at the hands of the heathens (Turanians) against whom the Persians were engaged in warfare. This happened in B.C. 583, when the prophet was sixty-seven. He was survived by all his three wives and two sons. There is perhaps no miracle connected with his death. But it is said that at birth he "laughed outright," a fact mentioned by Pliny Secundus. Besides, the glory of God descended on his virgin mother who was fifteen years old at the time.

The sources of our knowledge of the Persian religion are :

I. The scriptures of Zoroastrianism (i) Avesta written in Zend, an old dialect which is cognate with vedic Sanskrit. Avesta means 'Knowledge,' the same as the word Veda in Hinduism. The Yasna (*cf.* Jajna sacrifice or worship) forms the most important section which includes the Gathas or hymns. These are the only portions attributable to Zoroaster. (ii) The Vendidad or Law against

¹ Jackson, *Zoroastrian Studies*.

demons, a priestly code. (iii) The Visperad meaning invocations to all the Lords, a small liturgical work also used in worship. These form the most important part of the Zoroastrian scripture. (iv) Yashts or hymns. (v) Khorda Avesta or little Avesta containing prayers and litanies are also Canonical books.

II. Reference to Zoroastrianism in the Bible. Cyrus who was a follower of the religion is mentioned in eight books of the Old Testament.¹ The word 'Messiah' was used in connection with the belief of the Hebrews in a deliverer and leader who would enable them to fulfil God's righteousness on earth and restore them to their rightful kingdom. We find in Isaiah that King Cyrus was addressed by Jehovah as his 'Messiah.'² Thus a Zoroastrian was described by this glorious title several hundred years before Christ.³ 'Satan' was not an original feature of the Bible but was introduced from the Persians.

The principal features of the religion lie in its moral emphasis. The God of Zoroastrianism is called Ahura Mazda or Mazda Ahura or simply as Ahura or Mazda which means 'Lord Wisdom' or the sovereign who is knowledge.⁴ "This shows that the spirituality and loftiness of the conception of Ormuzd is remarkable, as a study of epithets, attributes and function of the god shows." Moulton says Wisdom is "the unerring instinct that can distinguish between truth and falsehood which for the prophet was the most vital aspect of the good and the evil."

Ahura Mazda is the God of Wisdom and of Light but over against this principle of light there is a principle of

¹ Namely, II Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemia, Esther, Isaiah, Daniel, Haggai and Zacharia.

² Isaiah 45 : 1.

³ Christ is a Greek translation of the Hebrew word Messiah in Isaiah 44 : 28. Cyrus is called 'my shepherd.'

⁴ In Hinduism Brahma or Supreme God is called Wisdom. Brahma is Truth, Knowledge, Infinite :

सत्यं ज्ञानमनन्तं ब्रह्म—Taittiriya Upa. 2:1:1.

Evil and Darkness. This is called Anra Mainyu¹ or Ahriman. God is irreconcilably at war with evil. This duality constitutes the most important characteristic of Zoroastrian thought. The whole world process is a continual fight between the good and the evil.²

This is, no doubt, a novel way of explaining the existence of evil in this universe, but when we remember that the problem of evil has often proved an insurmountable difficulty to every system of theology, we cannot fail to be impressed by it. Here we see the first attempt to face the problem squarely. The existence of evil that is falsehood, wickedness and sin, is admitted and instead of making a just, merciful and righteous God responsible for them Zoroastrianism postulated another creative power co-eval with the first.

This has made Zoroaster liable to the charge of dualism which the Parsees are reluctant to admit, under the impression that dualism is an inferior brand of philosophy. It is sought to be explained in a monistic way by saying that Spenta Mainyu and Anra Mainyu are both emanations from the supreme God Ahura. But dualism is the keynote of Persian philosophy. There is no doubt that the fundamental characteristic of Zoroastrianism is dualism. To force it into a Monism is to take away its most distinctive and indeed a very valuable feature. Ormuzd makes all that is good in the world and Ahriman mars it. God dwells in endless light and Sātan lurks in infinite darkness. This dualism is brought out clearly in Gathas, in Vendidad and Bundahishn. But this dualism however is not final. Ultimately Ahura Mazda will prevail and the forces of evil will be routed from the world. So, the religion of Zoroaster may be said to be, as Jackson points out, both dualistic and monotheistic.

Geiger states that so far as these two spirits are concerned, they may be regarded as aspects—one positive

¹ Manyu in Vedic Sanskrit, means wrath. मनुर्देव्यै क्रतौ क्रुधि
It is suggested by the anger of Indra. But he is invoked in two Rg.vedic hymns. When Manyu is personified, he is God, who is Indra, Varuna and Jatavedas. See *Vedic Mythology* (Macdonell), p. 119.

² Jackson—*Zoroastrian Studies*, p. 39.

and the other negative. They do not exist by themselves but each only in relation to the other. They existed before the beginning of the world and their opposition finds expression in the visible world. Such a dualism exists almost in every religion.¹

Spenta Mainyu is an effluence from Ahura Mazda and is his Holy Spirit. But the relation between Spenta Mainyu and Ahura is as difficult to follow as that between God the Father and God the Holy Ghost in the Bible. Any way, Spenta Mainyu seems to be that aspect of God which as Holy Spirit carries on an eternal struggle with the Spirit of Evil. But this almost everlasting conflict does not prove the omnipotence of God as it proves His omniscience.

In His constant wars with the forces of evil, God is assisted by a body of spirits or angels (Yazatas) who surround the throne of God. The chief among these are called Amesha Spentas (or Archangels), later called Amshaspands. These carry out the commands of the Great God. The name Amesha Spentas signifies 'immortal holy ones.' But they are personifications of abstract conceptions. For example, Vohu Manah, means good thoughts. He is the first creation of Ormuzd, the adviser who sits on his right hand and who is the chief promoter of the kingdom.² Asha Vahista (Best Righteousness) typifies *Punya*, *Satya*, *Bhakti*.³ Khshatra Vairiya (wished for kingdom), Spenta Armaiti (Bountiful Devotion), Haurvatat (Saving Health) and Amretat (Immortality). The Zoroastrian ideal is to live according to Asha (corresponding to Sanskrit *Rita* or its synonym *Dharma*).

¹ In the Hindu mythology, particularly in the Mahabharata and Ramayana, long stories are told of the wars of the demons against God, and of the wicked and vicious against the virtuous. Here also, as in the literature of the Zoroastrians, the forces of righteousness come out victorious in the end. This is maximised in the common adage यतो धर्मस्ततो जयः । Whence virtue springs, thence also victory. Ahriman or Satan corresponds to the 'Mara' (मार) of Buddhism.

² In Pahlavi literature, says Jackson, the cock is assigned to him as his sacred bird, white Jasmine as his appropriate flower and white garment as sacred to him. (In Sri Aurobindo Ashram at Pondichery, white flowers are regarded as sacred.)

³ Jackson: *op. cit.*, p. 49.

Aramati in vedic mythology also means Devotion and Piety.¹ The two last, viz., Amretat and Armaiti are mentioned together in Zoroastrianism like the Vedic twin Aswins.

In the Iranian hierarchy, after the Archangels come the Yazatas or Izads. Like the Amsha Spentas, these angels to whom Ahura Mazda stands in the relation of father and creator also carry the will of God to man. The number of these angels is legion and Diogenes Laertius says that according to this angelology the whole air is peopled with spirits. The Yazatas are the guardian spirits of the sun, moon, stars, heaven, earth, air, etc. Thus the religion of Zoroaster is linked to Nature-worship out of which most probably it sprang.

'Atar' or fire is the first Yazata; Apo or Water comes next. Mithra, Sraosha and Rashnu are no less important. They are judges of the souls of men after their death. Rashnu is the angel of justice. He holds the golden scales in which souls are weighed. *Vritraghna* (वृत्रघ्न) or the genius of victory was prominent in Sassanian times. 'Some elements of the Hindu deity survive in this divinity.'

In the later Avesta completed under the Sassanid King Shapur II (fourth century A.D.), Vohu Manah became the guardian of cattle, Asha, god of fire (in the Gathas also fire derives its power from Asha), Armaiti, goddess of the soil.

New deities had become known to the Persians at the time of their conquests under Cyrus and his successors. Among these new deities the most important was Goddess Arēdvi or Anahita (spotless one). This goddess is mentioned in inscriptions. Anahita was the goddess of fertility. One of the festivals of the later Persians, was borrowed perhaps from Babylonia, viz., "Festival of Fools." In Babylonia on New Years Day master and slave changed places and the occasion was marked by sexual excesses.²

Apart from these Yazatas, mention is made of another class of good spirits, viz., Fravishis—who are always ready to protect mankind from the forces of evil.

¹ See Macdonell's *Vedic Mythology*, p. 119.

² Carl Clemen, *Religions of the World*, p. 146.

Just as the angels are on the side of the good God Ahura Mazda, so there are legions of evil spirits to help Angra Mainyu. These are called daevas¹ or demons, the chief among them being Aka Manah or evil thoughts. Corresponding to the six archangels we have six archdemons, who spring from evil thought.

In the philosophy of Zoroaster good spirits and evil spirits are matched against each other. For example, Vohu Manah means good thought and his counterpart is Aka Manah who is the lord of evil thoughts and discord. The worshippers of the good angels are known as Mazda-yasna and those of the devils as Daevayāsna.

The Fravashis are the guardian angels of man. Special worship is enjoined for these good spirits. The function of the Fravashis is to guide human beings in their constant struggle against the forces of evil.

The principal tenets of Zoroastrian religion are, therefore, (1) There is a supreme God, viz., Ahura Mazda, All Wise Lord (2) Immortality of the Soul and (3) our responsibility for our thoughts, words and deeds. These last are summed up in Humata, Hukhta and Hvarsta—good thoughts, good words and good deeds.² 'I abjure all evil thoughts, evil words and evil deeds'—this is the watchword of the Religion. For this lofty moral tone, this religion has been

Daeva is the same word as Sanskrit Deva, which means shining ones. For some reason not yet fully understood, the Iranian section of the Aryans has reduced the gods of the Hindus into demons or devils (the word devil owes its origin perhaps to Daevas). The Vedic Aryans seem to have paid back the compliment by calling the demons Asura (or Ahura). Ahura is clearly Asura which means an opponent of the Hindu gods. असुराः—

पूर्वदेवाः सुरद्विषः (Amara-Kosha). Were they gods at first? The Zoroastrian Indra or Indar is spirit of apostacy, Sauru (Sarva) is an evil spirit of anarchy and drunkenness; Naon Haithya corresponds to Nāsatya and is a spirit of disobedience. Nāsatya is an attribute of the Asvins. There is a demon called Vareno (lust), another called Vaya or Vayu (merciless), Druj or Drauga (falsehood)—are some of the similarities which cannot be regarded as accidental.

² They correspond to Su-matam, Su-uktam and Su-vrishtam सुमतं सु-उक्तं, सुव्रष्टं

held in high esteem and Zoroaster highly respected among the founders of religion.¹

Humata, Hukhta, Hvarsta are like formulae of good conduct and no doubt helpful to memory. But mere recitation of the formulas does not solve the question as to what precisely constitutes good thoughts and good deeds.

Zoroastrianism is free from asceticism and mysticism² which are so abundantly found in other religions, particularly in Jainism and Buddhism.

Zoroaster was in later times venerated as a highly righteous man and deserving of religious worship. But we find that he was a prophet of a militant type who did not, like Buddha or Christ, denounce violence. He conducted, like the prophet of Islam, warfare against neighbouring people. Violence against adversaries is explicitly prescribed.

Herodotus summarises the education of the Parsee youth thus: 'They are taught to ride on horseback, to use the bow and to speak the truth. They hate lying and deceit. They are taught to keep their word and keep out of debt.' Next to the sin of lying, they consider it a disgrace to be in debt. 'For a man who is in debt,' says Herodotus, 'must necessarily tell lies.' Marriage vow is considered sacred. The family was the unit of the state, and families with a large number of children were usually rewarded. This was necessary in order to increase man-power.

The Parsees were a pastoral people and regarded the cow and the dog as sacred because they were useful animals. But it was not forbidden to destroy noxious and harmful animals such as snakes, etc. -

Fire, earth, water, sky, etc., were regarded as sacred—particularly fire was worshipped by the Zoroastrians as a symbol of purity. 'Throughout all the Avesta the maintenance of the holy fire which must be fed with clean wood, with incense and with the evergreen sprouts of the pomegranate tree, is a sacred act.'³ Every householder

¹ The Greeks, whose religion was tinged with anthropomorphism were struck by the spiritual nature of the religion of the Parsees.

² See *Encyclopedia of Ethics and Religion*—Schrader's article on *Aryan Religion*.

³ Jackson: *op. cit.*, p. 197.

was enjoined to maintain fire of the domestic hearth. Fire temples were erected in various places. One of them is mentioned by Firdausi in *Shahnama*. King Gushtasp first established the fire of Mihr Buzzin. Zardusht planted a cypress tree in front of the fire temple and inscribed on the tree: Gushtasp accepted the good religion. This tree was known as the cypress of Kashmar which is called the tree of Paradise.¹

The followers of the religion are often called Fire worshippers, but this is hardly correct. For the Zoroastrians are monotheists and worship Ahura Mazda as supreme God. The question is: how to reconcile their monotheism with the recognition of so many angels?

That great emphasis is laid on the worship of fire is beyond question² and a priestly class has grown up who are regarded as separate from the rest of the population. The priests are to look after the fire so that it may be properly fed, protected and produced. The priest performs the sacrifice with Haoma plant,³ and the urine of the bull.⁴

The eschatology of the Parsees is interesting. They believe in a future life. The Gathas, the Khorda Avesta and the Pahlavi texts have abundant references to future life. After death, the soul hovers round the dead body

¹ Quoted in Jackson, *op. cit.*, p. 258.

² In India also the Brahmins are enjoined to maintain the perpetual fire and those who do so are called *आहिताग्निः*.

³ Soma in Hindu mythology. The intoxicating juice of the plant is offered as the principal libation in both Persian and Vedic cults. But what is this Haoma or Soma plant? In the Vedas it is a mythological plant growing in heaven or on the mountains. It was brought by an eagle for Indra. The beverage is deified and the plant is often called King Soma. "Its exhilarating and invigorating action surpassing that of ordinary food or drink and prompting to deeds beyond the natural powers led to Soma being regarded as a divine drink which bestows immortal life." (Macdonell, p. 108.) Soma is a terrestrial plant as also the Avestan Haoma. Like the Vedic plant, Haoma grows on a mountain—Haraiti. In the *Rg Veda* it was brought by a swift eagle. In the Avesta it is distributed from its native mountain by certain auspicious birds. In both, it is a king of plants. In both, it is a medicine, which gives health and long life, and removes death.

⁴ Pratt: *India and Its Faith*, p. 328.

and then leaves for the world beyond. ' For the first three nights after the breath has left the body, the soul hovers about the lifeless frame. On the fourth day the soul takes flight from earth amid the waftings of a perfumed breeze or stifled by a blast of stench according as the individual has been righteous or wicked. It is then met either by a beautiful maiden or by a hideous hag as the case may be. Thus the Parsees believe in a future life of rewards and punishments. The Avestan word for heaven is Vahishta-ahu. The Mahommedan heaven ' Behest ' has perhaps come from this word.

The Zoroastrians like the Jews believe in a Day of Judgment. In fact, the religion is based upon the belief that a mighty crisis is coming. Every man ought to do what is right. Mankind will then be perfect and the world renovated. It is at the coming of the blessed era that the resurrection of the dead will take place. The soul arrives at the Judgment Bridge and three angels are present to weigh the good deeds against bad ones. When the final decision is recorded, the souls are allowed to cross the Chenvat Bridge.¹ For the righteous the Bridge grows broader and easier of transit but for the wicked it grows narrower and narrower till it is like the thinness of the blade of a razor so that they fall into the chasm yawning below.

Those whose wicked deeds exactly balance the good deeds are assigned to an intermediate space called Hamestakan. Here they must abide till final Judgment Day.

The Avesta refers to a millennium when the good will be separated from the evil. This is closely associated with the belief in the coming of a Saviour (Saosyant). The history of the world extends to 12,000 years of which the last three thousand years will be millennial. ' At intervals of a thousand years the three millennial prophets are born of three maidens bathing in the sea of Kasaoya the modern

¹ The Mahommedans also picture hell as a river over which there is a bridge called Es-sirat Bridge, which is sharper than the edge of a razor. Among many other races also, hell is conceived as a river. The Hindus picture a river between life and death, which is called Vaitarani.

Hamun lake in Seistan where some of the semen of Zarathustra is preserved.' ¹

There is no doubt that Zoroastrianism is one of the purest and noblest religions of the world. There are some features in it which must extort the praise of everyone interested in the cultural history of mankind: First of all its attempt towards the solution of the everlasting problem of sin, suffering and evil; secondly, its monotheistic tendency. Against the prevailing polytheism and image worship, Zoroaster's reform must excite the admiration of man for all time to come.

The moral ideal of the religion and the purity of atmosphere which it breathes have left permanent impress on the history of Ethics. The Zoroastrians laid great stress on individual responsibility. Man is endowed with free will. In this life everyone should make his or her contribution to the efforts of the moral Governor, Ormuzd, in subduing the forces of evil. Man is his creature and therefore naturally belongs to the kingdom of the good.

This theory that man is originally good, until perverted by the forces of evil, has been borrowed by Christianity. According to the Christian mode of thinking the human drama opens with the first man Adam being led astray by Satan from the path of righteousness and ends with Christ redeeming the sinful progeny of Adam. Christ pays with his own life for the original sin of the original ancestor of mankind. In Buddhism, on the contrary, man is regarded as evil by nature. Hinduism also supports this view. In both Buddhism and Hinduism, sin is the result of ignorance and it is up to the individual to work towards the end of getting rid of ignorance and sin.

Gradually this lofty religion of Zarathustra sank into a series of formalities. The priestly class became a commercial community and followed their vocation as a matter of form. So they were unable to give the spiritual lead which was badly needed to create enthusiasm in the mind of its followers. The priests do not understand the scriptures which they recite because they are written in old Zend.

¹ Pratt : *India and Its Faith*, p. 150. Bund—Chapter 30, pp. 1-3.

The Parsees are an exclusive people; there is no proselytisation, no admission into their fold. Not even Christian wives married by Parsees are admitted into their religion even if they acquiesce in conversion. The result is that their limited number is being gradually thinned. Their fetish of exclusiveness at one time went so far as to permit next-of-kin marriage, *i.e.*, sons could marry mothers, brothers, sisters, etc. But the custom has disappeared now.¹

The Parsees of India are a wealthy people. Their charity is proverbial. It is said that their charitable society gave to Rockefeller the idea of founding a charitable organisation along those lines.²

In spite of their charitable habits and successful business instinct the religion of the Parsees is lacking in that life-giving force, that urge which is necessary to make religion a thriving and popular one.

¹ There are other exclusive communities in India, whose marital relations are strictly limited to the narrow circle of their own families just stopping short at prohibited degrees.

² Pratt : *India and Its Faith*, p. 324.

BUDDHISM

Asia is the cradle of all the great living religions of the world. The three Semitic religions, *viz.*, Judaism, Christianity and Islam and one Aryan religion, *viz.*, Zoroastrianism were born in the western zone of Asia. But Buddhism was the gift of India to the world. It was in B.C. 563 (circa) that Gautama Buddha, the greatest son of our mother India, was born and brought up in the country which lies at the foot of the greatest mountain range, *viz.*, the Himalayas about a hundred and thirty miles to the north of Banaras. Among all the Founders of Faith, Prince Siddhartha ¹—for that was his name—renounced the world for the sake of truth, for the sake of the welfare of his fellow-beings. True to the genius of India which inspired her sons from the remotest past, Gautama left his wife and son of whom he was very fond, his kingdom and all, not at the bidding of any God, nor in pursuit of a supernatural vision, but in quest of truth. As he was in his early life nurtured in the midst of comforts and luxuries such as are within the easy reach of the sons of an eastern ruler, he was strangely moved by the sight of misery. The sight of an old decrepit man one day, that of a man suffering from disease on another, of a putrefying corpse on a third and finally the sight of an ascetic who had reached peace and quiet made a deep impression on his mind. From that time he knew no rest till he had solved the riddle of existence. The Prince left his home quietly one night. This is called the Great Renunciation (*Abhinishkramana*).

It was on the full moon day of Ashadha that Gautama left his palace. On reaching the river Anoma, he got down from his steed Kanthaka and said to his charioteer Chhandaka who was accompanying him, “Take my ornaments and return to the capital with Kanthaka.

¹ Whether Buddha's father was king or not is a disputed point. Later tradition extols the power and wealth of the Master in order that the sacrifice might appear more glorious—Hopkins: *The Religions of India*, p. 300.

I am going to become an ascetic.' So saying he cut off his long locks of hair with his sword. The story is told of how he threw his locks with the crest jewel into the air, saying "If I am destined to become a Buddha (Enlightened one), let it stand in the air; if not let it come down on the ground." The tuft of hair with the jewel went up and remained suspended in the air.¹

Then the royal mendicant wandered alone, ate his coarse food obtained by begging and went to different teachers in search of Enlightenment. But as this did not bring him satisfaction, he repaired to Uruvela near Gaya and resolved to practise the most severe penance. For six years he persisted in this rigid course of mortification. He was at last reduced to a skeleton. One day he fell down in a swoon and was given up for dead. After recovering from it, he came to the conclusion that mortification was not the way to Enlightenment.

As Gautama gave up this orthodox mode of spiritual uplift, his five mendicant friends left him, sorely disappointed.

It was here that on the full moon day of Vaisakha, Sujata, the daughter of the local chieftain (or headman), came to the Bo-tree and offered milk rice to the great man (Mahapurusha).

Then Gautama sat down to meditate on the problem of existence and resolved not to leave his seat till he had received Enlightenment, even 'if his life blood dried up.' At last Illumination came and the Bodhisattva realised the bliss of deliverance. This is so sudden and said to be so unprecedented that Buddha's attainment of Enlightenment has been regarded as mysterious. But since the explanation lies in ecstasy, it is neither unprecedented nor impossible; for ecstasy comes all on a sudden and is no doubt one of the mystic phenomena of spiritual experience.

Again on the full moon day of Ashadha, Buddha departed for Deer Park near Banarās after lingering for some days more near the Bodhi tree. On reaching there

¹ Kern : *Manual of Indian Buddhism*, p. 17.

he found the five monks who had been his companions during his tapasya at Uruvela. Here he inaugurated the dominion of the Law and proclaimed the ideal of Nirvāna in this world which is so full of suffering and misery. Those five friars became the disciples of Buddha.

In his first sermon before the five monks he preached that the middle path is the best, *i.e.*, the pursuit of worldly pleasures is as much to be avoided as the practice of severe austerities.

That this middle path is not opposed to the teachings of orthodox Hinduism is proved by the ideal being highly extolled in the Bhagabad Gita. “Yoga is not for one who eats too much, nor for one who fasts excessively, nor for one of very sleepy habit, nor for the sleepless, O Arjuna. For him who is trained in food and recreation whose activities are trained in performing action, who is trained in sleeping and in walking, Yoga becomes a destroyer of Pain.”¹

Now from this story of the attainment of Enlightenment or Buddhahood, we know wherein Buddha was moving within the traditional circle of Hinduism to which he belonged and wherein lay his point of departure. He was led to believe after the true Hindu fashion, first, that renunciation of the world was necessary in order to realise a spiritual life. Secondly, that philosophical discipline in the shape of study and instruction from the wise is never adequate. Thirdly, that one's salvation depends on one's efforts and lastly that the practice of Yoga consisting in excessive mortification of the flesh is unavailing.

But Buddha deprecated the value of Yoga as consisting in penance or austerities. He had however to rely on Yoga in the sense of meditation, concentration or Dhyānam.² His awakening or intuition or inspiration came no doubt through concentration. Besides throughout his public ministry, he emphasised the ascetic ideal and the virtue of renunciation.

¹ *The Song of the Lord* (Gita), translated by E. J. Thomas.

² Cf. Gita तपस्विभ्यं युक्तो योगी—Higher than ascetics is the Yogi, Gita VI. Again ज्ञानात् ध्यानं विशिष्यते—Better is meditation than Knowledge, Gita XII : 12.

There is one other point worth noticing in connection with Buddha's teaching. There was no St. Paul or Abu Bakr to propagate his message. The pyramid of his religion was built almost by his solitary efforts and has extorted the veneration of the East and the admiration of the West.

Monier Williams thus sums up the course of Buddhist religion : It passes from atheism and materialism to theism, polytheism and spiritualism. It is under one aspect mere pessimism; under another pure philanthropy; under another monistic communism, under another high morality; under another a variety of materialistic philosophy; under another simple demonology; under another a mere farrago (hotch potch) of superstitions including necromancy (magic), witchcraft, idolatry, and fetishism." ¹

The religion of Buddha was a bold departure from the God-consciousness of the Rishis of old, and that is one explanation how the highly metaphysical speculation of its illustrious founder made it possible for his followers to drift away to a variety of fantastic attitudes in which the essence of the religion was supposed to consist.

But the power of Buddhism in its rationalistic approach depended largely on the purity of ideas and the personality of Buddha himself. A Christian theologian speaking of Buddha's personality remarks, "The picture remains of an extraordinary man, the memory of whose unselfish life, thirst for truth, and love for humanity ought to be honoured to the latest generations." ²

In dealing with Buddhism, we come in contact with something which is no religion in the sense in which Zoroastrianism and Christianity, etc., are religions. For it does not, at least in its original form, believe in God and has got nothing to do with the supernatural or mysterious. It takes things of experience at their face value and proceeds to explain them in a rational way.

There is no doubt that Buddhism cannot be studied apart from the general background of Hinduism which prevailed in those days and out of which it grew.

¹ Monier Williams : *Buddhism*, p. 13.

² G. M. Grant : *The Religions of the World*, p. 130.

The rise of Buddhism coincides with the close of the Upanishadic period.¹ The polytheism of the Vedas gave place to a philosophic monism in which the idea of God had become faint. The ultimate reality of the Universe, Brahman; came to be identified with Ātman or human soul. Brahman, as impersonal substratum of reality was identified with the universe in a thorough-going pantheism. Sāmkhya philosophy had discarded the idea of God as incapable of proof.

Among such conditions, Buddhism boldly struck into a new direction and tackled the problem of deliverance in a rationalistic way. The substance of Buddha's teaching was that the salvation of man depends upon his own efforts and not upon any supernatural power.

The threefold teaching of Buddha which has been regarded as the corner stone of his philosophy is: All is impermanence, there is no Ego, and Nirvāna is the only calm.² These three are the fundamental truths of Buddhism.

The first of these, Impermanence, means that all things are perishable, that there is nothing which is not subject to death or destruction "Not in the sky nor in the depths of the ocean, nor having entered the caverns of the mountain, nay, such a place is not to be found in the world where a man might dwell without being overpowered by death."³ Wherever there is birth, there is death. Nothing is but becomes. The conception of Becoming implies the impermanence of moments. Thus nothing, no being can be the same for even two consecutive moments.

¹ H. Kern : *Manual of Indian Buddhism*, p. 11.

² Sogen : *Systems of Buddhist Thought*, p. 7.

सर्वमनित्यं सर्वमनात्मनिर्वाणं शान्तम् ।

³ न अन्तलिकखे न समुद्रमङ्गले न पव्वतम् विवरम् पविस्स
न विज्जति सो जगतिप्पदेसो यथात्थितम् नप्पसहेय मच्च ।

Sogen, *Ibid*, p. 10.

यत् सत् तत् क्षणिकम् Whatever is, is momentary (or fluxional) like a bank of clouds and all these things are, Sarvadarshana Samgraha, p. 15. Four points of view have been laid out (1) all is momentary, momentary; (2) all is pain, pain; (3) all is like itself alone; (4) all is void, void.

This doctrine of impermanence is very much like Heraclitus' theory of Flux. It is a curious coincidence that the Greek philosopher who discovered the theory was a contemporary of Buddha and lived between 536 and 470 B.C. Heraclitus's theory of Flux has been thus explained by Ferrier—all things flow and nothing stays. Heraclitus likens the universe to a river the waters of which are continually passing away; and he says, no man can bathe in the same stream because a stream is never, even for a single second, the same.¹

Modern science supports this idea of universal change. The theory of evolution asserts this doctrine of becoming or change and links it with the philosophy of the Buddhist which was taught five hundred years before Christ. The law of impermanence is a universal law and death is an inevitable corollary of that law. There is no power on earth or even beyond it which can in any way deflect that inexorable law. This is the explanation of the atheism with which Buddhism has been charged.

The next fundamental principle of Anātman or non-ego is closely connected with the first. If every thing is liable to change, how can the ego persist? All that is, is without self or Ātman. In the midst of our ever changing experience, the soul is supposed to persist. The soul is the changeless noumenon in the midst of the sea of changing phenomena. But Buddha says that there is no permanent substance as "Soul." What we have in its stead is the fourfold stage of organisation (utpāda), staying (sthiti), growth and decay (Jarā) and destruction (nirodha).

There are three contending theories regarding the soul, viz., Sāswatavāda, Ucchedavāda and the doctrine of the Buddha. The first says that the soul is truly existing, both in this life and the life to come; the second, that the soul is truly existing, but only in this life. The Buddha teaches that soul is not truly existing either in this life or in the life to come.²

The question is: How then is transmigration possible? and without transmigration how is the law of Karma

¹ Lectures on Greek Philosophy, Vol. I.

² H. Kern: *Manual*, p. 49.

applicable ? The Hindu view of Karma is based on the assumption of the existence of a soul. The Buddhists answer that Karma itself is the link which preserves the identity of a being through the countless changes which it undergoes in its progress through Samsāra.¹ When a man dies, the Khandhas (Skandhas) of which he is constituted perish, but by the force of his Karma a new set of Khandhas instantly starts into existence and a new being appears in another world, who though possessing different Khandhas and a different form is in reality identical with the man just passed away because the Karma is the same.²

Since the Buddhists do not believe in the existence of Jibātmā (individual soul), they do not believe in Paramātmā (universal soul) either. Here is the parting of the ways with the great body of Upanishadic lore.³ Sankarāchārya condemned this Nairātmyavāda of the Buddhists in no uncertain terms.

But it appears that Buddha did not disbelieve in an empirical ego, *i.e.*, so far as the phenomenal world is concerned, there is an ego or Ātman. This is clearly brought out in Nāgārjuna's commentary on Prajñāpāramitā sutra :

“ The Tathāgata sometimes preached that the Ātman exists and at other times he taught that it does not exist. When he preached that the Ātman exists and is to be the receiver of misery or happiness in the successive life as the reward of its own karma, his object was to save men from falling into the heresy of Nihilism (Ucchedavāda). When he taught that there is no Ātman in the sense of a creator or perceiver or an absolutely free agent, apart from the conventional name given to the aggregate of the five skandhas, his object was to save men from falling into the opposite heresy of Eternalism (Sāsvatavāda).”⁴

¹ Childers quoted in Kern's Manual, pp. 49-50.

² *Ibid*, p. 49.

³ The Buddhists attack the Upanishadic view of the unity of the soul. They argue that if the soul is one, how can there be diversity in it? If the Brahman is free, no question of bondage can arise; and if Brahman's nature is to be in bondage all discipline would be unavailing to make it free—Dr. Satkari Mukherjee, *Buddhist Philosophy of Universal Flux*, pp. 193-94.

⁴ Nanjio Catalogue, No. 1169, fas. 26.

Now we come to the most important part of the Buddhistic ideology, *viz.*, Nirvāna. The word Nirvāna is not used for the first time by the Buddhists. It is to be found in the Mahābhārata in the sense of the *summum bonum* of man.¹ Etymologically it means "cessation of a gust of wind."² And by a slight stretch of meaning the word came to be applied to the extinction of a lamp.³

Nirvāna which forms the central conception of Buddhism is indescribable. This is elaborately brought out in the famous book 'The question of Milinda (Milinda Panha).⁴ In that book, the king wanted to know the nature of Nirvāna and the teacher has been at great pains to shew that Nirvāna is the indescribable ideal of Buddhism.

This ideal is conceived in the Mahāyāna school as possessing the four qualities of permanence, blissfulness, freedom and purity. It is quite possible that the meaning of Nirvāna has undergone modifications in the course of the long centuries which have elapsed since it was preached in the Deer Park at Isipatana. But the purely negative view of salvation maintained by the followers of Hinayāna⁵ could not have been intended by the founder of the religion. Perhaps it was vaguely conceived by the laity as a state which is free from all suffering and all Kleshas (Passions).

Nirvāna is the only calm. It is the ideal state. Because the Buddhists regard life as essentially suffering; it is a passage through endless suffering. Spirit is entangled in matter and hence misery arises. This was also the prevalent view in all the important systems of Indian Philosophy. But unlike the Hindus, the Buddhists held that both body and spirit are perishable.

Knowledge or rather wisdom consists in realising that existence is an unmitigated evil. That life is a continuous suffering, and that owing to the law of Karma it passes through never ending series of rebirths attended with suffer-

¹ Sogen *Op. Cit.*, p. 18.

² *Ibid*, p. 30.

³ According to the sutra of Panini निर्वाणोऽवाते, त becomes न् when it is not applied to wind.

⁴ The Greek King Menander (about 2000 years ago) put the question to Nagasena, a Buddhist elder—This is a work of Hinayāna Buddhism.

⁵ In Ceylon, Burma and Siam (Sogen : *Op. Cit.*, p. 40).

ing makes the cessation of this chain as the highest goal of man.

The four noble truths of Buddhism are : All existence is suffering. All suffering is due to insatiable desires.¹ All suffering will cease on the suppression of all desires. Every person should follow the Noble Eightfold Path.

Now what is the root cause of the prolongation of this chain—this Samsāra? First of all man is a composite being. He is composed of (1) Corporeity (2) Feeling (3) Perception (4) Judgment (5) Consciousness.² These are the five Skandhas. So long as they co-operate, human being exists.

The cause of the aggregation of the Skandhas *i.e.*, birth and re-birth is Karma. Hence it is said : “ It is Name-and-Form which is re-born.”³ Every organised being consists of Name and Form. Name denotes mental or internal phenomena *viz.*, Vedanā (feeling), Samjñā (notion), saṃskāras (mental dispositions) and Vijnāna (clear consciousness). Rupa includes the four elements : earth, water, fire, air and every form springing from them.⁴

Nāma-Rupa, in fact, includes all physical and mental phenomena, the same as Prapancha and consequently is Māyā. In an idealistic system like Buddhism, phenomena are of course no realities.⁵

The individual or Pudgala is constituted by the aggregation of the Skandhas. Thus the Buddhists resolve the Soul into five material and five psychical elements. Man at first awaking enters into a state of half consciousness; his mind is affected by vague impressions (Samskāra) before he has reached clear consciousness.....By the contact of the organs of sense with some object, feeling or sensation is produced. Feeling leads to desire (tṛṣṇā). Desire has its root in ignorance or Avidyā. So long as tṛṣṇā increases, new states are created and these ceasing other states spring up—thus Samsāra continues endlessly. It is only by extirpating

¹ Cf. Bhagabad Gita आशापाशशतैर्बद्धाः etc., Chapter XVI.

Those men who are bound by the hundred nets of desires, etc..

² Carl Clemen : *Buddhism*.

³ H. Kern : *Op. Cit.*, p. 52.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 51.

⁵ *Ibid*, Foot-note, p. 47.

desire that the chain of existence—Cycle of births and re-births—can be broken. When in this way Karma ceases, Nirvāna may be attained.

The causal nexus which according to the Buddhists is responsible for the evil of existence is called Pratitya Samutpāda or causal production. The causes or Nidānas are enumerated in order to explain the root of evil. (There are twelve nidānas—Avidyā (ignorance), Samskāras (impressions), Vijnāna (clear consciousness), Nāmarupa (name and form), Sadāyatana (six organs of sense), Sparsa (contact of the senses with objects), Vedanā (feeling), Trishnā (desire), Upādāna (clinging effort), Bhava (becoming), Jāti (birth), Jarāmaranam (old age, death).¹

Pratitya Samutpāda or dependent origination is explained in this way: From ignorance spring the Samskāras, from the samskāras springs consciousness, from consciousness name and form, from name and form six senses, from the six senses springs contact, from contact sensation, from sensation thirst (desire), from thirst attachment, from attachment becoming, from becoming springs birth, from birth old age and death, grief, lamentation, suffering, dejection and despair.

Such is the origin of the whole mass of suffering. Again by the destruction of ignorance, the samskaras are destroyed, then consciousness is destroyed, then name and form, then sense organs, then contact is destroyed. When the contact is destroyed, sensation is destroyed, then thirst, then attachment, then becoming, then birth; then when birth is destroyed, old age and death, grief, etc., are destroyed.²

In order to get rid of suffering the Buddhists prescribe the Eightfold Noble Path which consists in:—

1. Right view of life (Samyag Dr̥sti).
2. Right aspirations (Samyak Sankalpa).
3. Right speech (Samyag Vāc).
4. Right conduct (Samyak Karmāntah).
5. Right livelihood (Samyag ājivah).
6. Right effort (Samyag Vyāyāmah).

¹ Cf. Yoga: Avidyā is the root of Duhkha.

² Mahāvagga, Sacred Books of the East XIII (See also Radhakrishnan's History of Hindu Philosophy, Vol. I, p. 410).

7. Right mindfulness or contemplation (Samyak Smṛti).
8. Right rapture or concentration (Samyak Samādhi).

This undoubtedly reminds us of Christ's Sermon on the Mount. The methods are different but in the minds of both the masters there is the same desire to lay down principles of a better life. "In the Noble Eightfold Path we have the Buddhistic ethics in a nutshell."¹ The Zoroastrians gave it in three precepts: Humata, Hukhta and Hvarsta—Good thoughts, good words and good deeds.

The law of morality as preached by the Buddha does not materially differ from the axioms taught by the Hindu sages. But Buddha made the moral law the gateway to salvation. Unlike Hinduism the moral law in Buddhism is the same for all—it is universal. There was no inequality on account of heredity or status. "A man does not become a Brāhman by his family or by birth. In whom there is truth and righteousness—he is a Brāhman."² This denunciation of caste system and its reinterpretation have a parallel in the 16th Century when Chaitanya, the founder of Bengal Vaisnavism removed all emphasis from hereditary caste distinctions and placed it on a man's devotion to Krishna.³

In Buddhism the law of purity along with the universal law of Karma formed a self-contained system whose appeal was very strong. It served to regenerate many a savage tribe to whom the appeal was made. In Ceylon, China, Tibet, Siam and other places Buddhism made great progress and raised the people very considerably in the scale of civilisation. Let me try to explain the law of Karma as the Buddhists understood it.

I have already said that the foremost principle in Buddhism is the law of change or Impermanence. One state changes into another and that into a third and so on. But this is not due to accident or chance or fate. The

¹ Sogen : *Op. Cit*, pp. 169-71.

² SBE 10 : 1 : 9.

³ Cf. Caitanya-Caritamrita :

মেই ভজে সেই বড় অভক্ত হীন ছার ।

কৃষ্ণ ভজনে নাহি জাতিকুলাদি বিচার ॥

changes that take place happen according to the law of cause and effect. This is the universal law of Karma. The unbroken continuity of the causal chain is responsible for re-birth. Nothing is outside the sweep of this law of Karma. Whatever happens is the effect of an anterior cause. As you have sown, so you must reap. In human life, every action produces its effect, good or bad.

Thus the ethical content of a man's conduct is determined by his own actions and not by any other force. Man is independent of the will of any Being outside himself. This has strengthened the idea of moral responsibility in the individual. Man's happiness or misery depends on him alone.

There is a story in Anguttara Nikāya illustrating man's responsibility for his deeds. "The warders of hell drag the wicked before Yama, King of hell, who asks the wicked soul 'Did you not see the five messengers sent to warn you, the child, the old man, the sick, the criminal suffering punishment and the dead corpse?'" And the wicked answers 'I did see them.' And didst thou not think 'I also am subject to birth, old age, death?' The man answers 'I did not, Sire.' Then Yama pronounces his doom. 'These thy evil deeds are not the work of thy mother, father, relations, friends, advisers. Thou alone hast done them all. Thou alone must gather the fruit.'¹

Now in order to attain salvation one has to accomplish the ten Perfections or Pāramitā, viz., Charity (Ahimsā), Purity of Conduct (Sila), Patience, Strenuousness (Virya), Meditation, Intelligence (Prajnā), Employment of right means (Upāya), Resoluteness (Pranidhāna), Strength (Bala), Knowledge (Jnāna).²

The Buddhists taught ahimsā or charity which consists in avoiding violence in any form and in cultivating the sentiment of love as an antidote against hatred. Christ taught 'love thine enemy'; the same precept is found in Buddhism and even earlier.³ "What is the merit of one

¹ Monier Williams : *Buddhism*, pp. 114-15.

² Sogen : *Op. Cit.*, p. 58.

³ उपकारिषु यः साधुः साधुत्वे तस्य को गुणः ।
अपकारिषु यः साधुः स साधुः सद्भिरुच्यते ॥

who does good to one's benefactor? The man who does good to those who do harm is called by the wise 'Sādhu' or good."

Those who aspire to be monks must obey the eight precepts : *viz* :—

1. One should not kill.
2. One should not steal.
3. One should not drink intoxicating liquors.
4. One should not tell lies.
5. One should not commit unlawful sexual intercourse.
6. One should not eat unseasonable food at night.
7. One should not wear garlands, nor use perfumes.
8. One should sleep on a mat spread on the ground.¹

The first five are obligatory for Buddhist monks and laymen and the rest for monks only.

Buddhism as a religion is chiefly meant for monks. In pure Hinayāna Buddhism, laymen appeared more as supporters of the Sangha than its actual members. They only revered Buddha and his disciples, and on occasions uttered the formula of Trisarana, so as to distinguish themselves as devotees of Buddha.² The existence of numerous monasteries in the countries where Buddhism happened to spread is proof of this fact. "During the whole history of Buddhism the order of monks is the key to its expansion and its power in every land to which it has gone. The monasteries large and small in every Buddhist country attest the hold of the idea of Salvation through self-discipline on the minds of men and women."³

As there are no gods in early Buddhism, so there are no priests. Priestcraft is unknown in Buddhism, but the influence of monks who are required to guide the laity in the path of salvation by their precepts and practice is no less extensive.

¹ Soper : *Op. Cit*, pp. 196-97.

² N. Dutt : *Mahayana Buddhism*, p. 3.

³ Soper : *Op. Cit*, p. 195.

The life of the monks has been made one of severe self-discipline. When a novice approaches the order for admission, he is asked some questions to ascertain if he really wants to be a mendicant. This is called Pravrajyā, which means leaving the world and adopting the ascetic life. On completion of his or her noviciate, he or she would be conferred Upasampadā which means full ordination or admission to all the privileges of the order.¹

At first the Master himself used to confer Upasampadā on all who would enter the order of monks, but later on, the monks or Sthaviras were permitted to confer on the new entrants Pravrajyā and Upasampadā. The requirements were: the novice should have his hair and beard cut off, put on Kāśāyas, i.e., the distinctive dress. He should then raise his joined hands and utter thrice, 'I take refuge in Buddha, in the Law, in the congregation. बुद्धं शरणं गच्छामि धम्मं शरणं गच्छामि, सङ्घं शरणं गच्छामि। The Upasampadā was directed later on with a ceremony in which the candidate was examined by the President in an assembly of ten monks and on the request of the candidate for admission the President put the proposal twice to the meeting. If none of the monks raised any objection, the applicant was admitted into the order of monks.²

At first Buddha was not inclined to admit women into the monastic order, but at the intercession of Ānanda, he relaxed but is reported to have said, 'that without women, his religion would have survived a thousand years, but now it will not last more than 500 years.'³

At first the monks had no fixed abodes, but later on the master is reported to have given his assent to the building of monasteries or Vihāra. The Vihāra does not only denote a monastery but any place where worship is conducted. The usual term for a monastery is Sanghārāma.

The discipline under which the monks live is enumerated in a code or canonical composition which is called Prātimoksha. It contains 227 articles. Prātimoksha is recited twice every

¹ H. P. Sastri—बौद्धधर्म.

² *Ibid.*

³ Kern, p. 77.

month in an assembly of at least four monks. At the end of each section the reciter asks if any of the brethren present has transgressed any article. Thus the code of discipline is also a formulary of confession.¹ The sabbath days were also days of fasting with the monks.

The most essential requirement for salvation is the threefold formula of 'refuge' or 'Saranāgati.' I take refuge in Buddha, I take refuge in Law, I take refuge in the Order. The monks have to repeat this three times before they are admitted into the Order. Just as the Christians are required to believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ before they are acknowledged as followers of the creed, the Buddhists, both monks and laymen, are required to owe their allegiance to the Founder of the religion. The natural development of this was that in course of time, Buddha came to be deified and the formula came to be regarded almost as a prayer offered to God.

The Tripitaka or 'three baskets' (of wisdom) is regarded as the sacred scripture of Buddhism. The first of the three Baskets is Vinayapitaka; it contains the rules of discipline for the order. The 227 articles of Prātimoksha are found in Vinayapitaka. The Suttapitaka contains the discourses of Buddha. The Abhidhamma Pitaka contains metaphysical discussions of Buddhist doctrine and psychology. Dhammapada (way of virtue), a part of Tripitaka, contains moral maxims of surpassing worth.²

The moral maxim of the Buddhist has been summed up thus: Not to commit sin, but to practise virtue, to purify one's heart—these three precepts represent the essence of the teachings of the Buddhas of all ages.³

¹ It was the general view of early Christianity that confession is the means whereby forgiveness of sins can be secured: *History of the Christian Church*, p. 100.

² "The Dhammapada and Sutta Nipāta deserve to be read by all who care for the unseen riches of the soul.... these books rank among the most impressive religious books of the world. Menzies: *History of Religion* quoted by Hume in *The World's Living Religions*, p. 74.

³

सर्वं पापस्य अकरणं

कुशलस्य उपसम्पदा

स्वचित्त-पर्यवदापनं

एतत् बुद्धानां शासनम् -- धम्मपद, बुद्धवग्ग, ११५ पृष्ठा

Buddhism came to have a wide influence during the reign of Asoka who was the Constantine of the religion. There are some points of similarity between Asoka and his western counterpart. Constantine became master of an empire and used his enormous influence in the cause of Christianity, the religion after his heart. So did Asoka; he was master of a big empire and made Buddhism the State religion of the country. Like Constantine he called a great council of the Buddhist monks nearly three centuries after the foundation of the faith. In the case of Constantine also, full three hundred years elapsed before the Council at Nicea met to decide the fate of Christianity.

Asoka after his conversion became a zealous reformer and a great patron of Buddhistic faith. The great contribution of this monarch was to propagate the faith in foreign countries. During his lifetime Buddhism was carried to Ceylon by his son. From the time of Asoka, the religion was steadily spreading in the north, notwithstanding the little favour it found with the kings of the Sunga dynasty. But at the time of Kanishka, the religion received a new inspiration. This Scythian king became a zealot and was regarded as a second Asoka to the religion. He called a council of 500 monks which met either at Jalandhara or Kashmir. In order to put an end to dissensions which had grown up among different sections of Buddhists, Kanishka who ruled about 78 A.D. called a council of monks in which sacred books should be explained according to the opinion of all the sects.

At this Council a great cleavage took place and a powerful sect raised its head. This sect called itself Mahāyāna and gave the name of Hinayāna to its less daring rival. The two terms, as is well known, figuratively express the relative popularity of the two schools. The Hinayāna school had already started the worship of Buddha almost as a god: he was sinless, perfect in wisdom and even omnipotent. Then its philosophical tenets were too difficult for the masses to follow. The ideal of Nirvāna was made so abstract and vague that it was gradually proving unattractive to many of its followers.

The Mahāyāna Buddhists postulated a supreme God viz., Ādi Buddha. There have been many Buddhas before

Gautama and the Ādi Buddha was an Eternal Being, or Deity who rules over the Universe. This was the Dharmakāya or the body of the Law which pervades the entire universe as its spiritual essence. The Mahāyānists conceived speculatively three orders in their Buddhalogy :—

1. Dharmakāya—world substance,
2. Nirmānakāya—the embodied form,
3. Sambhogakāya—body of the blessing. It is the saving power of the community.

This is like the Trinity of the Christian Church.¹

The no-soul theory of the Hinayāna disappeared. The Mahāyānas believe in the existence of the soul. The doctrine of Nirvāna was conceived less metaphorically as a paradise where the souls of good men go. Corresponding hells were also restored.

In all these additions, the influence of the Hindu religion was only too obvious.² The Hinayānists preach like the Vedantist that the phenomenal world is an illusion. The God of Mahāyāna is a god of love—and lays great stress on devotion which under the name of Bhakti was growing into importance.³

¹ Dharmakāya means intelligence or knowledge which underlies the entire phenomenal world. In this sense, a pantheistic view arises in which Buddha as Dharmakāya is the underlying essence of the phenomenal world. It is the Tathāgatagarbha or the womb of Buddha. To speak of the origin and ground of everything, womb was a favourite expression with the ancients : Cf. Gita.

मम योनिर्महद् ब्रह्म तस्मिन् गर्भं दधाम्यहम् ।

* * * *

तासां ब्रह्ममहदयोनिरहं बीजप्रदः पिता ।

Nature is the womb and I am the seed-casting father. Cf. Hartmann (19th century) conceives the world as the product of the idea as mother and the will as father.—Ueberweg's *History of Philosophy*.

Nirmānakāya is the human image of Buddha, whose accumulated good works (Karma) cause him to appear among men for their instruction and a superhuman image to appear in Paradise (Elliot, Vol. II, p. 35).

² Rajendra Lala Mitra in his "Nepalese Buddhist Literature" affirms that the philosophy of the Mahāyāna was a servile theft from contemporary Brahmin tractates. See *Buddha and Buddhism* by Arthur Little, p. 140.

³ Nāgārjuna, who was born at the time of the Third Council of Kanishka, was the most prominent figure in Mahāyāna Buddhism. He was taught by Brahmin Rāhulabhadra, who was reputed to be indebted to the

But the most important feature of Mahāyāna is its theory of Bodhisattvas. 'Bodhisattva' means ordinarily a 'sentient or reasonable being.' But the Mahāyānist meant by the word 'a potential Buddha' or would-be Buddha. There are innumerable existences through which one must pass before he attains Buddhahood.

Now before the actual Buddhahood is attained by Samyak Sambodhi (perfect wisdom), a stage is reached which is but one step below the final Nirvāna. The Bodhisattvas, according to the Mahāyānist view, turn round when about to attain Buddhahood to see if the world is free from suffering; then they refuse to enter Nirvāna so long as a single being remains who has not attained salvation.

Gautama Buddha before attaining that state passed through innumerable births which are recorded in a number of tales which are called Jātakas and Avadānas.

The evolution of the Bodhisattva takes place through the following Charya—or course: (1) Aspiration (abhinihāra), (2) prediction,¹ (Vyākaraṇa), (3) tumultuous acclamation (Halahālā) at the approach of his last birth.

The Bodhisattvas are also called Mahāsattvas which literally mean noble beings. A great number of Mahāsattvas are admitted by the Mahāyānists. The most celebrated among them apart from Maitreya who is coming² are Avalokiteśvara and Mañjuśrī. They are sometimes spoken of as avatārs of Sākyamuni. The Mahāyānists admitted Dhyaṇi Buddhas who are eternal and never were Bodhisattvas. There are female counterparts of these Buddhas called Tārās or Saktis.³

The Bodhisattvas possess the quality of compassionateness. While the Arhats of earlier Buddhism are passionless, the Bodhisattvas are compassionate and this is their

sage Krishna and Ganesa. It means, as Kern observes, that Mahāyānism is much indebted to Bhagabat Gitā and to Saivism (p. 122).

¹ One who is destined for Buddhahood must receive the prediction of his future destiny from 24 Buddhas.—Kern, p. 66.

² Like the Jewish belief in Messiah, the Buddhists believed in the coming of Maitreya, the last Avatār of Buddha. Maitreya surnamed Ajita, is still a living Bodhisattva in Tusita heaven. His future appearance is predicted by the Lord.

³ Kern, p. 64.

most important quality (Karunā). The Bodhisattvas always work for the good of humanity.

The Mahāyāna Buddhism in this way raises itself to an altruistic level and enjoins the practice of generosity and charity towards fellow-beings. The Hinayānist is concerned more about his own salvation than that of others.

The Mahāyānists were speculative philosophers or metaphysicians of the highest order. The two schools of Buddhist Philosophy, *viz.*, the Yogācāras and Mādhyamikas supported the view of the Mahāyānist with all the abstruseness of which the Indian mind was capable. The Mādhyamikas were nihilists. They followed the argument of the Master when he, being asked if the Perfect Saint existed after death, said, 'it is neither that which is in existence nor that which is non-existence, nor that which is at once existence and non-existence nor that which is neither existence nor non-existence.'¹ Like the Rishi of Brihad Āranyaka the Mādhyamikas maintain that reality can be described only negatively.²

A famous Kārikā of Nāgārjuna gives a string of eight 'noes;' "No annihilation, no production, no destruction, no persistence, no unity, no plurality, no coming in, no going out."³ According to these philosophers every extreme view can be refuted by these eight negatives. Hence the school was called Mādhyamika or middle path, *i.e.*, the path which avoids extremes *viz.*, total denial (non-existence) and uncritical realism (Existence). The middle view professed by the Mādhyamika philosophers consists in the realisation of *suchness* (Bhutatahatā) which is free from the fourfold limitations of (i) existence, (ii) non-existence, (iii) existence plus non-existence, (iv) neither existence nor non-existence.⁴

¹ Elliot : *Hinduism and Buddhism*, Vol. II, p. 35.

² नेति नेति—not this, not this.

³ अनिरोधम् अनुत्पादम् अनुच्छेदम् अशश्वतम् ।

अनेकार्थम् अनानार्थम् अनागमम् अनिर्गमम् ॥

—Sogen, p. 201.

⁴ Sogen: *Op. Cit*, p. 41. Cf. Sankarācārya's Māyāvāda. Māya is not definable either as existence or as non-existence :

The ultimate Truth is *Sunyatā*; it is Nirvāna. So it is indescribable. One who has conquered the Klesas (Passions) and Upaklesas (impurities) can rise to a view of suchness. The Klesas are such as Greed (Lobha), Malice (Dvesha), Folly (Moha), Conceit (Māna), etc. The stages of Buddhahood are enumerated as follows : (i) Srāvaka (one who has extirpated Klesas), (ii) Pratyekabuddha (one who has extirpated Klesas and Upaklesas also), (iii) Bodhisattva.¹

It is not necessary for my purpose to attempt an explanation of this abstruse philosophy beyond what I have already said. The line of thought which led to the postulation of the highest ideal as *Sunyatā* or Nirvāna requires more patient study than my time or powers will permit. In general language, the Nirvāna is suchness; it is *Sunyatā*; it is also the Tathāgata-garbha; it is the unchangeable noumenon, it is in short the transcendental essence of every thing as Vasubandhu who flourished in the 6th century A.D. and wrote many commentaries on Mahayāna, says :—

“ This is the transcendental essence of every thing and it is termed ‘ suchness ’ because its essential nature is real and eternal. But the real nature of suchness is beyond the reach of human language; it is indefinable.”²

The Yogācāra school is also an idealistic school. They admit that consciousness (Vijnāna) is real and so are the subjective states. The main difference between the Mādhyamikas and Yogācāras is that the former abolish the subject and object equally as unreal. This is why they were reputed as nihilists.³ The Yogācāras divide knowledge into (i) illusory (Parikalpita), (ii) depending on relation (Paratantra), (iii) absolute knowledge (Parinishpanna). The

न सन्न चासन्न तथा न चान्यथा न जायते न व्येति चावहीयते ।

न वर्धते नापि विशुध्यते पुनर्विशुध्यते तत् परमार्थ लक्षणम् ॥

It can be called neither existence nor non-existence. It is neither such nor otherwise. It is neither born nor destroyed. It neither increases nor decreases. It is neither purity nor impurity. Such is the real Lakshana of the Transcendental Truth (Suchness). *Ibid*, p. 230.

¹ *Ibid*, p. 230.

² *Ibid*, p. 229.

³ Elliot, Vol. II, p. 37.

Mādhyamikas divide knowledge into two classes (i) Samvṛti (conventional), (ii) Paramārtham (absolute truth).

The Paramārtha knowledge is that by which the Nirvāna can be conceived in its reality. It is not void or nothingness. Sunyatā or Nirvāna cannot be defined, as nothing—neither being nor non-being—can be predicated of it. Nirvāna means enlightenment—freedom from Ignorance. Ignorance and Karma are not causally connected; Ignorance is Karma. Wherever there is ignorance, there is Karma. The aim of Buddhist discipline is to overcome ignorance which is also freeing oneself from Karma. To free oneself from Ignorance is to be free from dualism. Discrimination between subject and object is Ignorance. Since knowledge consists in discrimination, there is no way out of Ignorance. So long as there is A over against not-A, there is always struggle. But it is possible to have a third concept, as it were, bridging the two terms. Sunyatā or emptiness is this third concept—says the Buddhist.

“To be shut up in the clouds of Ignorance means the acceptance of Karma as the dominant power of life. We are then overawed with Karma *i.e.*, we subject ourselves to be dominated by matter. We are no more self-acting but part of a grand machine of whose inner mechanism we know nothing. We move as the dead leaves are swept by the autumn wind.”¹

Karma is possible only when there is the duality of subject and object. The subject is conscious, conscious of what it is doing. Karma is the inevitable concomitant of consciousness. So long as there is no consciousness, there is no Karma. “There always hovers a dark cloud of ignorance over the horizon of consciousness.” This overshadowing cloud must be swept away by enlightenment if we are to have peace of mind.²

There are two ways of getting rid of ignorance: one negative and the other positive. The negative way is to deny the world, to escape it, to realise Arhatship, to enter

¹ Dr. Suzuki's Lecture: *Fellowship of Faith*, 1936, p. 34.

² *Ibid.*, p. 37.

into Nirvāna. The positive way is to assert the world, to fight it, to go through birth and death, not to flinch in the face of sorrow and suffering. Men of action take this way.

The negative way is comparatively easy, but it is anti-social. It is nothing but escapism.

The Buddhist ideal of Sunyatā consists in going through birth and death and death and birth, and in boldly getting rid of this duality. Sunyatā or Nirvāna is not different from Samsāra. Through birth and death you experience pain, sorrow, disappointment and failure, but when Sunyatā is experienced there is no sufferer, no suffering, ~~no~~ desire and no disappointment. When you experience Sunyatā there is neither dualism, nor monism, nor transcendentalism, no atheism, no pantheism, no acosmism.¹

In Prajñāpāramitā, this state is described thus: When I thus talk to you, there is no talk, nor any hearing; nor is there any talker and no audience either—which is Sunyatā.²

Buddhism sought to substitute the reign of law for supernaturalism. Buddha found, like the Greek philosopher Lucretius, that the law of Karma or the law of nature was quite sufficient to explain all the phenomena of mind and matter without recourse to any supernatural power. Buddhism asserted that man can attain salvation without the mediation of priests or without reference to God. Thus a self-reliant, self-centred philosophy was formulated with a wonderful dynamism of its own which finds its fulfilment 2,500 years afterwards in the dynamism of modern science. Modern science views the world as a vast reservoir of energy. "It is no more static stuff but radiant energy." The world of reality is a dynamic world of change and becoming. Life is a stream of becoming.

Of all the ancient religions which have survived to this day, there is none perhaps so complicated and metaphysical as Buddhism. In point of intellectualism, its parallel is furnished by Upanishadic Hinduism alone. In India the religion of its greatest son, Gautama Buddha, is

¹ Dr. Suzuki—*Faiths and Fellowship*, 1936.

² *Ibid.*

now but a memory, but the explanation is that partly at least it has been absorbed by Hinduism. Out of Hinduism it took its rise, and in Hinduism again it found its resting place.

But it is by no means easy to maintain faith at such dizzy heights of intellectualism. The result was that the Mahāyāna pantheon was peopled with numberless gods, and more attention was given to formulas which came to be nothing better than incantations. Religion degenerated into magic, and image-worship was largely introduced. Formulas had such a powerful hold on the imagination of the followers of Tathāgata that they were written down on paper which was actually swallowed. A prayer wheel was made and the mechanical turning of the wheel was seriously believed to bring salvation nearer. Formulas were inscribed on cloth which was allowed to flutter in the wind scattering prayers and benedictions all round. In all these various ways, the religion which once inspired millions and millions of people with its noble ideals and austere practices was allowed to descend to the lowest depths of priestcraft and spirit exorcism.

But Buddhism spread far and wide outside the land of its birth. This shows that its dynamic element which was lost to India enriched other lands and other people in a manner which it is difficult for us now to estimate. There was a tremendous cultural force released by Buddhism in those countries which continues even to this day. One Japanese scholar¹ has thus described what Buddhism has done for Japan, the most progressive of all nations in the East:—

“ If we want to know what Buddhist thought had on Japanese cultural life, the best way is to wipe out all the Buddhist temples together with their treasures, libraries, gardens, anecdotes, tales and romances of various sorts and see what we have left in the history of Japan. First of all there should be no painting, sculpture, architecture or even music and drama. Following this all the

¹ Dr. A. Suzuki, Professor of Buddhist Philosophy at Otani Buddhist College, Kyoto.

minor arts would also disappear—landscape, gardening, tea ceremony, flower arrangement and fencing (for defence).'' The industrial arts will also vanish, the first impetus to which was given by Buddhism. The origin of Japanese education is traceable to the colleges established in connection with Hōryūji, the erection of which was the product of architecture taught by the Buddhists. It was due to the Buddhist monks that '' the mountains were climbed, the rivers bridged, the roads built, the fields tilled, the wells dug and the hot springs discovered, the trees planted, and the canals opened for irrigation.'' ¹

As the Christians encouraged Charity, the Sufis indulged in the cultivation of emotion, the Buddhists were noted for the subtlety of their metaphysics. But metaphysics is a poor reed to lean upon and although the learned monks found nourishment in the Tripitakas and Sutras for their highly specialised spiritual craving, the masses moulded the religion according to their own light.

Gradually the high moral flavour of the religion disappeared leaving a mixture of superstition, magic and idol-worship in its place which was farther and farther away from the Buddhism of Gautama Buddha. In northern India Buddhism flourished under King Harsha but after him it began to decline. When the celebrated Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsang came and lived in Nālandā University the weakness of Buddhism was already in evidence. In Kashmir Buddhism had become corrupt, the monks had begun to marry as early as the sixth century.

Bengal and Bihar were the strongholds of Buddhism. Gopala, the founder of the Pala dynasty, was a Buddhist. The Pala kings ruled for about four centuries. These kings patronised the Buddhist faith. Dharma Pālā and his son Deva Pālā conquered large territories in the Āryāvarta. It was during the time of Deva Pālā that a cultural contact of Bengal and Magadha was established with the kingdom of Java and Sumatra. It is Dharma Pālā who founded the collegiate monastery of Vikramsīl at the close of the 8th

² *Buddhist Philosophy and its effect on the life and thought of the Japanese People*—Suzuki.

century.¹ Dharma Pāla endowed the university with rich grants. This celebrated university maintained 108 resident monks besides other monks and pilgrims. Dipankara or Srijnana Atisa was at its head.² This university was destroyed about 1200 A.D. by Muhammad bin Bakhtiar Khilji, who had apparently mistaken the monastery for a fort.³

In spite of attempts at revival made now and then, Buddhism could not compete with Hinduism. Kumārila Bhatta (750 A.D.), and Sankarācharya (800 A.D.) by their superior skill in disputation vanquished the Buddhist monks and ~~ensured~~ lasting triumph for Hinduism. In Bihar Buddhism flourished for a time but the Mohammedan invasion dealt a crushing blow and in about 1193 Sāranath was possibly sacked. The travels of Chaitanya contain stories of the disputes he had with Buddhists in South India (about 1510 A.D.). It shows that they had not yet disappeared. In Orissa traces of Buddhism can still be found.⁴

In many parts of Bengal the people worship a deity called Dharma' Thākur or Dharmarāja. This is supposed by some scholars to be Buddha in disguise.⁵ In the Dhyāna of this deity, the word Sunyamurti occurs and here, as also in Ceylon, Sunyamurti means Buddha.⁶

In Nepal, some vestiges of Buddhism still remain. But the monks do not observe celibacy nor do they trouble to practise austerities. But they worship the Mahāyāna Scrip-

¹ According to MM. Satis Chandra Vidyabhusana, the University of Vikramsila, was situated at Sila Samgama, now called Patharghata near Colgong in Bhagalpur. *Indian Logic*, p. 150.

² *Ibid.*, p. 151.

³ Tāranath related the story of how Kamala Rakshita, the Āchārya of the University, raised by his incantations a devastating storm, which destroyed in the 10th century, a Turushka Army. *Ibid.* (footnote).

⁴ The Saraks of Orissa are Sravakas of Buddhism. They call themselves Buddhists. They meet once a year in the cave temples of Khandagiri to worship Buddha and respect the temple of Jagannāth, which is, as is well known, supposed to have a Buddhistic origin. Elliot: *Hinduism and Buddhism*, p. 114.

Also see Nagendranath Vasu: *Discovery of Living Buddhism*.

⁵ The priests of this faith are usually non-Brahmin Hindus.

⁶ In Dharma worship we still find reference to Sunya Murti.

सुरनरवरदं चिन्तयेत् शून्यमूर्तिम् ।

tures, *e.g.*, (1) Asta Sāhasrika Prājnāpāramitā¹ (Transcendental knowledge) (2) Gangā-Vyūha (3) Dasabhumisvara (4) Samādhirāja (meditation) (5) Lankāvatāra (6) Saddharma Pundarika (Lotus of the Good Law) (7) Gautam Tathāgata Guhyaka (8) Lalita-Vistara (Life of Gautam Buddha) (9) Subarna-Prabhāsa (Glitter of Gold—like the Lotus). These are called Nava Dharmas or Nine Sacred works.² The Brahmins tolerate the Buddhists and say that to worship Buddha is the same as to worship Siva.³

The greatest symptom of decline was visible when Buddhism made an alliance with Tantrism⁴ which was as far apart from the spirit of Buddhism as anything could be. Tantra means “simplified manuals.” But Tantra and Tāntrik have come to acquire a special meaning in Hinduism and Buddhism, and mean the worship of such female deities as Kālī, Tārā, etc. In Tantra three types of worship are often mentioned *viz.*, animal (Pasvācāra), heroic (Virācāra) and divine (Divya Bhāva).⁵ The Bāmācārins are the ordinary sect of Tāntriks who are said to throw convention to the winds and indulge in practices which are offensive to religious or moral sense. There may be esoteric meaning in their Panchatattva or ‘Pancha Makār,’ *i.e.*, five Ms (Madya, Mānsa, Matsya, Mudrā and Maithuna),⁶ but a combination of such tantric practices with the worship of Buddha is a curious irony of history. There is no doubt that the indulgence in midnight orgies secretly performed was the last straw and Buddhism, as a religion, lost all its influence in India as a living faith.

¹ Diamond cutter (Vajracchedaka) is one of the best of these transcendental Treatises.

² Hodgson's Illustrations of the Literature and Religion of the Buddhists, p. 19 (Vidyabhusan, p. 64).

³ In Gita-Govindam of Joydeva (twelfth century) we find that Buddha has already been placed in the Vaisnava pantheon and regarded as one of the ten Avatārs of Vishnu. But it is doubtful whether the Vaisnavas have wholeheartedly accepted him as such.

⁴ Louis De La Vallee Poussin in his introduction to Dr. N. Dutt's Aspects of Mahāyāna Buddhism remarks ‘In fact Mahāyāna is allied to Tāntrism; it has sometimes sanctioned the marriage of monks and the overthrow of the ancient Buddhist institution, p. vii.

⁵ See Elliot—Chapter on Saktism.

⁶ Wine, meat, fish, parched grain, and copulation.

So far as tradition goes, Ceylon was the first country outside India which was converted to Buddhism; for it is asserted that Mahendra, the son of Asoka, and Sanghamitrā, his daughter, carried the faith to Ceylon. In Lankāvatāra Sutra, Buddha himself is reported to have gone also to Lankā, alighted on Mt. Malaya and discoursed with Rāvana, the demon king of Lankā in Paurānic age, about virtue and vice. But all this is pure fable, of course.

In the first century A.D., Buddhism entered China and slowly made converts. We are told that king Ming Ti of the (later) Han dynasty saw Buddha in a dream. He sent twelve delegates to the land of Yue-chi (Scythians) where Buddha must have been known. These delegates returned with Buddhist monks. The Emperor was impressed by their teaching and permitted them to preach in his kingdom. One of the Emperors was so impressed that he became a monk thrice. He prohibited the slaughter of living animals.¹

The famous Indian teacher Bodhidharma, the patriarch of Indian Buddhists, went to China, in 526 A.D., and founded a school of esoteric Buddhism.² In order to understand the achievement of Buddhism in China, we must briefly pass under review the conditions which prevailed in China in the early period of its history.

At first the Chinese were worshippers of Nature. Ancestor-worship also was not unknown. The Emperor worshipped Heaven—the principal God—on behalf of the people.

Then came Confucius (Kong-fu-tse) who was born almost at the same time as Gautama Buddha (*i.e.*, 551-478 B.C.), taught a practical morality and laid the greatest stress on life and conduct. There was also the religion of Lao-tse. Lao-tse was older than Confucius by half a century. His teaching was also marked by a high moral tone. His speculation made Tao³ the universal principle. It is diffi-

¹ So much so that he would not allow the figures of animals 'on garments lest scissors should be applied to them.

² Soper : *Op. Cit*, p. 230.

³ Tao means the way, Path. In Sufism we have the word Path. Christianity, also, was referred to as 'the way' in the Acts (9 : 2, 9 : 19,

cult to say exactly what this Taoism was.¹ In modern times, it is full of superstitions, magic etc. So the question has been raised whether Taoism is a religion at all. But it has still its temples and numerous adherents. There were, therefore, three religions existing side by side in China at about the beginning of the Christian era. Of these Confucianism was a religion of social propriety, Taoism, a religion of the divine way and Buddhism, a religion of renunciation and meditation.

The religion of Confucius was at first very successful and with royal patronage succeeded in the competition. It became a State religion under the Han Dynasty (206-221 A.D.) and very soon Confucius² came to be worshipped as a divinity. Temples were erected in his honour and worship offered with animal sacrifice. The other religions were suppressed. Buddhists were persecuted on a mass scale.

Confucianism was a political religion and the Chinese found it very useful as it lays down elaborate rules for the conduct of the people especially for political purposes.

But Confucius also speaks of Heaven as controlling the affairs of men. It was the prerogative of the Emperor to worship Heaven on behalf of the people. This privilege was entrusted to State officials according to a strict order of precedence. So, religion was practically no concern of the masses.

Buddhism, on the other hand, had a universal appeal for the masses. It was a religion of the heart and no mere outward conformity to rules.³ Although the

etc.). The Buddhist speaks of the Eightfold Path. The Japanese religion is known by the name Shinto, which is equivalent to Shin tao (way of the Gods).

¹ Nothing definite is known about the history of Lao-tse. The story goes that being disgusted with the world, Lao-tse went into exile in a mountain-pass. There the keeper induced him to put his thoughts in writing. This he did and the book was called Tao Teh King, which means Book or writing on the way of human responsibility or duty. Hence the religion is called Taoism (Soper, Religions of Mankind, p. 228).

² Confucius, originally a school master, was the possessor of all good qualities save and except weakness for wine.

³ One of their authoritative books, Bodhicaryāvatāra of Sāntideva (7th century), speaks more of devotion, love and wisdom than of the hard rules of monastic life.

Chinese are eminently of a practical turn of mind, they had deep spiritual longings. Taoism was mystical no doubt, but it very soon degenerated into quackery, trading on the superstitious fears of men. The Mahāyāna Buddhism contained a message of salvation and charity. The form in which Buddhism entered China touched the hearts of people because it had a theory of personalised divine love. This dynamic element which the two other religions were lacking was supplied by Buddhism. That Bodhisattvas, engaged constantly in guiding and saving the suffering humanity, ~~attracted~~ the mass mind in China. The most popular Buddhist deity in China is Kwan-yin, the goddess of mercy. The centre of gravity was thus completely shifted. The power of love and pity is invoked. Avalokita is called Mahākaruna, the Great compassionate one. He is also Lokeshwara, or the Lord of the world. In China, he is called Amitāva (Amidā). Men can hope to go to heaven or to escape hell by throwing themselves on the mercy of the benevolent Bodhisattvas.

In Tibet, history begins with the entry of Buddhism. It is this religion which gave them civilisation about the 7th century A.D. But Buddhism in Tibet has degenerated into spiritism. Laymen only seek the method of counter-acting the influence of evil spirits by means of charms. In Tibet, "Idolatry as well as polytheism has run mad."¹ Monastic life is still the centre of the creed, and there are over three thousand monasteries containing innumerable monks. The largest of them is in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, containing no less than ten thousand monks. Dalai Lama is the ruler of the country and he is supposed to be an incarnation of Avalokiteswara. There are other grand Lamas who claim to be incarnations of Bodhisattvas. When the Dalai Lama dies, a young boy is carefully selected to succeed him, after the chief personages are satisfied that Avalokita has incarnated in him. The Dalai Lama combines in his person the religious and political headship of the country.

¹ Soper, p. 207.

JUDAISM

Dynamism is the vital force of a religion which enables it to stand the test of time and to inspire the mind of man with ever-increasing enthusiasm. Without it, religion whatever its ideals and however noble its principles, is bound to lose its appeal and inspiration. The history of Religions records the rise of many religions, but as soon as they lost the vital force, they sank below the horizon of ~~spiritual~~ life and disappeared. For example, the Egyptian religion, religions of Greece and Rome now exist but in name. Besides these there have been from time to time revivalist sects, many of which like Manichaeism in Zoroastrianism and Montanism in Christianity vanished after a time.

Judaism, on the contrary, came with a very important message, *viz.*, that there is an ideal moral order which is to be realised on this earth under the rules of a righteous God. It was full of life and its scriptures inspired a gifted section of the human race, the Jews; its Prophetic vision and glowing faith that God cares for man as much as man cares for God have left a permanent impress upon the religious history of mankind. In Judaism, we witness a most curious phenomenon. Whenever the religious fervour of the people is on the wane, there appears a Prophet who infuses new vitality into the faith. God is always solicitous about His chosen people and is supposed to deliver His message through His chosen agents. The people take it as a revelation of God's will. Indeed, God enters into a Covenant with man and the Jewish people believed that that Covenant could not be broken except at their peril. It was this personal touch that set the people aglow with enthusiasm and each and every one believed that he was responsible for the fulfilment of the Covenant or agreement. It was a religion in which God was the Supreme Person, the Prophets were outstanding historical personalities and every individual was responsible to God as a person. The nation suffered before God, if the individuals happened to go astray.

The notions of sin and judgment, responsibility and duty together with high ideals of purity, cleanliness, and obedience, were developed by the Jews centuries before the birth of Christ. There is no doubt that among the world religions, Judaism occupies a high place for advancing the civilisation of man.

But as soon as it placed Law above the inner spirit and equated religion with legalistic or outer aspect, the dynamic element was lost. In consequence of their strict adherence to the legal code, the Jews not only lost their Prophetism ~~but~~ became isolated from the rest of mankind; and isolated they still live in the wide world without that vitalising influence which was their proud possession during the Prophetic period. The Jews are an exclusive race like the Parsees and the Jains.

Christianity came and electrified the whole religious fabric of the Jews. The Jewish Scriptures were not rejected but new life was poured into them. The Jews who clung fast to the old Law and custom could not adjust themselves to the regenerating influence and remained like an island around which the mighty ocean of the New Faith rolled on.

The history of the Hebrews extends back to more than 2000 B.C. and in the course of their chequered career a monotheistic creed was discovered which to this day marks them out as being the first in the history of religions to attain that conception, so far as the Western world is concerned.

The Hebrews were a Semitic people and we find them in the early period of their history as a wandering tribe without any habitation of their own and without any cohesion. In that early period, they were living in Egypt under the Pharaohs and engaged in irksome slavery.¹ From this oppression they broke loose and through some supernatural incidents (miracles) which favoured their escape came to Israel. Moses who led the revolt and brought the people safely

¹ "A relatively small and unimportant group of Bedouins, who had been allowed to settle in the pasture lands of the Eastern part of the Nile Delta (the Western end of the Wady Tuneilat) as State-slaves to be employed on public works." H. W. Robinson : *History of Israel*, p. 33.

across the Red Sea interpreted their escape as a consequence of Divine intervention. From this time onward the people of Israel looked upon God as in a special sense their protector and upon themselves as the chosen people of God. "This consciousness characterises the old Testament from beginning to end and continues to form the inspiration of Judaism."¹ Moses was not only the leader of the migrating people but also an inspired Prophet. In this sense he was the founder of the religion of Israel.

This religion or Judaism,² as it is often called, sprang out of a primitive polytheism which regarded various ~~natural~~ objects such as a mountain, a spring or even some artificial objects like a post or an ark as connected with their deity. But it started on its career with uncompromising opposition to idolatry in any form and to polytheism. The two offshoots of this religion, *viz.*, Christianity and Mohammanism, particularly the latter, are characterised by violent denunciation of idolatry and polytheism.

But the Hebrews did not attain to this monotheistic conception all at once. Every religion begins as a polytheism at first and the religion of the Hebrews was no exception to this general rule. Although Yahweh is a jealous God from the very beginning and is intolerant of any other god, the history of the Hebrews reveals the fact that in spite of God's warning, they fall again and again into the temptation of Baalim, *i.e.*, gods of the neighbouring heathen tribes. It is probable that there was no monotheism before Moses,³ and that the Hebrews did not attain to any clear consciousness of the unity of God before the 8th century B.C. Lods observes that the clear and conscious monotheism of the Jews came even later.

The people of Israel worshipped their dead ancestors. The phenomenon of death must have stirred the imagination of all primitive people. Each tribe or group worshipped its dead ancestor and poured libations on a massebah or a stele set up near the tomb. They regarded these ancestor-gods as "fathers" of different groups or clans before, of

¹ H. W. Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

² The word occurs in the New Testament (Hume).

³ Lods.

course, the worship of Yahweh was introduced. The Hebrews in early times believed in magic and in the efficacy of certain practices to control "invisible powers, gods, demons, spirits, the souls of things." Not only this, there was an element of animism in the pre-Yahwehtic Judaism. They worshipped trees, springs and rivers, caves and mountains. The sun, the moon and the stars were supposed to influence men's lives.

Yahweh revealed himself to Moses and this is the foundation of the religion. Moses is also the father of the history of the Jewish people. The Old Testament divides them into at least twelve tribes. They are descended from the twelve sons of Jacob with whom God entered into a Covenant or agreement to make his seed a great nation. One of the conditions was that all his children should be circumcised.¹ Thus in his Covenant on the human side a new rite is established. It was new so far as Abraham is concerned. It was practised by the Egyptians and other African peoples. This circumcision did not take place, however, in infancy. Abraham was 99 years old when he was circumcised. Ishmael, his son, was thirteen.²

Abraham is supposed to have lived more than two thousand years before Christ. The patriarchal legend makes Abraham, Isaac and Jacob the ancestors of Israel. The name Israel did not belong to the tribe before their exodus from Egypt and their settlement in Jerusalem.³

Yahweh as the name of the God of the Hebrews was perhaps borrowed from the Kenites a people who inhabited the slopes of the Mount Sinai. But His worship extended, before the time of Moses, to Canaan, Babylon and possibly Syria.⁴ The meaning of the word Yahweh is given variously as 'He that is' 'I am that which I am.' 'He that calls into being,' 'He who makes fall (i.e., enemies).' In Exodus, Moses tells God "that they (the sons of Israel) have said to me, what is His name?" and asks "What

¹ Every man-child among ye shall be circumcised. . . It shall be the token of the Covenant between Me and you (Gen. 17 : 10, 11).

² See Gen. 17 : 24, 25.

³ H. W. Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

⁴ Lods' *Israel*, p. 320.

do I say unto them?" And God replies, "I am that which I am" ¹ "Thus dost thou say to the sons of Israel," ² "I am now sent me unto you." This may lead one to suppose that in those early days, the Israelites could understand the highly philosophical concept of Existence or Being as the most fundamental connotation of the ultimate principle or the essential Attribute of God. But I think that as Moses was struggling to comprehend the Invisible God, he found that the simplest way in which he could be described was that He was a Person and that He was a living God. Tell them that "I Am hath said this." It is ~~not mere~~ assertion of the first person singular which God pre-eminently is, but the categorical assertion of his attribute of existence which removes the Supreme Being from the sphere of doubt. I am that which I am. This difficulty of describing God led the Indian Rishis to adopt the negative way, *i.e.*, not this, not this.

But the question is, does the word Yahweh derivatively mean this? There is no doubt that God was not known to Moses under this name. For God Himself says "I am Jehovah" ³ and I appear unto Abraham, unto Isaac and unto Jacob; as to My name Jahova, ⁴ I have not been known to them.

Moses could hear the voice of Yahweh on the mount of Sinai. He was even emboldened to make a request to see His face. He said, 'I beseech thee show me thy glory.' ⁵ God replies, 'Thou art unable to see my face, for man doth not see me and live.' ⁶ In the Bhāgabat Gita of the Hindus,

¹ Ex. III, 14.

² *Ibid.*

³ Ex. VI, 3.

⁴ Yahweh is generally known under this name (Jehovah) by the English. The Hebrews did not pronounce this sacred name. The first Christian Hebraists pronounced the name as Jehovah in the thirteenth century under a false notion.

⁵ Ex. 18-23.

⁶ There is a version of this in the Koran, which says that when God consented to show Himself to Moses at his importunities, Moses swooned away, and a mountain was turned into dust by Him. Sura VII, 139.

God before consenting to reveal His cosmic nature or *Viswarupa* to Arjuna says, "You cannot see my real nature with your mortal eyes." He gave Arjuna divine sight by which he was permitted to see His cosmic form.

Not only was Yahweh physically existent to Moses but possessed many human attributes such as love, mercy, favouritism (Gen., Chaps. 12 & 20), jealousy, anger (Sam.) and incitement to evil (Judge, 1 Sam. & 2 Sam.). He was fond of miracles and willing to perform miracles in order to achieve His end. He would not hesitate to send down ~~plagues~~ in order to reduce the unwilling or recalcitrant people to submission. Yahweh at times showed His great powers, *e.g.*, He would set a whole forest ablaze, cause rain and floods, make barren women fertile and would Himself lead armies to battle.¹

In the Old Testament, nothing strikes the reader so much as the insistence of Yahweh on cleanliness, purity of heart, avoidance of idolatrous practices and rejection of other gods than Yahweh. Throughout the whole book, a regular tug of war is going on between Yahweh and the people of Israel for whom He seems to have no end of solicitude. He is never tired of appealing to their sense of gratitude by reminding them that it was He who had rescued them from the tortures of Egypt and preserved them against evil spirits and natural catastrophes.

At first He would ask them to sacrifice to Him and to offer Him their firstlings including the first born sons.² In Gen. 22, this story is told "with matchless art" (Abingdon Bible). The sacrifice of Isaac is meant to illustrate Abraham's faith in God. It is a severe test to show that Abraham can trust God, however strange his command may seem to be. Human sacrifice was practised in pre-Mosaic times. In later times this barbarous sacrifice was substituted by

¹ Hence He was called the Lord of host. The imagery is probably furnished by myriads of stars in the firmament which symbolise Yahweh's army. *Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. II, p. 430.

² Ex. XXII, 29. 'The first born of thy sons thou dost give to Me.' . . . 'On the eighth day thou dost give it to Me.' But it is explained to be simply a dedication and not human sacrifice.

money ransom.¹ It appears that circumcision was obligatory on the eighth day and it is probable that it was instituted as a substitute offering for a child. As a matter of fact, the origin and significance of this ancient religious rite are lost.

At first Yahweh demanded sacrifices from his votaries and would not relent until the sacrifices and burnt offerings were offered. The Law laid down the quantity and quality of sacrifices. But with the march of time and the rapid progress in religious ideas among the Jews, offerings came more and more to be discarded. In Isaiah we find that offerings are not only not liked by Yahweh but positively forbidden.² The bloody sacrifices are sought to be replaced by cleanliness, purity of heart and practice of charity.³ "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; Cease to do evil; learn to do well; Seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow."⁴

This shows clearly how the tendency of Hebraic religion was towards an ethical monotheism. It is not suggested, however, that this was reached by a straight path. The progress was deflected on many an occasion by untoward events and the frailties of human nature. Sometimes the Israelites worshipped Yahweh during war time and paid homage to Baalim in peace time. The Hebrews started with a nomadic life and their conception of God naturally corresponded with that life. The earliest state of society takes us back to barbarism and the usual relationship between one society and another is one of feuds. You either kill or be killed, the unit being a group of people knit together by more or less loose bonds of kinship. Each of these groups had a God of their own. Even the monotheism of the Jews was not antagonistic to the recognition of other gods than their own, to whom other groups of people rendered their homage. But the Hebrews gradually got over this mono-

¹ Ex. XIII and every first born of man among thy sons thou dost ransom.

² Isa.

³ Isa.

⁴ Isa I, 10-17.

latry. Yahweh comes to be regarded henceforth not as the God of Jewish nation, but of all nations. From this time on, the religion of the Hebrews made a bid to be a world-religion.

Here again the advanced notion was not achieved all at once. When the Hebrews conquered Canaan, and settled down on the fertile land with its centre in Jarusalem, they exchanged their nomadic life for an agricultural life and celebrated the harvest time with various festivals.¹

But these festivals which betoken a changeover from ~~nomadic~~ to agricultural life do not betray the Jewish mind's love of nature. There is no doubt that the revelation of God takes place through natural phenomena, *e.g.*, Yahweh manifests Himself in storm; the Law was given on Sinai to the accompaniment of thunders and lightning.² The thunder is the voice of Yahweh, the lightnings, his arrows and glittering spear; the rainbow is a sign that Yahweh

¹ The important agricultural festivals are Passover, Pentecost, New Year, the day of Atonement and the feast of Tabernacles. The feast of unleavened bread or Passover, which was a harvest thanksgiving was instituted in commemoration of the redemption from Egypt (Hebraic Literature, translated by M. H. Harris, p. 373).

The Feast of Weeks or Pentecost (M. H. Harris) occurs when wheat has been completely gathered. It is also the anniversary of the delivery of the Commandment from Mount Sinai (M. H. Harris, *op. cit.*, p. 374). In Passover—a sheaf of green barley was offered and in Pentecost two loaves made of the first flour of the wheat harvest were brought before the Lord. The New Year or the day of Memorial is the season when the Lord pardoned the Israelites, who had worshipped the molten calf (M. H. Harris, *op. cit.*, p. 376). Then the cornet is blown to announce to the people that a new year has begun its course and to warn them to examine strictly their conduct. Man is judged on New Year's Day and the decree is made final on the Day of Atonement. God is ready at all times to acknowledge true penitence. God forgives those who truly repent for their sins. There is rejoicing in heaven when one sinner at least repents.

The Feast of Tabernacles is held in the autumn after the fruits of the field have been garnered in the store houses. The Feast of Tabernacles is also the Feast of Ingathering when men should thank God for the kindness shown. It is also called the Feast of Drawing the Water (M. H. Harris, *op. cit.*, p. 392).

² This may be compared with the natural phenomena of thunder and lightning, which accompanied the birth of Krishna in prison—Srimad Bhāgabat.

has laid aside the battle weapon (bow) He sometimes shows His displeasure by a devouring fire, destructive tempest and hailstones.

This shows merely that the Hebrew mind was impressed by natural phenomena and interpreted them as in some way connected with Yahweh, but He was never identified with nature. So the Hebrews were as far as possible from a pantheistic conception of godhead.¹ "It is always a dualism of the most pronounced type in which God and man stand out equally prominently in an indissoluble partnership."

The Hebrews looked upon Yahweh as their own God on whom they depended and to whom they turned in times of peril. The relation was based upon the Jewish conception of 'Law.' First of all, the idea of the Covenant which God made with Moses implies that the two contracting parties were to a certain extent possessed of independent will. But God revealed His will in the form of the Law. The observance of the Law is the only way to follow the way of the Lord, there being no other way. Herein lies the moral emphasis of Judaism. If it is the highest purpose of human existence to fulfil the ways of Providence, the only way to do so is to act morally, *i.e.*, the actions of man should conform to the standard of morality as laid down by God Himself. In this way the Jews reached an ethical monotheism which has tremendously influenced the other religions of the semitic people.

In pre-Mosaic period and even later, Yahweh was represented by images. Among the common representations we find the bull images established in Jeroboam and Dan. In Egypt and in Canaan the bull was regarded as a sacred animal. It is not improbable that the worship of the Bull image was due to the influence of the Egyptians among whom the ancestors of the Jews had sojourned in the early period of their history. Yahweh was sometimes called a young bull. This was denounced in later times (Hosea). Even the temples of Yahweh bore representations of the bull. The bull is the symbol of virility and

¹ Spinoza was a Jew and his philosophy was pantheistic no doubt. But in this Spinoza's thought was contrary to that of his Jewish ancestors. Spinoza was excommunicated by the Jewish Elders with a weird ceremony.

fertility and the worship of the bull indicates the presence of an early mystic cult in which sex and fertility ideas were prominent.¹ The sex idea is also suggested by the presence of dancing girls in temples.²

After emerging from the worship of dead ancestors, and natural objects, the Jews turned to Yahweh who revealed himself in thunder, cloud and lightning and in columns of fire

The Cherubim and Seraphim associated with the physical representation of Yahweh are mythological figures. ~~Cherubim~~ probably means angels with wings and Seraphim human figures with wings. (Abingdon Bible, p. 272). It is probable that the Ark of Yahweh contained the figure of a serpent.³ The Ark itself came to be a symbol of Yahweh. It was a simple box or chest and represented the dwelling place of Yahweh in the innermost and most holy part of the sanctuary. The Testimony, *i.e.*, the tables of stone containing the commandments was to be put into it. There was a covering of pure gold which was considered most sacred. Over it, though invisible, was the very presence of dwelling of God called by the Jews in later times 'Shekinah.' The Ark used to be borne before the Army in the belief that Yahweh was fighting on behalf of his chosen people.⁴

Later, when all worship was centralised in Jerusalem in the time of Solomon, the Ark was placed there. But at the time of the Assyrian conquest in 722 B.C. much damage was done to the temple. The Temple of Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 B.C. when the subject ruler under Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon who had conquered Jerusalem in 597 B.C. rose in revolt. This made the Babylonians return and destroy the city.

¹ The worship of the Bull may be found to a certain extent in Zoroastrian religion, and also in Saivism in India. In Egyptian Religion animal life was regarded as sacred.

² H. W. Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

³ Hezekiah, a prophet of Israel, destroyed the brazen serpent which had become an object of veneration. See Ottley: *History of the Hebrews*.

⁴ This is the emphatic form of the belief which still persists in the prayer that is offered to the God of battle.

God was conceived at first as Almighty. In the Jewish conception of God, power is the most important attribute. Power is the most fundamental of his metaphysical attributes.

A further stage in the evolution of God consciousness was reached when Yahweh came to be endowed with human attributes including human imperfections such as jealousy, revenge, repentance, etc.¹ Gradually however the best qualities of man were sublimated and attributed to Yahweh, *e.g.*, mercy, forgiveness and love. Henceforward the relation between God and man was conceived as that between father and children. Yahweh is not merely a creator and moral ruler but is also a beloved person to whom loving obedience and faithful service are due. 'I do draw them with thick cords of love.'²

The charge of anthropomorphism which is usually levelled against Judaism is, I think, based upon a misconception of human psychology. Xenophanes made the accusation that man has made God after his own pattern. It is said in the Bible that God made man after His own image³ which also comes to about the same thing. The nature of God, if it has to be expressed at all, must be expressed in language; and language is the creation of man and reflects his ideas and feelings. So a certain amount of anthropomorphism is unavoidable.

The Prophets of the Old Testament are a unique institution in more senses than one. In fact, the religion of the Hebrews is based upon the inspired sayings of their Prophets. With Moses, the founder of the religion, began a long line of God-filled men whose lives and pronouncements served as inspiration and guide for the Hebrews for generations. The prophets were

¹ That Yahweh was sometimes represented in human form is also a fact.

² Hosea II, 16.

³ Voltaire jokingly said that God made man after His own image and man lost no time in returning the compliment.

⁴ The word 'Nabi' is very frequently used for prophets in the Old Testament, but it is of doubtful origin. There is a kindred Arabic word

mystics and their utterances were often clothed in mystical language. Just as the oracles of Delphi had meaning for Athenian ears, so the language of the prophets was understood by the people for whom it was intended. To us the sayings may appear to be unintelligible and full of commonplaces and conundrums; but none the less the prophets in their own days proved unfailing guides to the Jews in their struggle for survival.

From Moses downwards, the prophets appear to be the agencies through whom the God of Israel chooses to make ~~His~~ mind known to the Hebrews. Before the eighth century, the religion of Israel was not exactly monotheistic. It was rather monolatrous, *i.e.*, they allowed the gods of other nations to exist side by side with Yahweh. Yahweh fought Israel's battles and brought about the downfall of her enemies. Gradually however the nationalistic view yields to a more universalistic conception of Yahweh as the God of both Jews and Gentiles.¹ Henceforth Yahweh was regarded as the God of all the earth and there was no God beside Him. As we pass from prophet to prophet, we notice that the vindictiveness which is associated with God's chastisement for transgressions is becoming less and less, although the fear of the last Day of Judgment, with the thought of dire consequences to the sinners, is still there. The prophets are more or less agreed with regard to the advent of the kingdom of God on earth. Over this kingdom God or the Messiah was to rule. The prophecy about the advent of the divine Kingdom included only the nation of the Hebrews at the outset and it was gradually extended to cover all the people of the earth. This becomes the new feature about the religion of the Hebrews, *viz.*, that it is not confined to a particular people or country. 'Before the Exile the nation was the religious unit, and the individual as such had no religious worth and could not approach God except through priest or prophet.'² When the mass of the

which means to announce. Two other words are used which respectively mean 'seer.' and 'speaker.'—*Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 757.

¹ Dr. Charles. *Religious Development between the Old and New Testaments*, p. 65.

² *Ibid*, p. 67.

Jews was deported to Babylon where there was no temple nor any settled order of priest, the outlook of the Jews was broadened and the individual came to have a direct contact with God.¹

The fact is that the Jews were a nomadic people. So their survival depended on social solidarity. When, therefore, the exiled Jews settled down to agricultural life in Babylon, the national view of life was gradually supplanted by the individual. Here in Exile, therefore, away from the Temple at Jerusalem the habits of offering common² prayer were cultivated, the offering of sacrifices was kept in abeyance and emphasis was laid on such rites as Sabbath, fast and circumcision. It came more and more to be recognised that God appreciates the offering of the heart more than burnt offerings of animals. Yahweh rebukes the Jews through the Prophets in no uncertain terms for bringing to Him material offerings. He practically spurns such offerings away.³ God wants pure heart, contrite heart⁴ more than anything else.

In Babylon, the faithful remnant gathered together in groups on the banks of rivers and canals. In course of time, fixed forms of prayers came into use and buildings were erected for worship. Thus the Jewish Synagogues arose.

Prophetism gradually took an ethical turn. It should, however, be borne in mind that the ethical tendency of the Jewish religion takes away the national or sectarian character of the creed and throws its doors wide open to all people of every clime and every age. But one effect of this was that the more universalistic the religion became the rarer became the Prophecy.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

² R. L. Ottley—*History of the Hebrews*.

³ Micah VI, 7-8, Is. I, 10-15.

⁴ Is. I, 16. 'Cease to do evil, learn to do good.' God even promises men forgiveness, I 18. 'If your sins are scarlet, as snow they shall be white. If they are red as crimson, as wool they shall be.'

Cf. Gita,

अहं त्वां सर्वपापेभ्यो मोक्षयिष्यामि मा शुचः । गीता, १८

I shall redeem you from all sins. Do not grieve.

Let me now give a brief survey of the age of the Prophets who made the Jewish religion what it was.¹ "The prophet may be defined as a man who with his inward eyes open to the eternal realities 'sees the vision of the Almighty.'² At first the terms 'seer' and 'Prophet' were used for different purposes, though both were related to Jehovah. But later on, they came to mean the 'inspired man.' God reveals his secret to the Prophets, his servants.³ God would take one out of his flock and ask him to go and "prophecy to my people of Israel."⁴ The prophetic message was an oracle of Jehovah. In most of the prophetic messages the themes are introduced with the words 'thus sayeth the Lord.' " About Moses, it is said that he held conversation with the Lord 'mouth to mouth.'

Moses is the first historical person who laid the foundation of the religion and also of the history of the Nation. "His personality and work point to him as the definitive founder of the religion of the Hebrews."⁵ To him is due the living power of the religion. On the mount Sinai, Yahweh revealed the law to him and this divine law supplied the content and the inspiration of Jewish religion. The Jews needed no representations or images, no festivals nor any superhuman representation of God on earth to hold them together in one creed, but they were bound together by a common regard for the Mosaic Law. The Law was called the 'Torah' and Hebrew piety consists in the observance of the Law. "All faith implies law and all law implies faith."⁶ Man is accountable to God for conformity to Law. "Conformity means piety, non-conformity sin."

Sin, therefore, becomes a matter of personal responsibility. There is no question of fate or predestination.

¹ See *Abington Bible*—Prof. A. R. Gordon, p. 150.

² Num, 24.4.

³ Amos III, 7. 'Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret to his servants the Prophets.'

⁴ Amos VII, 15.

⁵ Carl Clemen—*Religion of the Hebrews*.

⁶ Carl Clemen—*op. cit.*

The doctrine of original sin gradually fades away. It was the prophet Ezekiel who pronounced against vicarious righteousness. "If man be just, lawful and right.....he shall live."¹ Man's transgressions are forgiven, the moment the sinner or transgressor repents. "This is called atonement (at-one-ment), *i.e.*, reconciliation or return to God. As the religion of reconciliation with God, Judaism came to know its profoundest meaning."²

Religion of the Jews is a religion of the individual. The individual is responsible for his action and suffers for his own sins. The doctrine of original sin according to which the whole mankind is condemned to suffer for the disobedience of the first man is discredited. Whether the theory of original sin is understood in this primitive form or it is taken in a general sense to mean that man is born with an inherent tendency towards evil, Ezekiel laid emphasis on the recognition of freedom of the will and the responsibility of the individual for his choice. 'Fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge'—this view was laid to rest once for all. The Jews even went one step further in regard to the doctrine of suffering. That the sinner should suffer is just what is to be expected. But why, even the righteous are seen to suffer. And here we see the height to which Judaic preaching attained. The great Unknown Prophet proclaims that the righteous should suffer for the benefit of the sinners. The good are those that live for others and give up their lives for others. Through their sacrifice the greatest sinners are benefited. The Unknown Prophet was led to embody his conception in the figure of a suffering Messiah as its crowning realisation.³ This was fulfilled in Christ. But apart from its prophetic accuracy, the moral tone of this attitude towards suffering and sinful fellowbeings is beyond all praise. It leads to a new orientation of human suffering altogether unknown before this.

The Prophets often made prediction about the future and some of these were fulfilled in a wonderful manner.

¹ Ezékiel.

² C. Clemen, p. 339 sqq.

³ The Unknown Prophet.

Examples of such predictions come true are too numerous to mention. One of such predictions came true when Isaiah predicted the overthrow of the Assyrian king. A catastrophe actually overtook the Assyrian Army on the borders of Egypt. Herodotus gives a vivid description of how an army of field mice destroyed the bowstrings and the leather of their equipments, thus crippling the powerful army of invasion. It is surmised that probably the Assyrian army was destroyed by bubonic plague carried by the rodents.

The Assyrian and Babylonian invasions and even the ~~terrible~~ scourge of the invasion of Scythian hordes who descending from the regions of the Caucasus overran the whole of Western Asia in the seventh century B.C. (630) were considered by the Jews as the punishment inflicted by God. But the faith of the people began to decline.¹ Israel had virtually forsaken her God,² so said her prophet.

The discovery in the temple of the Book of the Law in 621 B.C. led to an important reformation in the reign of Josiah and helped to revive the prophetic spirit for a time.

But the discovery of the Law was destined sooner or later to interfere with freedom of knowledge and make prophetic inspiration superfluous. The object of the prophetic utterances from the very beginning seems to be a call to the people to follow the path of rectitude *i.e.*, to obey the Divine Law. The discovery of the Book of the Law, therefore, did not leave much for the prophets to do, until the advent of Jesus Christ who practically repudiated the legalistic view of morality and religion.³ The new line of thinking opened up by Christ made it possible for a new crop

¹ Jehovah will not do good, neither will he do evil—Zephania, i. 12.

² Cf. Jeremiah ii, 13. 'They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.'

³ The prophets were not exponents of the 'law' in the technical sense; that function belonged to the priest. But the 'word' which was given to the prophet was an immediate revelation of the will of God, and was sometimes necessarily opposed to the orthodox and conventional religious teaching of men more anxious about following precedents than discerning the highest duty—Dictionary of the Bible—W. T. Davison (art. on Prophets, p. 761—Moral Teaching).

of prophecy to appear. And so the tradition of the Old Testament Jews was continued in a very real sense in the Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament.¹

Now, in studying the religion of the Hebrews we cannot help feeling that it represents a religious movement which, at least in its abundance of prophetic messages, is 'unparalleled elsewhere in history.'² The substance of these messages is invariably some religious or moral teaching intended solely for the isolated group of Israelites. It is not the lesson which is the essential thing about prophecy but the impression that it is a revelation of God's will. The fear of God and of His wrath has the most compelling force on those for whom the prophecy is intended. 'The fear of God is the beginning of knowledge,'³ it is said. But for the Jews it is not only the beginning but the sole sustaining force.

The prophets feel a call within themselves and begin to prophesy and the ears of the Jews are strained to catch every syllable and every accent of the utterance. For a time the prophets are obeyed and their guidance is followed but gradually people begin to doubt and sometimes lose faith in them. Then follows a period of reaction as in the reign of Manasseh and others. Again a prophet appears and brings back the straying sheep into the fold.

The age of the prophets in the Old Testament may be roughly divided into two periods; *viz.*, the pre-exilic and the post-exilic periods. Jerusalem was captured by Nebuchadnezzar in 597 B.C. and many Jews were carried away as captives to Babylon. This is spoken of as the Exile of the Jews. The Temple of Jerusalem since the time of Solomon was the only place where the Jews could worship; and to have to live away from the place of worship was considered a great calamity.

¹ The spirit of prophecy, as it meets us under the old Dispensation runs on into the New, and there are prophets in N. T., who are properly to be described as O. T. prophets—*Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 764.

² 'Jesus Himself was a Prophet.' *Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 757.

³ Proverbs 1; 7; *Cf.* Psalms, Fear of God is the beginning of wisdom (111 : 10).

There were some of the greatest Hebrew prophets in the Pre-exilic period. Leaving aside the early period, we find several great prophets, *viz.*, Amos, Isaiah, Micah the Morasthite and Jeremiah.

Amos, the herdsman of Tekoa, heard the call of God, (B.C. 760-750) burst in like a moral thunderbolt upon a merry feast at Bethel, denouncing the moral degradation of his countrymen and warned them about the approaching doom. Isaiah (B.C. 740-701) was not a rustic like Amos, ~~but~~ belonged to an aristocratic family. But in spite of his aristocratic birth, he sympathised with the proletarian aspirations of the prophetic school. Finding that complete moral regeneration of his people was impossible, he placed his hope in the coming of a Messiah. The Messianic ideal may be traced to this great prophet. The vision of Isaiah is one of the best literary products in the Old Testament and Isaiah is regarded as the greatest of prophets. He lived through the persecutions of Manasseh and counteracted his paganising influence. He also heartened King Hezekiah to fight to the death against the Egyptians. According to tradition Isaiah had his head sawn asunder.

Micah the Morasthite flourished about the time when the Assyrians conquered the Northern kingdom of Samaria in 722 B.C. This prophet instilled hope in the minds of the Jews and preached that although God would chastise them by the loss of their national power, redemption would come in the end. He was perhaps the first in the Western world to proclaim the dream of universal peace. For God could not be a god of War, but was a god of Peace.

Jeremiah was descended from a family of priests. He watched the decline of monarchy and the degeneration of the priests, and offended both the royalty and the priestly class by his prophecies of national destruction. After the discovery of the Law, Josiah led the Jewish people to live according to the law of Moses. But under the weak successors of Josiah, people forgot the Deuteronomic reforms and became involved in mean intrigues till the capture of Jerusalem by the King of Babylon in 597 B.C. Jeremiah suffered imprisonment for his bold pronouncements and

courted a martyr's death in Egypt where he was carried a captive by the Jewish refugees in their flight.

The two great prophets of the Exilic period were Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah or the Unknown Prophet. "Of the three great Prophets, Isaiah was primarily the poet, Jeremiah the preacher and Ezekiel the Mystic." To this mystic prophet we owe the expression of religious truth through parables. Ezekiel rejected the theory of vicarious punishment *viz.*, that owing to man's first disobedience the whole human race is condemned.

"The fathers have eaten sour grapes

And the children's teeth are set on edge."

Ezekiel was carried off to Babylon at the age of twenty five and he worked there among the captive Jews.

The Unknown Prophet is a prophet of the Exilic period although his work is sometimes considered to be a continuation of Isaiah. He is therefore called the Second Isaiah or Deutero-Isaiah. He is remarkable for two things—first, the suffering of man is not merely punishment for his own sins or those of the nation; but sometimes the good must suffer to atone for the transgressions of the wicked. This vicarious atonement is embodied in a suffering Messiah. Secondly, the redemption of Israel through suffering means the redemption of all mankind. This is the highest conception reached by the Jewish prophets—its crowning realization of the meaning of suffering.

The temple of Jerusalem lay in ruins after the city was sacked by the army of Babylon (586 B.C.). Under the urgent appeals of Haggai and Zechariah and with the leadership of Zerubbabel and Joshua a second temple was built at Jerusalem and regular worship renewed. This Zerubbabel is perhaps the same as the one who with the generous help of Darius the Persian King whose bodyguard he was, took up the construction of the temple. An interesting story is told in the Bible of how the royal favour was won by the cunning and patriotism of a Jew. In the expectation of rewards from Darius, three youngmen entered into a literary competition. They wrote each a sentence—one wrote, wine is the strongest; another, the King is the strongest; the third 'women are the strongest,' but above

all Truth beareth away the victory. Next morning the king called the competitors in his presence and asked each to develop his statements. The third named Zerubbabel was adjudged the best and when the king asked him to name his reward, he asked the favour of his building the temple at Jerusalem.

The Jewish Book of the Law set a limit not only to freedom of thought but reduced religion largely to a mechanical obedience to the letter of the law. The Jewish wisdom raised a wall of law around them. It became necessary for them to interpret the law to suit new circumstances as they arose. These interpretations or expositions were called Midrash which means enquiry or interpretation. Gradually a large body of laws came to be codified and this is called the Talmud. It consisted of two parts, one containing the Texts or rules called Mishna and the other Gemara or the commentary. The Talmud which means the teaching was in two recensions the Palestinian and the Babylonian—the latter by far the longer of the two being known as ‘The Talmud.’ It was completed in 500 A.D. It is not a book but a sort of ‘loose printed encyclopedia’—a big store house of law and wisdom.¹

To the modern Jew the strict observance of the immense collection of laws and customs is no doubt irksome, knowing as he does that most of them are meaningless and obsolete practices.

One celebrated Spanish Rabbi *viz.*, Maimonides in the eleventh century produced a code of laws and customs called the “Strong Hand” which has been of great help to the Jews up to the present time. Maimonides also formulated a set of 13 principles which are regarded as authoritative by the Jews. These may be summed up in the following (1) Belief in one God. (2) Belief in His eternity. (3) Belief in Prophecy and in Moses as the greatest of Prophets. (4) Belief that the eternal law is revealed from Heaven. (5) Belief in the coming of the Messiah. (6) Belief in Resurrection.²

¹ Soper : *op. cit.*, p. 269.

² *Ibid.*, p. 270.

The formalistic Deism of the Jews suffered a setback, as has been remarked before, from one of their own people *viz.*, Spinoza who gave a pantheistic explanation of the universe. According to him God is not a person but the whole universe is permeated by His presence. Like the Jewish prophets Spinoza was a God-intoxicated man, but his mode of thinking differed altogether from his Jewish predecessors and for this he was expelled from the Jewish community.

In the case of the Jews, for centuries together prophecy formed the basis of life, religion and the State. From the perusal of the prophetic pronouncements, one cannot resist the conclusion that the prophets represent all that was best in Jewish poetry, philosophy, ethics and religion. The prophets were the wisest, most religious and most selfless among the people.¹ The peculiar feature about them is that they spoke to the nation not in their own name but in the name of their national God, Yahweh. This they sometimes did even at the peril of their own life. They felt an inward urge which was attributed to a supernatural source. There will be found many people who are reluctant to admit any supernatural element in prophecy. But how can it be explained otherwise? In the circumstances of the modern world, contact with God is bound to be regarded as a myth. But if we could transport ourselves to two thousand five hundred years back,, we might understand what a valuable experience it was to feel the direct presence of the Divine Being who guides the destinies of races of mankind and also shapes the life of individual men. Call it myth or call it mystery, but pragmatically it was a tremendous reality inasmuch as it made the Jews an extremely religious people and knit them together as a powerful nation holding its own in the face of persecution and oppression.

What is the secret of prophetism? Every one could not be a prophet. In fact some of the Jews who lacked

¹ J. S. Mill describes it as an inestimably precious feature that the persons most eminent in genius and moral feeling could reprobate with the authority of the Almighty and give a higher and better interpretation of religion which henceforth became part of that religion. Quoted in the *Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 762.

the prophetic gift, claimed respect as sons of prophets. After Elisha, the order fell into such disrepute that Amos emphatically declared that "he was neither a prophet nor a prophet's son." But Amos who was to inaugurate a long line of prophets was himself a great figure among the greatest of the Jews who constituted the class of prophets. They had divine vision for one thing. They had the gift of prophecy in many cases and they could perform miracles. The miracles of Elijah¹ and Elisha in the Old Testament are inseparably connected with their prophetic ministry. Their value as evidence is of course questioned. Harnack in explaining the miracles performed by Jesus says that the credulity of the age in which the Gospels were written was responsible. In other words, there was no miracle, but some credulous persons were deceived by appearances. Now this explanation lays axe at the root not only of prophecy and the Gospels, but also at the root of many other religions which believe in miracles. Science claims to have proved once for all the impossibility of miracles. So one must be a bold man to say that the miracles happened in those God-illuminated days. I have already dwelt at length on the hostility of science to religion. We may not be able to explain the occurrence of miracles by the methods of modern science, but to many intensely religious minds, the poetry, romantic charm, mysticism and the secret appeal of religion cannot but be lost if the miracles are summarily dismissed.

The Old Testament has a very close affinity with the Purāṇas of the Hindus. The important similarities are: (1) both are poetic in form; (2) both narrate in story form the relations of God to man and Nature; (3) both are highly anthromorphic in symbolising God or His attributes;

¹ Elijah the Tishbite challenged the prophets of Baalim and made the issue of monotheism rest on an experiment. Eliza dressed a bullock and laid it on wood but without fire and prayed to God to accept the burnt offering. The fire of the Lord fell on it and consumed the burnt sacrifice; but in the case of the prophets of Baal, a bullock was similarly offered and laid on wood. But although they prayed to Baal, their god, the whole day, there was no response. The prophets of idolatry were not only defeated but exterminated.

(4) ultimately the ways of God are justified to man; (5) both the Christian Bible and the Hindu Purāṇas believe in miracles; (6) both believe in incarnation—the Hindu believes in Avatārs and the Christian in the coming of Messiah; (7) the triumph of virtue against vice is the main theme in both. But while the Bible leads to an ethical monotheism, the vast literature of the Puranas does not always show any unity of purpose and, even if their tendency is towards monotheism, it is often lost in the midst of pantheistic obscurantism and sentimental eroticism.

The question is : If God was really so near the Jewish people, what made Him withdraw Himself from this, 'the sphere of our sorrow' ? It seems that mankind in its childhood was nearer God and that is the secret of the religious greatness of Judaism.

One of the most interesting features of Judaism is the conception of the kingdom of God. According to the Old Testament prophets, the Jews were the chosen people of God and He ruled over them, cared for them and led them to victory against their enemies. This conception was gradually enlarged to include the whole universe. God was the supreme ruler of the Universe. Yahveh was the King over all the earth and all the heaven. At first, Yahveh was the greatest of all gods, but the prophets evolved the higher monotheism according to which Yahveh was the only God and His throne was set high up in heaven in inexpressible majesty and glory.

This idea is connected with the Messianic conception.¹ The Messianic prophecies hoped that a time would come when Messiah would rule over the Kingdom of God or the heavenly kingdom. The Messiah or Saviour of Man is anointed of God. In all the expectations of the Hebrew people, the coming of a king, empowered and inspired by God Himself, is the keynote. Cyrus, Nebuchadnezzar or Alexander may temporarily rule over large kingdoms; but God is the eternal king and the Messiah is the representative of God on earth. Jehovah is reported to have established His Son as King upon Zion.² Jehovah says to His Son

¹ *Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 517.

² Psalm 2.

sit thou at my right hand until I make thy enemies thy footstool.' ¹

The Messiah is an associate of God but not God Himself. So he has a distinct existence apart from God. But whatever power he has got is derived from God. He would not rule apart from Jehovah or exercise a different authority, for the Kingdom of Messiah would also be the Kingdom of God.

The kingdom as pictured by the Prophets is an earthly kingdom where righteousness or justice only prevails, people are freed from oppression, persecution or domination, the enemies are humbled, and peace and prosperity reign.² There is in this conception not much room for any spiritual interpretation. The imagery is not always clear but so far as the prophetic visions go, the kingdom of God is mainly, if not wholly, a material kingdom. In their exile, the pious Jews could only see the vision of an ultimate readjustment under divine dispensation. After the conquest of Alexander the Great (336-323 B.C.), the belief in the ultimate victory of the forces of righteousness through the advent of Messiah was strengthened. The spiritual meaning is a later growth. It is only in the Synoptic Gospels that we find that the Kingdom of God is within and not without. It is not an earthly paradise of affluence and retribution, but an affair of the heart. The pure and penitent heart is the Kingdom of God. This it remained for Jesus Christ to discover.³

Although the Hebrews were a God-fearing people and their life was attuned to the Divine will in every sphere and every phase, and although they had formed the conception of rewards and punishments as logically flowing from God's relationship with man, the Hebraic Eschatology did not include the view of spiritual immortality. The Hebrews did not contemplate any reward and punishment after death. God rewards men for

¹ Psalm 110.

² Zecharia LXX.

³ The Parables of Jesus . . . show in many ways that the heavenly kingdom has to do with the spiritual nature and possibilities of man. See *Dictionary of the Bible*.

good deeds and punishes evil deeds here on earth in this life. The disembodied soul goes to Sheol which is beyond the jurisdiction of Yahweh, for he is the god of the living and not of the dead.

At first divine justice was dispensed on the Day of Jehovah. The Old Testament idea was that like a King, Jehovah would judge the people—nationwise. That is, He would reward the Hebrew nation and punish the enemy nations and on the Day of Judgment, there would be a *national resurrection*.¹ This follows as a consequence from the prophetic view of morality according to which the whole nation of Jews is judged for the transgression of the nation as a whole or of the individuals. The idea of individual immortality is a later growth. It becomes more distinct in the Apocalypses.² It appears sometimes as if resurrection is limited to the righteous and there is none for the wicked.

A certain class of writings which arose among the Jews during the closing centuries before the Christian era is known by the name of Apocalyptic literature. They appeared in the Hellenic period, *i.e.*, after the conquest of Alexander the Great. In this literature, there is combined with the faith in Jehovah a certain amount of pessimism as the result of the present misery. The Apocalyptic writings wanted to stir up faith in a glorious future, in spite of the gloomy picture of the present. The Apocalypse is akin to prophecy. But there is this important difference that whereas in prophecy, there is always a perception of the divine forces working in and through nature, in Apocalypse, there is the overwhelming sense of present misery and a hope for miraculous deliverance. Its purpose was fundamentally to encourage faith on the part of those who are in distress by 'revealing' the future. It is revelation in as much as the Apocalypstist assumed a pseudonym and spoke like a prophet of the past. The chief books of the Apocalypse are Daniel and Enoch, the Ethiopic Enoch and the Slavonic Book of the Secrets of Enoch, the book of Jubilees, the Psalms of Solomon, the Assumption of Moses, the Testaments of twelve Patriarchs, the

¹ *Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 236.

² *Ibid*, p. 236.

Ascension of Isaiah, the Apocalypse of Ezra, the Apocalypse of Baruch, the Sybilline oracles, etc.¹

Along with an elaborate description of the punishments which will be inflicted on the sinners of other nations, there is the hope in Apocalyptic literature that God will, out of His infinite mercy, forgive the people of Israel, only if they repent; and there will always be some among them to repent. Thus the nation will be saved and restored to its rightful position among the neighbouring nations who are now oppressing them. Among the unpropitious and distressing national and international conditions, the Jews dreamt of a messianic advent which will miraculously set the crooked straight for the Jews by mere word of mouth, without any armed conflict. This is also the idea at the root of the Hindu idea of periodical Avatar.

It is interesting to follow the various stages through which the Jews attained to their conception of God. In the pre-Prophetic period (1200-750 B.C.), *i.e.*, before Moses, the Jews were polytheists, although belief in a Supreme God was not necessarily absent in the more enlightened section of the people. Moses reduced the religion to monolatry, *i.e.*, the worship of one God and with him the history of the religion properly begins.

The amalgamation of the Jews with Canaanites after Moses resulted in the fusion of Jehovah with Baal. Baal means lord or master. Jehovah was another Baal and the same rites and customs came to be connected with his worship. The immoral practices such as prostitution and the use of images crept into his sanctuaries. But the followers of the Mosaic faith asserted themselves and the Prophets were emphatic in their denunciation of idols and evil practices.

During the Prophetic period a few important features of God-consciousness appear. In the first place, an explicit religious monotheism is grasped. Jehovah is the only God and there is no other God. He alone knows the future and can predict it. Jehovah is the Creator and no

idol possesses creative activity. The recognition that God is the Creator makes the relation between Him and the human destiny a matter of deep religious significance. Secondly, righteousness is the most fundamental attribute of God. It forms the cornerstone of all relationship between God and man. Sacrifices, etc., which figured so prominently in the earlier stages of the religion lose their significance. "God is for them no ecclesiastical disciplinarian." God demands pure heart, righteousness and justice. Jehovah is "a just God and a Saviour."¹ "To Amos Jehovah was pre-eminently the God of moral law, to Hosea the God of love, to Isaiah the Sovereign lord of Mankind, to Jeremiah the Searcher of hearts who enters into personal relations with men, to Ezekiel the jealous Guardian of an inflexible justice, to Deutero-Isaiah the Redeemer of Israel and of the World."² In this way, Judaism reached a conception of God which was, at least in intent, an absolute ethical monotheism.

Even in the legalistic view, *i.e.*, when emphasis was placed on strict obedience to law, the ethical tendency was not extinct. The rigorous monotheism of the Jews and the ethical conception of Divine nature mark out Judaism as a distinct advance in the religious thought of mankind. The idea of a personal God, His mystic relationship with man, absolute righteousness as the bedrock of that relationship, the emphasis on individual responsibility in human conduct and the qualities of mercy and justice as determining factors in God's dealings with man and finally the idea of God as Redeemer of the world made the whole race of Jews intoxicated with a religious fervour. So long as the religion was not allowed to degenerate into a formal obedience to rituals and customs it possessed a rare dynamism which led them from strength to strength and made it possible for such a highly spiritualised religion as Christianity to take its rise among the Jews.

¹ Isa 45 : 21.

² *Abingdon Bible*, p. 163.

CHRISTIANITY

Of all the world religions, Christianity has the largest number of followers, and its scripture, the Bible, can be read in more than five hundred different languages. Rising in the East, it spread rapidly towards the West, including in its conquest even Greece and Rome, countries which are looked upon even now as the cradle of human civilisation in the West. The evangelising zeal of its followers has penetrated the remotest corners of the earth bringing life and light among races of men steeped in darkness and ignorance.

Christianity sprang out of Judaism as Buddhism and Jainism sprang out of Hinduism. But there is this difference that while Buddhism and Jainism were largely based on a denial of the authority of the Vedas, Christianity enlarged and improved upon the Bible of the Jews. In the course of his teaching Christ superseded the Old Testament but, when asked about it, said that his purpose "was not to destroy but to fulfil."

The scriptures of the Christians consist of the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament and the twenty-seven books of the New Testament.¹ The Old and the New Testaments were combined into one volume long before Constantine who convened a council; like the Buddhistic councils of Asoka and Kanishka, at Nicea in 325 A.D. and made Christianity the State religion of the Roman world.

At first the disciples of Christ worshipped in the temple of Jerusalem like other Jews, but later on they formed a separate community which believed in the divinity of Jesus Christ. The Jews, however, could not accept him as the Messiah of their faith as he did not possess any temporal

¹ At first, of course, the Old Testament was regarded as scripture. The Gospels and Letters of Paul were valued, but they did not possess scriptural authority. The process by which New Testament came to possess divine authority was by analogy. At first the Gospels received recognition and then the Epistles of Paul. By about 200 A.D. the New Testament came to be recognised by the Church as authoritative.

authority nor any paraphernalia of earthly sovereignty. So Jesus did not answer to their messianic conception. Still we find that from the beginning of his career, Jesus spoke with authority, compelling obedience.

The only reason for this seems to be his God-illumined personality and self-forgetfulness. He impressed his countrymen as a wholly God-filled person who lived not for himself but for others. In the second place, his fame spread quickly for the miraculous healings he effected. For example, he cured the blind, fed large crowds of hungry men with practically nothing, drove out evil spirits from people and even restored dead man to life. These were taken as the signs of the supernatural. They led to the belief that Christ derived his miraculous power from no other source than God Himself.

These therefore served as the credentials of Jesus Christ. They came to have an invaluable significance when people remembered that Christ used his miraculous powers for the benefit of others and not for his own. He saved others, but did not save himself from the Cross nor did he invoke the intervention of his Heavenly Father against those who unjustly caused him torture. He was even mocked for this, but still he would not save himself from the cruellest conceivable death.

This, however, did not lead to revision of opinion about his supernatural powers but, on the contrary, raised him in the estimation of his followers who were confirmed in the belief that Christ was sent by God and that he suffered for the sins of mankind.

From the early centuries, miracles have been the strongest pillars of faith in the Christian Church. One writer has gone so far as to say: "It is none the less true that those apparent miracles were essential to Christ's success, and that had he not pretended to perform them, the Christian Church would never have been founded, and the name of Jesus of Nazareth would be known at this day only to the curious in Jewish antiquities."¹ It is perhaps worthwhile to mark in the above quotation the

¹ *Ecce Homo*, p. 49.

expressions 'apparent miracles' and 'pretended to perform.' This is obviously by way of concession to notions of modern science. Miracles stand thoroughly discredited now as being inconsistent with scientific laws.

Now miracles may be grouped under three categories. Extraordinary phenomena not quite amenable to the laws of science are known to be performed by Yogic exercises, *viz.*, by the control of breath. For example, an Indian Sadhu buried under the ground was found to be alive after some days. This has been witnessed by people whose evidence is unimpeachable. Such miracles are performed even to-day. Then, there are many miracles performed under hypnotic influence. These also are quite familiar phenomena and their laws have been but partially understood by eminent scientists like Freud and others. Hypnotism is practised for the purposes of healing and also for gain. It is the third category, *viz.*, miracles connected with spiritual phenomena, the possibility of which is denied outright by scientific people, and to this category belong the miracles performed not only by Christ himself but also by several of his disciples.

Of course, under the reign of causality, as it is interpreted by modern science, no other view is possible. But when by a sweeping generalisation miracles are assigned to the credulity of the simple people of those days or to the self-deception of saintly characters, it is scarcely done, as in the passage quoted above, with a full sense of responsibility. We seem to forget that the belief in resurrection of Christ is, like belief in Jesus Christ himself, an essential tenet of Christianity and this bodily resurrection is the greatest of miracles in the religion of Christ.

The body of Jesus was taken down from the Cross and buried by Joseph Arimathæa with the leave of Pontius Pilate in a nearby garden. But on the third day Mary Magdalene was the first to notice that the sepulchre was empty.¹ This was not all. Christ appeared to many of them in person, talked to them, ate with them, etc. Can all this be a myth? Yes, in the limited sphere of positive

¹ This is described in detail by all the four Gospels. Mark (Appendix). Matthew (Chap. 28: 6). Luke (Chap. 24: 12). John (Chap. 20).

knowledge which is called 'science,' they are no better than myth. The Hindu philosopher, however, would not allow the intrusion of positive science into these mystic experiences. 'The things inconceivable' he would say, 'should not be joined with (*i.e.*, proved or disproved by) logic.' 'That which is beyond nature' (*i.e.*, *supernatural*) is the mark of the inconceivable.¹

The idea of resurrection was well known to the Old Testament and the Apocalypse.² But the bodily resurrection mentioned in the Gospels is quite a unique phenomenon in Christian theology.

JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY

The transition from Judaism to Christianity is neither abrupt nor unnatural. The Prophetic mysticism of the Jews with its insistence on monotheism, moral purity and deliverance had already prepared the ground for the religion of Christ.

This religion started from the highest point reached in Judaism. In Deuteronomy, we find 'And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might.' Christianity seized this idea and made it the cornerstone. But with the Jews this was a vision; in the life of Jesus, it became a reality. What was only vaguely perceived by the Prophets of old, became a dynamic faith in the teachings of Jesus Christ. In Judaism God is the Ruler, the Sovereign power, the seat of authority in the moral government of the world, but in Christianity God became in addition the loving Father, demanding love from his worshippers and giving them love in return. He is not only just, righteous and powerful, but also merciful and forgiving. In the words of St. John, "the law was given by Moses, but truth and grace came by Jesus Christ."

¹ Cf.

अचिन्त्यः खलु ये भावा न तांस्तर्केण योजयेत् ।

प्रकृतिभ्यः परं यत्तु स्यादचिन्त्यस्य लक्षणम् ॥

² In the Psalms of Solomon a resurrection of the righteous on the Day of Last Judgment is taught. In the book of Enoch (Similitudes) there is a reference to general resurrection. (*Dictionary of the Bible*—Article Resurrection.)

This change in view-point raised the religion of Christ not only above Judaism but above many of the living religions of the world. That God was One was the revelation to the Jewish prophets but that the Supreme Being was also supremely Loving is a revelation to Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament, God is seldom addressed as Father. He is the Lord of Heaven and Earth, but in the New Testament He is a forgiving Father; He is ever ready to forgive the sins of His children. In many passages in Old Testament Jehovah is described as moral governor of the Universe and as a god of wrathful vengeance. But that forgiveness can exist side by side with chastisement, it was for Jesus of Nazareth to preach to the world. Forgiveness of sins is one of the most important features of Christianity.

As a corollary to the Fatherhood of God was the brotherhood of man. Anyone who loves the Father cannot but love His children. The Jews also had taught the duty of loving one's neighbour, but they loved the law of God more.¹ In Christianity, the meaning of neighbour was automatically extended, and embraced everybody who was in need of help. In Christianity, therefore, the brotherhood of man was universalised. In this connection, Christ's parable of the good Samaritan may be recalled. A man fell among the thieves and was left half dead on the way. A priest and the Levite came and saw and passed by. Now a Samaritan, who was not a co-religionist of the Jews, came, bound up the wounds of the man, set him on his breast, brought him to an inn and nursed him to life. Christ asked "Which of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him?" The lawyer replied "He that showed mercy on him." Then Jesus said "Go and do likewise."

At the time of the advent of Christianity powerful currents of Eastern mysticism were flowing over the Western part of Asia.² The religion of

¹ 'To walk in God's law which was given by Moses, the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of Jehovah, our Lord, and His ordinances and statutes' (Nehemiah 10 : 29), sums up the Jewish ideal.

² It is a fact of primary importance that Christianity is an oriental religion. Erich Seeberge in Carl Clemen's *Religions of the World*, p. 339.

Zoroaster and the philosophical monism of India came to be more and more widely known at the time. The thought currents of Greece also were making powerful inroads on the Hebrew mind. But the influence of the East is seen more predominantly. It is sometimes asserted that at some period of Jesus's life, he came into contact with the East.¹ That there are traces of the influence of the East on Christianity is a fact which cannot be disputed.

For instance, in Buddhism, which flourished at a much earlier date there are many things which show a remarkable similarity with some of the best elements in the teachings of Jesus Christ. The most striking of these resemblances is the high moral tone in both the creeds.

'It is not too much to say' says Rhys Davids 'that almost the whole of the moral teaching of the Gospels as distinct from the dogmatic teaching, will be found in Buddhist writings, several centuries older than the Gospels; that for instance, of all the moral doctrines collected together in the so-called Sermon on the Mount, all those which can be separated from the theistic dogmas there maintained are found again in the 'Pitakas.' In the one religion as in the other we find the same exhortations to boundless and indiscriminate giving, the same hatred of pretence, the same regard paid to the spirit as above the letter of the law, the same importance attached to purity, humility, meekness, gentleness, truth and love. And the coincidence is not only in the matter; it extends to the manner in which these doctrines are put forward. Like the Christ, the Buddha was wont to teach in parables, and to use homely figures of speech; and many of the sayings attributed to him are strangely like some of those found in the New Testament.'²

¹ In the account of the life story of Jesus Christ, there is a gap: from the age of 13 to the 30th year, no account can be obtained. Some have supposed that Jesus came to India and lived among the sages. But this is nothing but a myth.

² Professor Rhys Davids, *Journal of the Pali Text Society*, 1923, pp. 43-44. (Quoted in Radhakrishnan's *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, pp. 173-74.)

The influence of Judaism is, of course, obvious. The Prophetism of the Jewish religion, though dormant for centuries, was revived in Christianity together with its inwardness and emphasis on righteous life. Christianity recognised the fact that the door of heaven opens from within. Christianity showed a marked tendency towards the ethico-legal aspect which had been the core of Judaism. The life and ministry of Jesus and his claim to kingship through his descent from David, point to the influence of Jewish tradition. When John the Baptist called him 'lamb of God,' he was thinking of the Book of Psalms. The idea of 'suffering servant' was borrowed from Isaiah. The Messianic hope which is the most dominating thought in Christology is characteristic of Jewish prophecy. Even the Sermon on the Mount which contains the essence of the Ethico-religious teaching of Christ has affinity with the ideas of the Old Testament, although these have come in for a good deal of negative criticism at the hands of Christ. Generally it may be said that the teaching of Christ is a much more logical and much more improved edition of the ethics of the Old Testament.

When the Jews were taken captive to Babylon, these people, known as Exiles used to meet on river banks and other places in small groups in order to worship their God. These groups were the beginnings of Jewish synagogues. Christ at first preached in the Jewish synagogues. It is presumed that these groups supplied the pattern of the Christian congregations of Jerusalem, which developed into the Church.¹ But Christianity did not come from Judaism merely by way of a natural transition, but was in many respects a revolutionary development.

The influence of Greek philosophy was at this time very predominant, *e.g.*, the Stoic doctrine of Logos. According

¹ Church, as a name for Christian Congregation, first appears in the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament, where it is used for the whole people of Israel as a divinely called Congregation—Walker.

"The early Christians formed a distinct community devoted to Jesus as their Lord" (Hume).

to the Stoics, Logos was the world-soul which is a rational substance. This is called God. God is the Universal Reason. He is the eternal reason which governs the Universe and pervades all matter.¹ The Logos theory of the New Testament is indebted to this Greek influence. St. John opens his Gospel with the well-known mysticism, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Then John goes on to say "And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." This is hardly intelligible apart from its context in Greek philosophy. The failure of Stoic pantheism led to the Neo-Platonic view that God was essentially transcendent.² God as the ultimate principle of the Universe is inaccessible to man. Hence it became necessary to postulate some divine power or angel to serve as the mediating factor between God and Man. This was the Logos. By the doctrine of Logos, 'a ladder is let down to the earth by which divine influences may descend upon the worshipper and by which he may be drawn up towards the source of his, and of all existence.'³

Now Philo the Jew, a contemporary of Jesus, accepted the Old Testament as a real revelation of the word of God and interpreted the theology of the Jews according to the principles of Greek philosophy. He taught that Logos was the highest power or attribute of God. Through Logos a connection is established between the Supreme God and Man. God is revealed to man through the word, through Logos which is conceived in Greek philosophy as a second deity. Philo expresses the relation of this principle of revelation in a twofold way: (a) the Word is declared to be the Son of God, the first born, the highest archangel, the oldest of the angels: (b) he is said to be the ideal man of whom the actual man is a poor copy.⁴

In this way, Philo prepared the way for that 'marriage of Greek thought with Christianity which had such powerful

¹ Ritter—*History of Ancient Philosophy*, Vol. III. p. 522.

² Caird—*Evolution of Theology in the Greek Philosophers*, p. 179.

³ *Ibid*, p. 181.

⁴ Caird—*Ibid*, p. 187.

influence in the development of theology in the early Church.' ¹

Although influenced by Greek Philosophy and the religions of the East, Christianity was not a syncretistic religion. Its principal strength lay not so much in the soundness of its tenets as in the unique personality of its founder. This personality, as a matter of fact, was without any parallel or precedent in ancient history. His relationship with God, his spiritual zeal, his suffering, his resurrection and the theory of redemption have all contributed to the inconceivable measure of success which his evangelical mission attained.

Our knowledge of the character and personality of Jesus is derived from the Synoptic Gospels, that is of Mark, Matthew and Luke. These were, however, not composed before 70 A.D. Mark's was the first in point of time, and Matthew and Luke were based upon it. Mark was the companion of St. Peter and his version is based upon the lectures or statements of Peter who was one of the Twelve famous Apostles of Jesus. The Gospel of St. Matthew was fuller in detail and contains the teaching of Christ, as Mark's gives a picture of his life. Luke was a physician, a companion of St. Paul, who must have been supplied with many original matters not to be found in either Mark or Matthew. The Gospel of John is the latest of the Gospels. Its main thesis was to prove that Christ was the divine Son of God. He re-interprets the life-events of Christ so as to prove his thesis.² The Acts of the Apostles gives a description of how Christianity began to spread from Judea through Asia Minor and Greece to Rome, the then capital of the world. From the Acts we obtain a glimpse of the missionary work of St. Paul through whom Christianity became a world religion.

The factors which contributed to the rapid spread of this religion were first and foremost the intrinsic worth and high moral tone of the teaching of Christ. Secondly, the suffering of the Master who, it was contended, gave his life on the Cross for the sins of men ; and thirdly, the self-

¹ Caird—*Op. Cit.*, p. 183.

² See Introduction to the Bible as Literature.

sacrifice of a noble band of followers who did not hesitate to give their lives for the sake of faith.

When a small band of earnest people gathered together for the purpose of worshipping Christ, no serious notice seems to have been taken. The Roman authorities looked upon the new religion as a branch of Judaism which enjoyed the protection of the State. But gradually the hostility of the Jews made the Christians liable to persecution. It will be remembered that the Jews represented Christ as opposed to the Roman Empire and brought about his crucifixion. Next, Stephen was stoned to death by a mob. The immediate consequence of it was that the small congregation at Jerusalem was scattered "so that the seeds of Christianity were sown in different parts of the country."¹ The Roman officials came to take the view that it was criminal to be a Christian. The charges brought against the Christians were atheism and anarchy. Their denial of old gods was atheism and their refusal to worship the Roman Emperor was the height of sedition. The faithful band of Christians in those days gave the only reply possible, *i.e.*, they chose martyrdom.

There was dispute regarding the nature of Christ. The historical Jesus was the son of Joseph and Mary in human form but he came to be regarded as divine even in his lifetime. The question is: how can one be both human and divine? God is pure spirit. His essence consists in Truth and Reason. Matter does not enter at all into His constitution. Was Christ made of the same essence as his Father, God? But how can a man be identical with pure spirit? That Christ was different from the Father appears from his prayer that the Father's will and not his own be done. "The Father is greater than I" says he.² Again when he cried out in agony of the Cross, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me? there remained not the shadow of a doubt that he was different from Godhead. This is reconciled by saying that Christ was the Son of God. Christ himself approved of this appellation. Although there was no distinction in essence between Father and Son,

¹ Walker: *History of the Christian Church*, p. 24.

² John 14 : 28.

distinction there was, for father and son cannot be one and the same. The Ebonites of the second century interpreted Christ by saying that he was a human being in flesh and blood but that on account of his having fulfilled the Jewish laws completely, he was raised to the position of Messiah after Baptism.¹ St. Paul made Christ an eternal being. Christ existed before birth and lived after death. This view of pre-existence of Christ is connected with the theory of Fatherless Birth. To give the story a greater degree of credence the report goes that God communicated with Joseph in a vision and asked him to take Mary as his wife. But this did not set at rest all disputes in the matter and some went so far as to say that Christ as the divine manifestation and as pure spirit on this earth could not have been in flesh and matter. This view reduced Christ to a phantom, ghostlike, docetic appearance. This Docetic view was largely prevalent among the Gnostics.

There is no doubt that Gnosticism influenced the Christian Churches in their early period. The Gnostics meant 'knowers' from Gnosis—knowledge, not what we ordinarily mean by knowledge; but it means a mystical, supernatural wisdom by which salvation can be obtained. This salvation consists in regarding flesh or matter as intrinsically evil. Since the world of matter is evil, Christ could not have been a part of it. The Gnostics not only held with the Parsees the fundamental distinction between good and evil, but also between spirit and matter. The Gnostics were led to believe that spirit was held down by the burden of the flesh, in its struggle for salvation. It is only by keeping down the passions and impulses—in one word by denying the flesh, that the soul can be saved. As a result of this view, Christianity was led to follow the ascetic ideal and even to torture the body in order to make the spirit uncontaminated and pure. Celibacy was practised in the early Christian churches in the idea that all desires, particularly the sexual impulse, are evil. In one section of Syria, no married man could be baptised. This also reminds us of the Buddhists. Their asceticism and the insistence in their monastic order on celibacy closely corres-

¹ Walker, *Op. Cit.*

pond to the gnostic view which introduced the pursuit of ascetic ideal in the Christian churches.

Since the material world was an evil, the Gnostics thought that its Creator or Ruler was not the highest God but a Demiurge. Paul's teaching contained many similarities with the doctrine of the Gnostics who regarded him as their chief apostle.

BAPTISM

As a part of the general theory that matter was evil, the Christians attached great importance to the purification of the body. This appears from their insistence on the ceremony of Baptism. The practice of cleansing was known before the birth of Christianity, but in Christianity Baptism came to possess very great significance.

The Jews insisted on circumcision for proselytes but they also appear to have laid stress on cleansing by Baptism as early as the time of Christ. Perhaps John the Baptist took it from the Jews as the symbol of the admission into a new spiritual life. The early Christians held the view that baptism was necessary to wash away sins. The Fourth Gospel makes Christ declare 'Verily, I say unto thee except a man be born of water and the spirits he can not enter the kingdom of God.' In the Appendix to Mark the risen Christ says, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved." In Tertullian's opinion Baptism conveyed eternal life. St. Thomas Aquinas thought that without Baptism, there is no union with Christ.¹

The question is: if Baptism means cleansing of sins, why did Christ come for baptism at all? John the Baptist knew who Christ was and so the question of remission of his sins does not arise. The explanation as suggested by the Christians is that although baptism was not necessary so far as Jesus was concerned, he submits to it because in his own words "it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."²

¹ The Christian Fathers of the first centuries, notably St. Augustine held the view (*De Anima* I, c. 9) that a child who died without baptism was eternally damned.

² Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, about 200 A.D. in one of his epistles thus interprets the meaning of Baptism: when however they come to the water of salvation and to the sanctification of baptism, we ought to know

Like water, fire also has been held to be a great purifier. Just as physical impurities are removed by fire, so sins which were often regarded as material impurities are thought to be purified by fire. This explains the statement of John the Baptist about Christ that he will baptise by fire.¹

Sermon on the Mount

The high moral tone of Christianity is illustrated by the Sermon on the Mount. This forms the brightest jewel in the crown of the brilliant moral teaching of Jesus. It is difficult to say how far the Sermon represents the actual words of Christ. Probably later writers have also given interpolations of their own. Still the Sermon is looked upon by many as the highest point reached by man so far as moral speculations go.

The Sermon begins in a lyrical vein with several beatitudes—Blessed are the poor in spirit, Blessed are the meek, Blessed are the peace-makers, etc. They breathe a spirit of nobility and moral excellence scarcely surpassed in any religion.

In his condemnation of the human vices such as murder, adultery, etc., Christ not only goes much further than the Hebrew Prophets but places right emphasis on the inner side. Jesus is not satisfied with condemning the outward manifestations of the offences, but attacks the inward and to trust that there the devil is beaten down and the man, dedicated to God, set free by divine mercy. For as scorpions and serpents, which prevail on dry ground, when cast into the water, cannot prevail nor retain their venom, so also the wicked spirits which are called scorpions and serpents are trodden under foot by us, by the power given by the Lord and cannot remain any longer in the body of man in whom, baptised and sanctified, the Holy Spirit is beginning to dwell (Epistola 58, Art. 2). Cyprian boldly suffered death by beheading (258 A.D.).

¹ In India, purification plays a large part in Islam and Hinduism. In Islam lustrations with water are the pre-requisites of Prayer and Namaj. In Hinduism, a dip in the water is essential before the performance of any religious rite. Bathing in the sacred waters, particularly at auspicious moments, is regarded as very efficacious in removing the sins, not only of this life, but also of previous births. Similarly fire is looked upon by every Hindu as the sure means of purification. For example, no one can be restored to a condition of purity after contamination with a dead body or after return from cremation ground without touching fire.

springs from which they proceed. He takes the acts done from their external context and places them in the context of a man's character. He thus changes the view-point from legality to spirituality. For example, it is not enough, according to Christ, to refrain from killing, but one must control those inward forces which lead to it, *viz.*, anger. "Jesus turns his searchlight upon the heart and shows men what are the working forces within that arrest all growth and possibility of reform."¹

Purity is the greatest obligation of Christians. So in the matter of adultery, Jesus goes very far beyond the Jewish commandment. Absolute purity of heart is insisted on in Christ's sermon, *e.g.*, that whosoever looketh on a woman with lustful eyes is guilty of adultery. The inwardness of sin is never better expressed than in this Christian emendation of the Jewish commandment.

Then follows the injunction of non-resistance to evil. The Jewish idea of retaliation² in the saying 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth' is a maxim of revenge. It is prompted by natural impulse. Morality consists not in giving free play to our impulses but in checking them. So Christ's maxim not only gives the right direction, but expresses the belief that ultimately the power of goodness and benevolence will triumph.³

¹ Abingdon Bible, p. 963.

² Mine eyes shall not pity. Life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot (Deuteronomy XIX : 21; also Exodus XXI : 23-25; Leviticus XIV : 17-21).

³ The theory of Non-resistance to evil or absence of revengefulness inspired Gandhism in India under the name of passive resistance or *Satyāgraha*. - Mahatma Gandhi used to call it soul-force. The superiority of this soul force has been proved even in this materialistic age by the British voluntarily withdrawing from their alluring kingdom over India.

In this respect the rule of Christian life which is more often honoured in the breach has, however, claimed the allegiance of two master minds of the present times, *viz.*, Gandhi and Tolstoy. Tolstoy taught, like Gandhi, that 'violence should be used under no provocation and in no case under pretence of retribution. The chief evils among men result from the use of violence. Disguised as retribution, it is used by some against others. 'Only God can overcome evil and not be infected by it.' Tolstoy enjoins that we should neither support nor agree with violence or anything founded

This attitude of forgiveness and non-resistance has been condemned by some thinkers as a sign of weakness. In a world mad with the lust of power, forgiveness or non-violence is bound to be looked upon as undesirable and impracticable. For, it is contended so long as man cannot control his passions, this law of unrevengefulness will fall on deaf ears. But what is the result? Violence will beget more violence and the evil which is sought to be put down will go on increasing. Men like Nietzsche can call it a sign of slave-mentality, but if there is any one formula which can ensure peace to this war-weary world, it is non-violence.¹

The next important doctrine taught in the Sermon is 'love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you.' This is perhaps the most difficult rule of conduct which Christ gave to the world, perhaps for the first time. To forgive an enemy is one thing but to love him is another. One who can love his enemy, comes very near to God and can well claim his Sonship, because, only divine nature can love all beings alike whether friend or enemy. It must be admitted that the moral tone expressed in this injunction surpasses from the ethical and sociological points of view, anything which has been ever conceived by man.

upon violence. This will bring persecution on the part of the authorities. By suffering this in loving kindness, the persecuted will open their persecutor's eyes (Quoted by Julius F. Hecker: *Communism and Religion*).

¹ Nietzsche (1844-1900), the poet philosopher of Germany, believed in a new kind of civilisation in which the ideal is mastery of man over man. His ideal of 'superman' which exercised a great influence over the nineteenth century-thought means the evolution of a race of human beings who will assert their mastery over the rest of mankind. Nietzsche, therefore, regarded as 'slave morality' any creed or behaviour which offered obstacles to the 'will-to-power.' The morality of slaves coincides essentially with the ascetic nature of supernaturalism with which we are familiar. According to Nietzsche, a type of human race—the Nordic from which the Germans claimed descent—will be so trained as to assert their supremacy and mastery over the rest of mankind by brute force scattering to the wind all tendencies of slavish morality. 'All the brutality of trampling down those who may be in the way, of the unfettering of the primitive beast in human nature, appears here as the right and duty of the strong.' 'The strong is not bound to follow any rules either logical or ethical but those of his own will.—Windelband's *History of Philosophy*.

But the fundamental tenets of Christianity which secured for it a unique position among religions of the world are stated in Mark XII, 28-34 and Luke X, 25-37. Quoting from Deuteronomy¹ Jesus told the Scribe who questioned him 'What is the first command of all?' "Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God out of all thy heart, and out of all thy soul, and out of all thine understanding, and out of all thy strength." "This is the first command and the second is 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself'—greater than this there is no other command."²

The first is known by the Jews as the 'Shema' which every Jew repeats at his prayers daily. The second is found in Leviticus. 'They are the pivotal points of the new religion.'³ These two were combined for the first time in the teaching and in the person of Jesus.

These commandments of love are not difficult to fulfil like the preceding one, viz., loving one's enemy. But altogether they emphasise the aspect of Christianity as a religion of love. To the extent to which it has been successful in preaching this doctrine of love of God and the love of man, to that extent Christianity has been able to introduce a real dynamic element in faith.

The question is: Has it been successful in preaching Christ's doctrine of love? The last two world wars have proved conclusively that the teaching to love one's neighbour has produced very slight effect on the people who profess the Christian faith. This fact has produced misgivings in the mind of most people as to the adequacy of Christian religion to solve the problems of human life. But in reality Christianity is not to blame. The teaching is there, but the lust of power has made man blind. The lust of power is that all engrossing passion which makes people forget peace, charity and—God.

One writer⁴ has remarked that although Christianity is not to blame for the violent struggle in which its followers

¹ Deuteronomy VI : 4-5.

² Leviticus XIX : 18.

³ Abingdon Bible, p. 938.

⁴ E. D. Soper : *The Religions of Mankind*, p. 327.

are engaged, its method is defective. It has taught individuals the virtue of charity and neighbourliness but not the nations. The individuals have been taught to love their neighbours but nations have not. He says "while the message of peace had been proved the very voice of God in individual hearts and in countless churches and denominations, it had never been seriously applied to society at large and among the nations." But this is a poor consolation, based on a misconception of the relation between individual and society. If the individuals composing a society are prompted by noble impulses, the society cannot but be guided by them. Take the case of Ivan, grandson of the Russian rustic prophet Sutayev. Ivan, who was a staunch believer in the Gospel, when asked to join the army as a recruit, refused to take an oath, saying that it breaks the commandment, *viz.*, 'thou shalt not swear.' When handed a gun he said 'thou shalt not kill.' He was thrown into prison but refused to take any food.¹ Such is the attitude of those who really believe in the Christian gospel of non-violence. If people believe in love either individually or collectively which to my mind comes to about the same thing, it is impossible for them to create conditions of hate which lead inevitably to war. Here we may recall the difference between the two great minds of modern times, who have influenced the thoughts of millions of men. I mean Count Tolstoy and Karl Marx.

Marx's philosophy consists in showing that a struggle between the capitalistic and working classes, between the wage-earning class and their masters is inevitable. He concludes by saying that nothing short of the abolition of the master class can solve the conflict. But this will be possible only by revolution, by a bloody conflict; because those who have now the monopoly of the means of production will never agree to part with power. The workers must seize the State by any means fair or foul and usher in the Communist State. There is no doubt that there is a certain amount of idealism in the thought that men all the world over will unite in their attempt to wrest freedom from the hands of

¹ See Julius F. Hecker : *Communism and Religion*.

those who have kept their fellowbeings down under the yoke of subjection and slavery. But even the leaders of this mode of thinking cannot but admit that the way to such equality and liberty which the Communists contemplate lies through mass murder, plunder, anarchy and wholesale destruction. The Communists have not hesitated to include all these in their programme. They have accepted a particular ideal and will stop at nothing to secure it. This is 'transvaluation of values.' All that is considered heinous and unworthy and so rejected, is re-admitted as valuable in order to achieve the Communist ideal.

But look at the other picture. Tolstoy was no less impressed by the social tyranny of the modern world and no less eager for its removal. But his principle was to avoid the evil method, because he was persuaded that evil can never produce good.¹ To obtain good by the hated means of murder, robbery, etc., can only make the conditions worse. Tolstoy's soul registered all the 'seismographic shocks' produced by the revolutionary upheaval of the times particularly in Bolshevist Russia, and Tolstoy's works unmistakably prove how he felt with the suffering masses.

Lenin while acknowledging Tolstoy's extraordinary power in exposing and denouncing their common enemy—the Capitalist—differed from him in his non-resistance to evil. In Lenin's opinion, Tolstoy represents the sufferings of the masses with emotion. "He reflects their feelings so genuinely that he incorporates into his teaching their unaffected simplicity, their estrangement from politics, their mysticism, their desire to flee the world, their non-resistance to evil, their helpless imprecations upon Capitalism and the power of money."²

The difference between Tolstoy on the one hand and Marx and Lenin on the other is that the latter drifted far

¹ It is instructive to recall, what the Buddhists said more than two thousand years ago :

नहि वैराणि वैरेण शम्यन्ति । अद्वैरेण च शम्यन्ति एष धर्मः सनातनः ॥—धम्मपद ।

Violence can never be assuaged by violence, but by non-violence—this is the eternal religion.

² Julius Hecker's *Communism and Religion*.

away from religion and from the noblest sentiment to which Christ had given expression, *viz.*, 'love your neighbour.' Marx is emphatic in his support of atheism when he says that religion is "the soul of soul-less condition, the heart of a heartless world, the opium of the people."¹ Lenin's attitude is also well known. Mahatma Gandhi was a disciple of Tolstoy, and Gandhi's Passive Resistance movement started in South Africa in 1906-7 was modelled on the non-resistance of Tolstoy.² But the non-violence creed or the creed of Ahimsa was not unknown to the Indians in very early times.

Tolstoy's temperament which accords with the Indian view is beautifully reflected in his parable of the wanderer. The parable is this: A wanderer pursued by a ferocious beast runs for his life and falls into an empty well inhabited by a dragon. Luckily, he finds the branch of a tree overhanging the well. The wanderer then hangs on to the branch between two dangers—the lion and the dragon. But all on a sudden he notices two mice—one black and the other white—gnawing away the branch on which he is hanging. He sees that he is doomed. At that very moment he observes some honey is dripping from the leaves. The wanderer licks the sweet drops. In such a manner, says Tolstoy, I am hanging on the branch of my life-tree. The dragon is the monster of death, honey is the ephemeral earthly joys, the black and the white mice are day and night.

There is a certain amount of asceticism in this view of life. But no religion is possible without asceticism. The Christians have done no greater harm to their religion than to ignore the tone of asceticism which in my opinion forms the core of Christ's teaching. When a young man approached him and said he had kept the commandments all his life, and asked what more was wanted, Christ said to

¹ Criticism of Hegel's *Philosophy of Law*.

² Prof. Jorgensen of Denmark, a delegate to the Pacifist Conference held at Santiniketan (afterwards at Sevagram), said that the Russians are the most religious people in Europe and that from 1928-47, 26 millions of Tolstoy's works have been sold in Soviet Russia.

him, "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor. . . ."¹

Religion in the truest sense means sacrifice. It demands dedication, and dedication requires sacrifice of earthly pleasures. Emphasis on this otherworldliness is the essential requirement of every system of advanced religion.

The failure to appreciate this has been the cause of rot that has set in in the Christian Church. The history of the Christian Church reveals this fact. The Church was the means to realise Christ and his ideals. But gradually the Church became centre of power and wanted to dominate the life of its votaries by standing as an intermediary between God and Man. The Church behaved as if it only had the power of dispensing divine grace and salvation. So it laid stress on sacraments—led people to believe that without these sacraments which are controlled by the Church, there can be no spiritual life for the Christians.

In the Middle Ages, the domination of the Church as the representative of God on earth reached its culmination, when the Pope asserted his ecclesiastical jurisdiction, not only on the Churches, but on kings and emperors. It was clear that only by breaking the fetters of the Church and papacy spiritual freedom could be ensured. This was accomplished by Renaissance and Reformation. In the fifteenth century when Constantinople fell into the hands of the Turks, scholars and learned men fled to different countries of Europe bringing genuine knowledge and scholarship with them. This was the undoing of the authority of the Church.

In the sixteenth century, Martin Luther (1483-1546) fought for and won the battle for the liberty of the individual from the yoke of the Church and the Pope.² To him faith was a vital, transforming power, a new and vivifying personal relationship. He therefore protested against the authority of the Church to act as mediator between God and Man. Luther denied the authority of the Pope, infallibility of the

¹ St. Matthew, XIX, 20, 21.

² Walker: *History of the Christian Church*, pp. 335-50.

ecclesiastical councils, and held that the final appeal lay only to the Scriptures and to the Scriptures, moreover, as interpreted by the individual judgment.

But this substitution of the authority of the Bible for the authority of the Church did not succeed in freeing the individual to the extent desired. Protestants came to be called the People of the Book. The veneration for the Bible amounted almost to Bibliolatry.¹ The Christians have undoubtedly great respect for the Scriptures but their true seat of authority in religion is in the person of Jesus. "The revelation contained in the Book found its culmination in a Person."²

Since the age of Reformation, various movements have been set on foot to make Christianity a living faith so that it may create a genuine thirst for salvation in the minds of its followers. In the thirties of the sixteenth century, Ignatius Loyola formed a company of serious-minded students, who took a vow to go to Jerusalem in order to work for the Church and their fellow-men. They called themselves 'the knights of the Virgin' and their creed was love to God and the Church as they understood it. Ignatius became the first 'General' of the group, each member of which was disciplined by the use of the 'Spiritual Exercises' in accordance with which a Jesuit (or the servant of Jesus) was drilled in a 'spiritual manual of arms.' The Jesuits carry on a war with evil and by intense contemplation of the life and teachings of Christ prepare themselves for spiritual life.³ But the sect was the direct antithesis of Protestantism. It secured, however, a large following and helped in the expansion of Christianity.

Another vitalising movement was initiated by George Fox (1624-1691). This movement is also instructive as it throws some light on the attempts to revitalise the religion of Christ. Fox preached that the sacraments are

¹ The only parallel of this is furnished by the Sikhs, who, after the demise of their tenth Guru or spiritual leader, did away with spiritual leadership of man and substituted their Holy Book, the Granth Saheb, for Guru.

² Soper : *Op. Cit.*, p. 318.

³ Walker : *History of the Christian Church*, p. 426.

inward and spiritual verities. The outward elements are not merely unnecessary but misleading. War is unlawful for a Christian. All Christianity to be true must express itself in a transformed, consecrated life. The followers of George Fox were called Quakers or Society of Friends. They hated all formalism and demanded inward spiritual experience.¹

Last of all, I wish to refer to the Methodists. The founder of this sect was John Wesley (1703-1791). At first this new movement was started under the Church of England. But gradually the organisation of its own order required a separation. The guiding principle of the Methodists was love to God and to one's neighbour. This would free man from sin. The leaders of this movement, Wesley and Whitefield, were very effective preachers. Under their preaching, remarkable bodily excitements took place in the audience. Men and women cried out, fainted and were torn with convulsions. To both preachers, this was the result of God's spirit or the visible resistance of the evil spirit.²

THE SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY

The spread of Christianity is in a sense a romance. At first the followers of 'the way' were closely united with the people of Israel and remained within Judaism. They followed the old forms of religious worship. But gradually they separated from the parent religion inasmuch as they were convinced (1) that Jesus was the Messiah of God and (2) that salvation was centred in him and not in the Mosaic Law.

The Book of Acts of the Apostles gives a graphic description of how Christianity started on its career of conquest and threw a dynamic challenge to the people with whom it came in contact. The principal weapons in the armoury of the few faithful saints were suffering and sacrifice. The story of the spread of Christianity to the different parts of the far flung Roman Empire is the story of how suffering and not force conquers the world. The Acts is the *Magna Charta* of the religion. In the Acts of the

¹ Walker : *History of the Christian Church*, p. 479.

² This finds a parallel in the exhibitions of bodily disturbances during the Vaisnava teaching or singing of Vaisnava songs. The exhibitions are called Sattwik, i.e., connected with the best elements of human nature and regarded as signs of God's favour. Cf. also the ecstatic conditions of Sufis.

Apostles, the Gospel—the message of Jesus Christ—becomes incarnate and its spiritual force becomes irresistible through martyrdom.

But what was the centre of gravity of its appeal? Man is by nature sinful. Every one who has the power of looking before and after must at some time or other of his life feel weighed down with the burden of sin. The knowledge that God dispenses even-handed justice in rewarding virtues and punishing vice is not consoling enough. The conception of mercy as an attribute of God was gradually emerging in the consciousness of the Prophets, but still to many a weak mind full of consciousness of sin, God was an ecclesiastical disciplinarian exacting a strict conformity to the code of laws as revealed by God.

Here we see the inherent excellence of the Christian faith. In the theory of Reconciliation, Christianity brought a message of hope never dreamt of before. Reconciliation of the sinful world takes place through the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus. He offered himself as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind. The sinless one was identified in some mysterious way with the sins of man. He was sent by God to save mankind and the only way by which he could save the sinful race was by making atonement for their sins by his own innocent blood.

St. Paul boldly put forward this interpretation of the death of Christ as illustration of the redemptive purpose of God. Christ was the second or last Adam.¹ The first Adam brought death into this world and the second Adam made man free from sin.² 'The wages of sin is death.' Therefore the drama which commenced with the fall of man ended happily with his glorious resurrection.³ The ultimate enemy of man is death. It is sin that has invested death with terror. Christ's final triumph over sin and death makes³ the preaching of Paul so effective and successful.

¹ I Cor. 15 : 22.

² Resurrection was understood generally in the material or physical sense. But St. Paul following the Master interpreted it in a spiritual sense.

³ Romans 5 : 12, 7 : 9.

The resurrection takes place through love. In the ministry of St. Paul, the doctrine of love plays a conspicuous part. "Love takes long views and acts with kindness, is free from jealous thoughts, from boastful words, from self-conceit, from discourtesy; it is not self-seeking nor passionate,¹ keeps no reckoning of wrong, takes no delight in injustice, but finds its joy in that which rejoices Truth also." This then is the foundation on which the ideal of character is built by the saintly Christians who took upon their shoulders the difficult mission of Christ.

Saul was chosen by Christ himself for this sacred task. He was not one of the twelve Apostles nor was he blessed with their companionship. On his way to Damascus, he saw a light in the midst of which Christ appeared and said "Saul, Saul why persecutest thou me?"² Saul was persecuting the Christians. Probably he was one of those who had caused Stephen to be stoned to death. In fact he was going to Damascus with letters to the Synagogues to send to Jerusalem in chains any Christians ("any of the way") he found there, "whether they were men or women." Saul at once recognised Jesus and recognised his own mission too. He was changed from a persecutor to a missionary. He was 'a chosen vessel' to bear the name of Christ to the Gentiles. Saul was a Hebrew name, and Paul a Roman one. It was common in those days to have more than one name. Paul literally means a man of short stature and St. Paul was actually short in stature, but this does not appear to have anything to do with his name. From the outset of his mission to the Roman Empire it was fitting that he should be known by his Roman name.

The main point in Pauline Christianity is that it is entirely Christocentric.³ His creed in its simplified form is that 'Jesus is Lord.'⁴ The words of Jesus have supreme authority with him and his whole thought is centred in the

¹ With the Sufis and the Vaishnavas Divine love is passionate. In fact, in passionate manifestation of the feeling consists its essence.

² The Acts, Chapter 9 : 4.

³ *Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 706.

⁴ I Cor. 12 : 3.

acts of redemption and the blessings won thereby. Christ was the Son of God. Originally he belonged to a higher world and left it of his own accord in order to bring about the salvation of man from this sinful world. St. Paul's mind was occupied more with the risen Christ than with his earthly career. It was after the Resurrection that the true greatness of Christ was realised. "In his exaltation that sonship is displayed fully." "For to this Christ died, and lived again, that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living."

Paul was a mystic as well as a missionary. It was mainly through Paul's efforts that Christianity spread among the Gentiles. The Jews and Gentiles were sharply contrasted in the literature of the Jews. The Jews regarded themselves as holy, as Yahweh's people, and the non-Israelites who included the Greeks and the Romans as 'nations' whom the Apocrypha speaks of as uncircumcised, unclean, idol-worshippers, who do not observe the Sabbath, etc.¹

Therefore the Jews avoided the Gentiles altogether and the difference between them was accentuated during the Babylonian exile, though this race-hatred so far as the Jews were concerned was considerably toned down later on and the culmination was reached when the doors of Christianity were thrown open to the Jews and Gentiles alike as the result of St. Paul's preaching.

In the Acts of the Apostles and in the famous letters which have been recognised as part of the Christian scripture, the great figure of St. Paul comes out prominently as the indefatigable missionary to whom the credit belongs of making Christianity a world religion.

The Epistles of St. Paul contain the exposition of the principles of Christian theology as well as earnest persuasion to the people to whom they were addressed. They illustrate not merely the love and loyalty which characterised Paul's character, but also his mastery over the ethical and spiritual ingredients of his religion. He established many churches

¹ *Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 690.

in the cities from Asia Minor to Rome and inspired the devoted bands of followers who constituted the early members of the Christian Church. The enthusiasm with which he worked from 51 A.D., until his death (before 68 A.D.), found its fitting culmination in his martyrdom at Rome where he was beheaded under Nero's orders.¹

¹ Nero died in 68 A.D.

ISLAM

The history of Islam is pre-eminently the history of how religion has proved the most powerful force in moulding the character of a people. Islam converted a class of lazy, ignorant and superstitious folk into a brave, cultured and warlike people who, at one time, rolled like an avalanche through the entire length of three continents of the old hemisphere. The dynamism of religion is nowhere illustrated so well as in the case of this, the youngest among the great religions of the world.

The religion of Mohammad, as is well known, is a Semitic religion and draws its inspiration from the other two Semitic religions, *viz.*, Judaism and Christianity.

Mohammad was the posthumous son of Abdallah belonging to the Quoresh tribe and was thus an orphan brought up by his widowed mother. In after life, therefore, he had always a soft corner for widows and orphans. He married Khadija, a widow, 15 years older than himself, when he was 25. His marriage with wealthy Khadija, who had engaged him to look after her business affairs, lifted him out of poverty and enabled him to live up to the social position to which he was entitled by right of birth. Mohammad was a man of thoughtful or pensive disposition and loved to spend his time in brooding over the problems of religion and philosophy. It was at the age of forty that he felt at Mount Hira a call to convey a divine message and he was greatly agitated in mind. "Recite thou. in the name of thy Lord, Who created."¹ This is the revelation he received. This revelation was no doubt similar to the prophecy of the Jews, but there is a great deal of difference in this that God spoke to Mohammad direct and commissioned him to deliver the message to mankind. Quran the Mohammadan scriptures, means 'that which is recited.'

After two years another revelation came, for which Mohammad had been waiting, to corroborate the first and

¹ Sura 96, Quran.

this is recorded in Sura 74.¹ After this he never doubted that he was "in immediate contact with God."² Mohammad used to get these inspirations whenever circumstances needed them. There are some who think that Mohammad, during the inspired moments was subject to epileptic fits or some such malady. But other godlike persons have been open to criticism of this kind and generally the ecstatic conditions induced by great religious excitement are regarded as 'pathological cases.'³

The prophet of Arabia was a most uncompromising advocate of monotheism. In fact he started by proclaiming, at great personal risk, against the polytheism and idolatrous practices of the popular religion. In Arabia people worshipped the powers of Nature, the stars, etc. Mohammad was dissatisfied with the moral and religious degradation of the Arabs. His contact with the Jews and the Christians must have led him in the direction of a monotheistic creed.⁴ It is against this background that we are to understand and evaluate the great contribution made by Islam. Probably some germs of the monotheistic doctrine were there among the Pre-Islamic Arabs.⁵ The Hanifs were dissatisfied with the prevalent paganism and inclined towards monotheism.

Mohammad preached the doctrine of the unity of God and warned his people that the Day of Judgement was at hand, in the fashion of John the Baptist in the Christian religion. That Mohammad felt a call in his heart and believed sincerely in his divine mission there can be no doubt. "If self-sacrifice, honesty of purpose, unswerving belief in

¹ O thou, enwrapped in thy mantle,
Arise and warn

Thy Lord—magnify Him.—*Rodwell's Translation.*

² Soper : *Religions of Mankind*, p. 280.

³ Chaitanya, the great Vaishnava Reformer of Bengal, was regarded as a pathological case even when he was alive.

⁴ Carl Clemen : *Religions of the World*—Article 'Islam' by Franz Dabinger, p. 439.

⁵ Some passages in the Quran make it probable that the tribal polytheism was being gradually tempered by the recognition of a Supreme Deity, sometime before the birth of Mohammad. See Haridas Bhattacharyya—*Foundations of Living Faiths.*

one's mission, a marvellous insight into existing wrong or error and the perception and use of the best means for its removal, are among the outward and visible signs of inspiration, the mission of Mohammad was inspired." ¹

At first Khadija, the faithful first wife of Mohammad, was the only convert to his new faith and a few other good people, viz. Abu Bakr, Ali and Omar. But the rest of the Meccans turned a deaf ear to him. He called his kinsmen together and asked them to adopt the new faith. He said "No Arab has offered to his nation more precious advantages than those I bring you. I offer you happiness in this world and in the life to come." But he received nothing but scoffing and contempt from them.² They realised that the success of the new faith would mean the destruction of the national religion, and loss of wealth and power to the guardians of the sacred Ka'ba. As the number of adherents to the new faith increased, the hostility of the Quoresh increased and they heaped on Mohammad insults, abuses and threats. But Mohammad was safe under the protection of his uncle Abu Talib, an influential kinsman. It is said that once the Quoresh approached Abu Talib and asked him to restrain Mohammad from making attacks on their ancestral faith. When Abu Talib appealed to Mohammad, he replied, "Were the sun to come down on my right hand and the moon on my left, and the choice were offered me of abandoning my mission until God Himself should reveal it or perishing in the attempt, I would not abandon it." Abu Talib was moved, and exclaimed "Go and say whatever thou wilt, by God. I will never give thee up unto thy enemies." ³

In the conversion of Umar, we have an example of how the new faith succeeded in winning more and more followers. Umar, who was one of the bitterest enemies of Mussalmans became one of the ardent followers of Mohammad and succeeded him after his death. One day being exasperated with the persistence of Mohammad in preaching against the

¹ Dr. Leitner : *Religious Systems of the World*, p. 293, quoted by Haridas Bhattacharyya in *Foundations of Living Faiths*, p. 352.

² Sir T. W. Arnold : *Preaching of Islam* :

³ *Ibid.*

national religion, he rushed sword in hand to slay him. On the way one of his relatives met him and asked him where he was going. Omar said that he wanted to kill the renegade, *i.e.*, Mohammad. But the relative advised him to punish first the members of his own family and set them right. He said, "Thy brother-in-law and thy sister have become followers of Mohammad." When he heard this, he turned back home and rushed upon his brother-in-law, Said, and struck him. Fatima, his sister, threw herself between them to protect her husband and was wounded. The sight of blood on the face of his sister softened Omar's heart and he agreed to listen to their new creed. When Omar read the paper containing an exposition of it, he was converted.

Khadija, the wife of Mohammad, who was practically his guardian angel died in 620 A.D. His uncle Abu Talib also died about this time. So he was obliged to transfer the venue of his activities from Mecca to Medina. From this the era of the Moslems called Anno Hegirae is reckoned (622 A.D.). In Medina, Mohammad was welcomed by some tribes, who had been fighting against each other and chose Mohammad as their leader. This was the beginning of the success of his mission.

Mohammad's God, Allah, was a god of power. In fact, the simple faith he preached conceived God almost as a great sovereign, whose will was law. When the number of his followers increased, he drilled them in devotions, religious exercises and zealous aggressiveness. His success in two battles against overwhelming odds raised his military prowess in the estimation of the people and he even went so far as to warn the neighbouring Kings such as the Emperor of Byzantium, the King of Persia, the Negus of Abyssinia and the Governor of Egypt.¹

Now on, Mohammad goes on to play a very ambitious role. He would not only convey the message of God or recite His communication to people, but conquer the whole world and convert it to his Gospel. In this military campaigning he was assisted by his personal followers Abu Bakr

¹ This is of doubtful authenticity. See Wensinck: *The Muslim Creed*, pp. 7-8.

and Omar, who carried out the plans of the Prophet after his death. He began as the ruler of Medina with the doubtful allegiance of a few tribesmen; he ended his career as the ruler of the whole of Arabia. His letters to the foreign potentates show the extent of his political ambition. Mecca was captured without bloodshed but the methods by which Mohammad subdued the people were certainly not the methods of a religious regenerator. His followers however never questioned the justice of his methods, perhaps under the idea that whatever was done by this prophet of God was directly inspired by God. For instance, when he got his adopted son Zaid to divorce his wife in order that Mohammad might be able to marry her, no dissatisfaction was caused, because the prophet himself gave out that this was done at the bidding of God Himself. So long as Khadija lived, he took no second wife, but after the death of that noble lady, Mohammad married some ten or twelve wives.

Mohammad was no doubt a social reformer inasmuch as he put down once for all the Arabian practices of infanticide of girl babies. He also brought about a great social and political reform in that he united the different Arab tribes who were constantly engaged in blood feuds. But so far as women were concerned, he could not rise above the spirit of his time. Women were made to live under conditions which cannot be considered satisfactory from the modern standpoint. The law of divorce was very easy and altogether in favour of the husbands. Mohammad introduced the practice of veils which has stood in the way of progress and enlightenment of Moslem women. Similarly the practice of polygamy and, to a limited extent, of slavery approved by Islam is supposed to have retarded the progress of the Moslems.¹

“The rapid expansion of Islam is one of the marvels of history.”² During the Caliphate of the first four successors of the Prophet (632-711), Persia, Syria, Palestine and Egypt were conquered. In 711, the Mohammedan army entered Spain after crossing North Africa. “When the first tide

¹ Soper : *Religions of Mankind*, p. 300.

² *Ibid*, p. 296.

of Mohammedan invasion set in towards the West, its irresistible flood seemed about to overwhelm the whole of Europe and extinguish every trace of Christianity.”¹

Had the Mussalmans been successful in the rest of Europe as they had been in Spain, Christianity would have suffered a serious setback. But the victory in the battle of Tours or Poitiers in France won in 732 by Charles who received the name of Martel (hammer) narrowly checked the invasion of the Mohammadan hordes.

It has been a matter of wonder how the Arabs within an incredibly short time of their conversion succeeded in founding one of the greatest empires which the world has ever seen. The Arab army overran Syria, Persia, Northern Africa and some of the fairest provinces of the Roman Empire. What was the secret? Their number could not have been very large—indeed they must have been much fewer than many of the armies whom they overthrew in combat.² They were mostly drawn from the Arab deserts which offered them a miserable subsistence. It has been suggested that the zeal of the new religion made them invincible in battle. But it is difficult to believe that the Bedouins who mainly composed the invading army were all actuated by their allegiance to the Prophet or his teaching with a heartfelt conviction. They marched with a fanatical disregard of death, and with the conviction that Allah was on their side. This was the moral force. For one thing, they had a good deal to gain by these wars and nothing to lose. The prospects of plunder must have provided a strong incentive as a worldly or economic force. The solidarity of their organisation under the new religious tie was phenomenally strong and leadership, able and infallible. Then, the Christians who opposed them lacked both enthusiasm and unity. This is also what happened in India. Vast armies, whose valour was unquestionable, collapsed when they opposed the Moslem invaders because they lacked organisation and a common national feeling of

¹ Sir William Muir: *The Mohammedan Controversy and Other Articles*, p. 2.

² See Sir T. W. Arnold: *Preaching of Islam*.

unity together with the determination which such a feeling produces.

The Mohammadans claim divine origin for the Quran, the scripture of the Moslems. God communicated the Quran to Mohammad in the Arabic language and no Mussalman will tolerate any departure from this book which is believed to be the word of God. It is contended that since Mohammad was an illiterate man (he calls himself so in the Quran Sura vii: 156), the Quran containing the essence of wisdom could not but be inspired. The Prophet himself threw down the challenge that none who was not inspired by God could have produced the book.¹

But the Quran was not composed all at once or even at one place.² Part of it was composed at Mecca and part at Medina and it took years to be completed. The finished work written in Arabic, the language of the angels, consists of one hundred and fourteen chapters or Suras of unequal length.

It was found, as is natural in a composition of this kind, that there was a good deal in the book which was not clearly intelligible and much again which contained inconsistencies and contradictions. This gave rise to controversy and dispute. Even in the life time of the prophet, it was felt that the book needed clarification and elucidation. This

¹ The word 'Ummi' in the Quran is taken to mean 'illiterate,' i.e., one who cannot read or write. But could Mohammad read and write after the Revelation?—is the question.

² The Quran was perhaps communicated orally to Mohammad, but his followers regard it as a heavenly book which was brought from heaven to the Prophet by Gabriel or Jibril. It is likely that Mohammad's amanuensis Zaid made a compilation of the sayings of Mohammad. When disputes arose over various readings, a final recension was made by Zaid and several others of the Prophet's own tribe and this is the standard version of the Quran.

Soper, p. 286: R. E. Hume: *The World's Living Religions*. Hume says that all existing copies of the previous compilation were ordered to be destroyed, p. 220; see also Muir, *Life*, Vol. I, p. xiii.

'Quran' literally means recitation. It may be considered as the verbal noun of the stem 'to recite.' "And when we recite it, then follows its recitation" (5 xvi—42). Quran means the speech of God. In this sense it is uncreated. Arberry, p. 23.

led to *Tafsir* or exposition of the Quran based on authentic utterances of the Apostle.

The Quran is not only an inspired book of religious canons but also a lawbook. In order, therefore, that the book may meet the religious, political and social needs of the followers of the faith, recourse was had to the *Hadis* or tradition. Mohammad found that in his country there existed a body of unwritten laws among the masses which was held to be right and valid. Appeal was therefore made to the traditional custom to supply an unerring body of rules of conduct.¹ Mohammad, although he broke away from the ancient beliefs and customs, could not abolish this Sunna or customary law. He adapted it to the requirements of his new faith and so Sunna came to be regarded as the Islamic code approved by its founder and his companions. Their words, conduct, and desires constitute the contents of the tradition known as *Hadis*.²

The catholic instinct of Islam is illustrated not only by the acceptance of the age-old usage which prevailed in that period but also in the recognition of public opinion as a valuable source of guidance for the religious life of the Faithful. *Vox dei* was not however taken in the sense of the opinion of the masses but of the 'spiritual guides of the people, scribes or lawyers.'³ The ulemas (lawyers in Arabic) and the mollas (Persian) are alone competent to give professional advice to the followers of Islam.⁴

Mohammad proclaimed himself at first as a warner and told the sinful world that the day of reckoning was near at hand. But this role he seems to have abandoned and to have declared that he was the Apostle of God. It is not enough that the believer should acquiesce in the unity of God—this was of course the *sine qua non* of the new faith—but should believe in Mohammad's mission as the *Rasul* or messenger of Allah—which is equally important. His whole formula consists of two parts—(1) that there is no God but

¹ In Hinduism also traditional custom is sometimes regarded as more binding than the written law or *Smriti*.

² Carl Clemen, p. 444.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 444.

⁴ *Cf.* The ideal of the Wise man among the Stoics.

Allah and this is urged against the polytheists; (2) that Mohammad is the Apostle. This is obviously against the other monotheistic systems. There have been many prophets of course and at one time Mohammad seems to have held that every nation has its own prophet and "every age has its Book."¹ But in practice, this statement does not seem to have been adhered to.

Henceforward he proclaims that "there is no God but Allah and Mohammad is the Apostle of Allah. This declaration of faith is called *Shahada*. This means in plain language that Islam is the only religion and Mohammad the only person through whom God has chosen to reveal his religion. Mohammad never claimed any divinity for himself, and his objection against the Christians was that they believed in the divinity of Christ and His Mother. From the point of view of Rationalism, this new faith may therefore be regarded as an advance, but this does not prevent the Mohammadans from believing in miracles. They ascribe, like the followers of Jesus Christ, numerous miracles to Mohammad, such as, he cleft the moon in twain, he travelled to Jerusalem in a night and even ascended to heaven in the human body and held conversation with God Himself.²

All these go to show the tremendous hold which the prophet of Islam had on the mass mind in those dark days of idolatry, superstition and polytheistic practices. Therefore, when he proclaimed himself as the prophet in whom the line of prophets comes to an end—he calls himself 'the seal of the prophets'³—people understood it in the only sense

¹ Quran—Sura xiii.

² Sura xvii, 62 (Sec.). This is explained as a vision by some.

³ One who accepts the truth of the Revelation is called *Mumin* (Believer); when he worships God at definite times laid down in the Quran, he is called *Abid* (worshipper). One who has expelled the love of this world from his heart, is called *Zahid* (Recluse); when he attains the love of God, he is called *Wali* (Saint). When he is gifted with inspiration, he becomes a *Nebi* (Prophet), and when entrusted next with God's message, he is called *Rasul* (Apostle). When he is appointed to abrogate a previous dispensation and preach a new one, he is called *ulu'l' Azm* (who has a mission). When this mission is final, he is called *Khatm* (Seal).—Palmer—*Oriental Mysticism*.

possible, viz., that Islam is the last word in the history of religious development.

In the Quran the names of twenty-eight prophets occur, and they include besides Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus, Aesop and Alexander the Great. But Mohammad alone is dignified with the title of Rasulullah, the messenger of God. Every apostle is a prophet, but not every prophet an apostle. Mohammad is the greatest of apostles.

But the Islamic theology makes Mohammad or the Light of Mohammad as having existed before all creation. The Light of Mohammad is created from the Light of God and makes possible subsequent creation. He is even conceived as the Holy Divine Spirit and the medium through which God becomes conscious of Himself in creation.¹ This is an echo of the Christian doctrine of the Holy Ghost. Since Quran is the uncreated Word of God, it is like the Logos doctrine of Christianity.

Mohammad has accepted from Christianity the idea of intercession.² At one time he thought that the prophets of different peoples interceded in favour of their respective people on the Day of Judgment. In early Christian literature, we find that the prophets, angels, apostles, etc., intercede for the sinners. In Islamic theology the same classes are supposed to enjoy the privilege of intercession. But gradually the view appeared that all the other prophets when requested to intercede would excuse themselves and Mohammad alone would, with the permission of Allah, rescue the sinners from Hell.³

Thus the Islamic conception of prophetism combines the Judaic monotheism with the Christian doctrine of Mediation. But the question is: how to reconcile the function of intercession with the theory of predestination? If God has ordained it beforehand, who is to be in the blazing hell fire and who is to enjoy the Elysian pleasures in paradise, what difference can intercession make? The Quran however does not explicitly mention that Mohammad will act as Inter-

¹ Nicholson: *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, p. 110.

² See Hughes' article on Intercession—*Dictionary of Islam*.

³ Cf. Jesus descended into hell to rescue its inmates.

cessor.' But such belief is supported by the meaning of certain statements in the Quran,¹ and the orthodox community has accepted intercession as a part of the creed.

The insistence on predestination can hardly be reconciled with freedom of will. Unless man can act freely, the question of sin does not arise. But in Islam, the unchangeable decrees of God predetermining all that happens in the world of nature and of men leave very little for which man can be held responsible. Sin, according to Islam, is disobedience and virtue, obedience to the laws and injunctions laid down in the Quran. No one is entitled to question them. Even the least of the written word is a law imperative unto the faithful.

In the third century A.H., a sect of free thinkers arose in Baghdad² who denied the theory of predestination and asserted the freedom of human will. These Mutazilites or seceders as they were called, held many unorthodox doctrines.³ The Mutazilites were finally defeated in debate by Al-Ashari, the champion of orthodoxy, who had once been a mutazilite himself. Al-Ashari was a master of dialectic and employed the methods of scholastic philosophy. Since then the orthodox opinion of the Moslems has never suffered any great setback.

Mohammad was not only a spiritual leader but a great political genius. He foresaw that in order to establish his religion on a world scale, it was necessary to knit the people of Arabia by a common faith and then to push the borders of his dominion far beyond the country of origin of the Creed. It is said that the followers of Islam spread the creed with the Quran in one hand and the sword in the other. Although this statement is not wholly true, it cannot be denied that forcible conversion was carried on on a large scale by the armies of Islam. But however widely it may have been

¹ Sura, xvii : 82 and xciii : 5.

² In 825 A.D.

³ *E.g.* (a) man is the author of his acts and not Allah; (b) those who commit the gravest sins forfeit their claim to be called a Mussalman; (c) things are intrinsically good and evil and not because God makes them so; (d) the Quran is not eternal—See Wensinck: *The Muslim Creed*.

favoured in practice, there is no doubt that forcible conversion was not allowed by the teachings of the Quran. As an instance of forcible conversion subsequently repudiated by Moslems may be cited the case of Moses Maimonides the famous Jewish philosopher of Spain. He was converted into Islam by some fanatical Moslems. He fled to Egypt and there openly declared himself to be a Jew. The Moslem jurists in Spain denounced his apostasy and demanded that the extreme penalty of law should be inflicted on Maimonides for this offence. But a famous Moslem judge of the time, who was Prime Minister of the great Saladin, authoritatively declared that a man who had been converted to Islam by force, could not be rightly considered a Moslem.¹ Tavernier also relates a similar story. Some Jews of Ispahan were so harshly persecuted by the Moslem governor that they were obliged to turn Mohammadans; but the King (Shah Abbas II), understanding that only pressure and fear had constrained them to adopt Islam, “suffered them to resume their own religion and to live in quiet.”²

Now it must be admitted that such instances were rare. Force, cunning, pressure, threat, reward, etc., were largely used. The fact that once a person is converted into Islam, however that conversion may be brought about, the chances of going back to his ancestral religion become very remote. So far as converts from Hinduism are concerned, return to it is impossible.³ In India, the number of Mussalmans is nearly one hundred millions now and Sir Thomas Arnold is of the opinion that this large number is due mainly to the missionary activity of the Moslems. But this seems to be a somewhat overstatement. The example and precept of Mohammadan saints like Mainuddin Chisti or Nizamuddin Aulia are no doubt responsible for some conversions. The real explanation of large scale conversion is to be sought among material or rather non-spiritual causes, *viz.*, pressure and worldly gain.

¹ Sir T. W. Arnold, *Op. Cit.*, p. 411.

² Tavernier (1), p. 160, quoted by Sir T. W. Arnold.

³ This is now being permitted by the rules of Arya Samaj founded by Swami Dayananda Saraswati.

Another factor which favoured the spread of Islam in India has been rightly held to be the invidious distinction among Hindus introduced by caste system. Whatever may be the justification of the principle underlying this age-old institution, the fact cannot be disputed that the distinction has worked harshly among the social units and those who sought relief from the oppressive social laws of the Hindus found a welcome change in conversion into Islam.

The followers of the faith believed that Mohammad was a divinely appointed prophet and that the Quran was an unerring guide. In one of the Suras of the Quran ¹ it is said, "We have not sent thee otherwise than to mankind at large, to announce and to warn."

The followers of Islam have gone further than members of any other religion in the practical application of the principles of equality and fraternity.² But the view of the Prophet that all men are equal, was modified by the teaching that 'only the faithful are brethren.'³ This conception of fraternity based only on sectarianism made the Mussalmans everywhere a well-knit organisation which became irresistible when attacking and socially contented in peace. This, of course, does not mean that the principle of equality was rigourously followed even in the closed circle of their own community.⁴ Their status varies according to their age, sex, standing, etc. A free Mussalman can lawfully take four wives at the same time, but a slave is not allowed to have more than two. The husband can divorce the wife at any time he likes and is not answerable to anybody for his action. The wife is not allowed this freedom. The treatment of the Moslems to the conquered people is different. So far as Jews and Christians are concerned they are treated as enemies until they pay tribute, but the heathens must accept Islam. This difference in treatment is due to the recognition

¹ Sura xxxiv—H. Bhattacharyya, *Op. Cit*, p. 366.

² See Fellowship of Faith, London, 1936: K. N. Mitra *on Islam*, p. 173.

³ Sura xlix: 10.

⁴ Even Mahommadans themselves are not all equal before the eye of law.—Carl Clemen: *Islam (Religions of the World)*—p. 451.

in the case of the former, *viz.*, Jews and Christians, of the fact that they are 'possessors of the writings.'¹

The cardinal principles of Islam according to the Sunnite (Sunni) version² may be briefly stated as follows:—

(1) There is no God but Allah and Mohammad is the apostle of God. God is All Will and All Power. The relation of man to God is one of slave or Abd to Master.³ The word 'Islam' means submission (or resignation), *i.e.*, to the Will of God. The name Allah was perhaps taken from one of the neighbouring tribes. Allah is merciful and compassionate. Man is His slave. No human relation, such as Father, Mother etc. can be applied to Him. Submission to Allah does not tolerate any concession to polytheism (or idolatry). We have it stated in unequivocal terms in the Quran.⁴ Freedom of worship contemplated in the code does not appear to have been followed in practice. All vestiges of the worship of idols and images were put down with a strong hand. The only relic of the old practices which was permitted to remain is the Ka'ba in the old sanctuary of Mecca. Ka'ba is a special object of veneration, and pilgrimages down to this day are made to this old sanctuary. Ka'ba literally means 'dice' or 'cube' and is a black stone round which the pilgrims circumambulate. The water of the Zamzam well nearby is considered holy.

God is eternal. He begets not nor is He begotten and there is nothing like unto Him.⁵ God has seven eternal attributes—Life, Knowledge, Omnipotence, Will, Hearing, Sight, and Speech.

¹ Carl Clemen: *Op. Cit.*, p. 451.

² *Ibid*, p. 445.

³ Probably the idea of divine slavery was current in South Arabia. 'The (faithful) slaves of the Beneficent are they, who walk upon the earth modestly (or in humbleness) and when the foolish ones (or the ignorant) address them, answer: Peace.'

⁴ In Surah CIX (Al. Kaferun), it is stated: Say O disbelievers, I worship not that which ye worship; nor worship ye that which I worship. I shall not worship that which ye worship, nor will ye worship that which I worship. Unto you your religion, unto me my religion.

⁵ Sura 112.

(2) Belief in angels: They are divided into several classes. Some are messengers of God, *e.g.*, Jibril or Gabriel, some are guardian angels. One of them however fell from favour and became the devil (Satan). There are jinns again of whom we read in the tales. These pry sometimes into the divine councils. The falling stars are the balls of fire which are hurled at them for their intrusion. This doctrine is influenced by Jewish and Christian mythology.

(3) Belief in the Quran. It is made by no man, but is communicated. It was revealed by God to Mohammad, who communicated it to men 'piece by piece in the course of 23 years. The Quran is infallible. It will never be abrogated.

(4) Belief in the prophets, of whom Mohammad is the greatest. He is more than a prophet—an Apostle. The prophets are loyal, truthful, infallible and pure. They have the privilege of interceding for sinners with God. This gradually grew into saint-worship which is largely found among Moslems. Although Mohammad did not admit any intercession between God and man and therefore did not approve of the practice of saint-worship, it was universally approved by 'consensus.'¹

(5) Belief in future life. During the first night after burial, the souls of the dead are examined by two angels, Munkar and Nakir. "The first blast of the trumpet of the angel Israfil lays all low in death. The second blast is the signal for resurrection. Then comes the Last Judgment." The good pass over a bridge which is as narrow as a razor edge, into the beyond, while the wicked miss their footing and fall into the pit of hell."² The Moslems believe in Paradise and Hell. The souls of the prophets and martyrs pass immediately into Paradise which is depicted as a place of undreamt of pleasures and enjoyments. This explains the 'courage unto death' displayed by the Moslems in war. This furnishes the explanation also of how with much fewer

¹ Carl Clemen: *Religions of the World*, p. 447.

² Cf. Zoroastrian conception of Chinvat Bridge.

A bridge called Es-Sirat, finer than a hair and sharper than the edge of a sword or razor, stretches over the hell of the Muslim—Geza Roheim: "*Animism, Magic and The Divine King*," p. 39.

army they succeeded in vanquishing vast hordes of the enemy. The infidels, they believe, go straight to hell. After enduring punishment in hell, the sinner may enter Paradise, if he has a grain of faith in him.

(6) Fatalism or predestination. The Quran lays down that happiness and the reverse are predestined *i.e.*, they are written down on the "eternal tablets of Fate." In later times this terrible idea which makes all things in the life of man predestined from the beginning was however sought to be modified.

The Mohammadans are to perform certain duties which are called the 'five pillars' of Islam *viz.*, the recital of the creed, prayer after ablutions, giving of alms, fasting during the month of Ramjan and pilgrimage to Mecca.

Prayers must be said five times a day *viz.*, before sunrise, at noon, in the afternoon, after sunset and two hours after that. On Fridays the *Jumma* prayer is held at noon which is a more elaborate service including two sermons. At first, prayers were held three times a day, but perhaps under Persian influence this number was increased¹ to five. Each of the five daily prayers is accompanied by various bodily movements which are "strictly prescribed as to number, nature and order." The prayers consist of invocations to God and recitations from the Quran.

One of the most fascinating things in connection with the prayers is the announcement, *Ajan*, made from a minaret in the mosque, of the hours of prayer by a person who is called 'muezzin,' whose duty it is to call people to prayer. The custom, though perhaps an imitation of the Christian belfry, has a wealth of significance for the devout Mussalmans which cannot be ignored. The Muezzin turning in all directions reminds with a loud but musical voice that the hour of prayer is come. He begins by repeating 'Allahu Akbar' thrice and goes on: Ashadu Anna la; ilaha illallah wa-Mohammadun Rasulullah—Allah is great; I declare that there is no God but Allah and that Mohammad is the Apostle of God.²

¹ Carl Clemen: *Religions of the World*, p. 454.

² *Ibid*, p. 450.

The alms-giving is also a very important pillar of Islam. It is a compulsory tax which is enjoined upon every Mahommadan as a sacred duty. It is $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent in the case of cattle, goods, gold and silver but 10 per cent in the case of crops. It is laid down in the Quran that the money, is used for helping the poor and needy, for redemption of slaves, for missionary activities for the way of Allah, for people who are unable to pay their debts, for travellers and for the cost of collection. Having regard to the growing acuteness of distress among the poorer classes the usefulness of compulsory almsgiving cannot be overestimated. If any thing can keep out the Communistic propaganda, I think this economic system of Islam will.

The month of Ramjan is regarded as a specially sacred month by the Mussalmans; for during this month the Quran was sent down from heaven. No Mussalman, except those that are sick or aged or mothers with unweaned children or pregnant women, should eat, drink, or smoke from early dawn to sunset. The end of the month is celebrated by the followers of Islam all over the world. In Turkey the festival lasts for several days.

Although the followers of Islam are never tired of denouncing idol worship and every practice connected with it, they agree with the Hindus in prescribing pilgrimage as an essential part of their creed. *Hajj* or pilgrimage to Mecca is enjoined as compulsory and is undertaken by all devout Moslems. The sacred Ka'ba, which is a cubical temple was made the principal place of worship for the Mahommadans. When praying they turn their face towards the west *i.e.*, in the direction of Ka'ba, wherever they may happen to be.¹ The Mohammadan pilgrims kiss the Stone and circumambulate it several times. Thus the pilgrimage supplies a strong bond of union between the followers of Mohammad inhabiting different parts of the globe.

But Mohammad left no male heir and as he did not name anyone as his successor, disputes arose regarding

¹ But it is said in the Quran 'since God is omnipotent, all pervading, since He is in the East as well as West, whichever way ye turn, God's face is there.'

succession. Some of the followers of the Prophet declared Abu Bakr as the successor and after him Omar. The prophet's son-in-law, Fatima's husband, Ali was assassinated in 661 and Ali's son Hasan, who was nominated to succeed him renounced the office and his brother Hossain was slain in 680 at Kerbala by his enemies. This tragedy is remembered with all its mournful associations in the first month of the Mohammadan year *viz.*, Muharrum. The anniversary of this tragic event is also called Muharrum. Now over this question of succession to the Caliphate, a very powerful schism was formed known as the Shia according to whom Ali was the legitimate successor to the Prophet and the other Caliphs were usurpers. Shia means 'party' (*i.e.* of Ali). This party grew in numbers and influence and persisted in opposing the Sunni Mussalmans over the question of Caliphate or more accurately Imamate for the Shias called their spiritual leader Imam. Although the difference between the Shias and the Sunnis was not very great as regards the essential principles of the creed, still for a long time the bitter struggles between the two Islamic sects continued. Owing to the opposition of the Sunnis who were far more powerful, the Shias, while outwardly conforming to the principles of the Sunnis, formed secret societies and carried on their activities with 'caution' (*tagiya*). They enjoined on their adherents the necessity of concealing their religious convictions.

Quite apart from this, controversies began to appear among learned exponents of the religion itself regarding Caliphate, predestination, freedom of human soul, etc. These dogmatic discussions were about to lead to permanent conflict among the various groups till Al Ghazzali appeared and declared the futility of these controversies. He said that religion was not a matter of academic discussion or dialectical and casuistical disputes but of inward experience. He condemned all scholastic treatment of religious questions. Ghazzali, who has been deservedly called *Mujhiuddin* or the Restorer of Religion died in 1111.¹

¹ Carl Clemen : *Op. Cit.*, p. 454.

Islam's attitude towards Christianity deserves to be mentioned. The Prophet called the Jews and the Christians "people of the written book" and made this concession that they should be allowed to live on payment of tribute. He had no such concession for idolators and polytheists. They were only allowed to live on condition that they adopted his faith.¹ The territories which came under Moslem rule were divided into dar-al-Islam (sphere of Islam) and dar-al-harb (sphere of war). Heathens were to be treated as enemies until they accepted Islam.

But as Mohammad claimed to be the 'seal of the Prophets,' his religion must needs supersede both the Old and the New Testament religions. He even goes so far as to say that Christ predicted the coming of Mohammad. In the Gospel of John, Christ is reported to have told of the Paraclete.² Paraclete is a Greek word which means Advocate—(Abingdon Bible). Christ is also called Paraclete. In John, Christ's words would lead one to believe that another like Him would be sent by God. "But I tell you the truth" says Christ, "it is better for you that I go away, for if I may not go away, the comforter will not come to you."³ Now Paraclete means the same thing as the Arabic word Ahmed which is a synonym for Mohammad, the founder of Islam.⁴

Mohammad accordingly says Jesus, the Son of Mary, said 'O Children of Israel. Verily I am the Apostle of God to you, verifying the law that was before me, and giving you glad tidings of an Apostle who shall come after me, whose name shall be Ahmed.'⁵

The whole of the Old Testament and the New Testament were ransacked by Mahommadan theologians for prophecy about Mohammad, and when it was not forthcoming, they

¹ This accounts for the large number of Mahommadans to be found in India. Many of them were cases of forcible conversion in an earlier period of India's history.

² 'And I will ask the Father, and another Comforter He will give to you that he may remain with you to the age'—John XIV. 16.

³ John XVI: 7, 12-14.

⁴ Hume, p. 221.

⁵ Rodwell's Translation, 405-6.

thought that such prophecies had been wilfully suppressed by later Christian theologians.¹

The Christian Trinity was unacceptable to Mohammad who was an uncompromising monotheist. It was his opinion that Judaism and Christianity, although claiming to be monotheistic could not strictly maintain their monotheistic doctrine. The doctrine of Trinity reduces God to a third of three.² But Christian divines like Tertullian maintained that God, the Holy Ghost and Christ were not different substances. 'All are one, by unity of substance ; while the mystery of the dispensation is still guarded which distributed the unity into a Trinity placing in their order the three, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; three however,.....not in substance but in form; not in power, but in appearance, for they are one substance and one essence and one power inasmuch as He is one God from whom these degrees and forms are reckoned under the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.³ The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Spirit is God. And yet they are not three gods but one God.⁴

Mohammad thought that Christ was not crucified, for an Apostle cannot die in that way. It is beneath his dignity. A likeness of Christ must have been crucified.

The myths about the Prophet grew as time went; for example, his splitting of the moon, his night journey to Jerusalem and mounting on his steed Buraq, his going to Heaven and holding conversation with God. Besides these mentioned in the Quran many other stories of miracles gathered round his personality after the Prophet's death. Mohammad's own belief was that 'no apostle had come with

¹ Macdonald: *Aspects of Islam*, p. 234f; p. 240.

² Sura V: 77-9. In Mohammad's opinion the Christian Trinity was composed of God the Father, Mary and God the Son or Christ, and Gabriel was the Holy Ghost. This way of conceiving the divine triad is familiar in the religion of the Egyptians also. They constructed triads of gods, grouping them as Father, Mother and Son. For instance, at Thebes the triad is constituted by Amon the Father, Mut the Mother and Montu the Son.—Soper: *Op. Cit.*, p. 88.

³ Walker, *Op. Cit.*, p. 69.

⁴ Hastings: *Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 949.

miracles unless by the leave of God.¹ But Mohammadan theologians were not only inclined to deify Mohammad but ascribed to him various miracles like those of Christ, *e.g.*, immediately after his birth he spoke and recited from the Quran.²

The Shias could not reconcile themselves to the idea that the descendants of Ali should be deprived of the Caliphate. This made them very bitter and they started revolts and organised secret societies to overthrow the Sunni Caliphate.

But the Shias themselves were divided into numerous sects who tried to seize power. Some of the aspirants to the throne called themselves Mahdi or Messiah in order to enlist the support of the Shias, because they believed in the prophecy that Mahdi, *i.e.*, "the Rightly guided one" will come and put an end to all religious conflicts and political unrest.³ So a movement called the Mahdist movement has appeared from time to time and tried to gain power. The latest one occurred in Egyptian Sudan in the early eighties of the last century.

One of the Shia sects was called Imamiyya, *viz.*, those who believed that there were twelve Imams and the twelfth Imam who vanished in his youth is still living somewhere and will reappear 'at the end of the ages' to set matters right. Another sect is called Ismailis. Ismail was the seventh and the last Imam.⁴ The Ismailis form a considerable number of Mohammadans both in India and outside, and the Aga Khan is their acknowledged head. The veneration in which this leader is held shows the difference between ordinary Moslems and this Shi-ite sect.

In Persia which was subjugated by the Mohammadans the religion of Zoroaster was already in a state of decay,

¹ Sura XIII: 33.

² Muir: Mohammadan Controversies.

³ The Mahdi, according to Mohammadan tradition, will come in the last days and 'fill the earth with equity and justice' and give strength and stability to Islam.

⁴ The sect Ismailis became notorious during the Crusades for assassinations committed by a section of them. This section used an intoxicating drug called Hashish plant. From this, the murderous sect was known as Assassins.

but the Persians could not adapt themselves to the new religion which they were forced to accept. This forcible conversion to Islam which went against the spirit of their Aryan temperament and traditions must have had a depressing effect on their national character. This is one of the reasons why Shiaism found favour in Persia.¹

¹ Shiaism has been the form of the State Religion of Persia, since the beginning of the 16th century.

SUFISM

The essence of Islam consists in its uncompromising monotheism. Although this is a common feature of all the semitic religions, Islam was more emphatic, I think, than any other kindred creed in rejecting polytheism and persecuting it.¹ But the omnipotence of God combined with His arbitrary will as preached by Islam does not leave much room for the freedom of individual will. The Allah leads to grace any one he chooses. God's law is inexorable and sin is not determined by any moral standard but by the direct will of God. Any violation of God's command is sin. On the top of this comes the doctrine of pre-destination. Therefore submission to the inscrutable will of Allah constitutes the essence of religious experience.

The Quran was accepted as the word of God, although it contained many things which it was found difficult to reconcile. Hence there grew up differences of opinion. The Murjites placed faith above good works.² The Mutazilites built a theology based on reason and rejected the attributes of Allah as incompatible with His unity, and predestinarianism as contrary to His justice. They proceeded to define the attributes negatively, e.g., eyes do not see Him, nor can He be heard by ears, etc.³ So the dogmatic position taken up by the faith came to be somewhat shaken during the early years of Mohamman era. But the credulity of the Moslems generally prevailed over these minor differences and kept the bond of unity among the followers of the Prophet strong.

But the fact remains that so long as a religion consists mainly of certain formulas and practices, it touches only

¹ A Muslim may commit various sins, such as, theft, fornication and still be a Muslim, but polytheism is an unpardonable sin, which is inconsistent with being a Muslim.

² Cf. Sura: God is with good works: *Nicholson Mystics of Islam*, pp. 5-6.

³ See Wensinck (quoted in H. D. Bhattacharyya: *Foundations of Faith*, p. 372).

the external nature of man. It cannot transmute his moral and spiritual nature as religion is expected to do. Haunted by the fear of a wrathful God and pursued by an inevitable fate (*Tagdir*), which is morally degrading, religious consciousness cannot blossom into that wealth of thoughts and ideas which impart to faith its living content; that balance between emotion and reason, between dogma and spirit is absent and religious enthusiasm easily degenerates into fanaticism which instead of bringing peace upon God's earth brings misery and devastation instead. Goldziher seems to ascribe this to pagan influence. In speaking of the mixture of Islam with paganism in India he remarks, "with the Allah worship that is purely outward, with a use of the Quran that is purely superficial and with an unintelligent obedience to Mohammedan usages are to be found demon-worship, ancestor-worship and various other animistic practices."¹

So the Sufi movement sprang up among the Moham-madans out of a truly spiritual longing to realise God. Religion must be based not on worldly power or heavenly pleasures which are conceived on the pattern of their counterpart in this life but on spirituality. Spirituality is the core of religion. Sufism, which may be said to be the philosophy of Islam, supplied the deeper meaning of faith. Instead of external conformity to certain meaningless practices, the Sufis directed their thought to the inner experience of the soul. The Sufis—poets, philosophers and mystics—paid scant regard to the practices and formalities of Islam. But they were treated not as heretics but sometimes with great respect by Muslims and in some cases classed with the Saints.

Now, what is the origin of the doctrine of the Sufis? Four theories have been mentioned² :—

1. It was the development of the esoteric doctrine of the Prophet as revealed in the Quran. The Sufis have always made the Quran their Text-book.

2. The influence of Buddhism, Hinduism, etc.

¹ Quoted in Carl Clemen, p. 458.

² E. G. Browne: *A Literary History of Persia*.

3. Neo-Platonic influence.

4. Independent origin.

‘ Sufi ’ is derived from a word which means woollen garment usually worn by ascetics from very early times.¹ The Sect probably started to systematise spiritual training sometime about the 10th century A.D.² Gradually it was divided into several branches—one tracing their origin to the fourth Caliph Ali³ and another to Abu Bakr, the first Caliph.

It is difficult to trace the history of Sufism. First, because it was practised as a secret cult and secondly, the Sufis were not worldly minded. Their divine madness hardly encouraged any historical attitude among them. It is probable however that Khorassan in Central Asia was the place of its origin. The world’s commerce passed through this town which was consequently the meeting place of various peoples. Hence we find the mixture of many civilisations which account for the influence of religious ideas of other races on Sufism.⁴ It is maintained by scholars that Abu Hashim (150 A.H.) was the first to bear the name of Sufi while Dhu’l-Nun of Egypt (245 A.H.) may be said to have given Sufism a permanent shape.⁵

The Sufi conception of God is pantheistic. God is all. There is nothing but God. Imam Ghazzali held that God is Will. One who believed in ‘ wah-dat-ul-wajud ’ *i.e.*, oneness of existence regarded everything as a gift of God. God is Supreme Beauty and the only deserving object of Love. Love is the yearning of the human soul for union with God. “ Union is the revelation of the heart and the contemplation of the conscience.”⁶ The contemplation of the conscience is indicated by the Prophet’s saying “ Worship God as if thou seest Him.”⁷ The condition of union means that God con-

¹ *Outlines of Islamic cult*, p. 486.

² *Ibid.*, p. 471.

³ The Khoja Mussalmans regard Ali as the tenth incarnation of Vishnu—Radhakrishnan.

⁴ F. H. Davis: *The Persian Mystics*, p. 14.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Al Nuri quoted by Arbery: *The doctrine of the Sufis*, p. 101.

⁷ Cf. Arbery: *Muslim Saints*, p. 158.

trols me, not I myself, in my actions : for God exists, not I. So God said to His Prophet : ‘ Nor didst thou shoot when thou didst shoot, but God did shoot.’¹ This is illustrated by the story of Abdullah Ibn Umar. He was engaged in circumambulating the Ka’aba when a man saluted him. He did not answer him; and when the man complained of this, he said, “ We are beholding God.”²

Alone with a lone God he is alone.³

This union is possible only through love. According to Abdullah-al-Nibaji “ Love is a pleasure if it be for a creature, and an annihilation if it be for the Creator.” Annihilation means that no personal interest remains, that such love has no cause, and that the love does not persist through any cause. This is what corresponds to the uncaused love of the Vaisnavas.⁴

When the well-known Sufi, Lady Rabeya, says, “ If I love God for the fear of hell fire, let hell fires consume me. If I love God for the pleasures of Heaven, then O Lord, let those pleasures never be mine. But if I love Thee for Thy own sake, then do not forsake me,”⁵ we seem to feel the thrill of love which is not of this world. It leaves the mundane world and its dirty associations far behind.

Ibn Abd al-Samad said “ Love is that which renders blind and deaf.” The Prophet said; “ Thy love is a thing which renders blind and deaf.”

The striking resemblance between the practices of the Sufis and those of the Hindus may be largely due to a common source. But it may also be due to the fact that genuine mysticism is almost the same everywhere. I think the deeper the religious experience, the more mystical it tends to be. Mysticism is as universal in man as the instinct of religion itself.⁶ So far as Mysticism is concerned, East is

¹ Sura, viii: 17.

² Arbery, p. 119.

³ Amr ibn Uthman al-makki (Arbery).

⁴ अहेतुक्यव्यवहिता या भक्तिः पुरुषोत्तमे । —Srimad Bhāgavat.

⁵ Quoted in Aldous Huxley’s *Perennial Philosophy*.

⁶ Dean Inge says “ So far as mystical experience is concerned, there is an astounding agreement. Mysticism is singularly uniform in all times

West and West is East.¹ Mysticism is opposed to Naturalism which holds that every thing is reducible to the terms of sense phenomena. Sense phenomena only reveal appearance, they cannot give us any knowledge of Reality. Ethically the mystic regards the world of sense as imperfect, as an evil. There is in this a close similarity between the Sufis and the Buddhists. In fact, it is alleged that the Sufis have borrowed this pessimistic attitude from the Buddhists, but there is a good deal of difference between the two. So far as avoidance of worldly pleasures goes, and so far as the control of desires and passions goes, the Sufis very closely follow the ascetic ideal of the Buddhists. Even the story of Prince Siddhartha finds its counterpart in Ibrahim Ibn Adham, a prince of Bulkh, who renounced his kingdom and became a wandering Dervish.²

But the difference between the Sufis and the Buddhists is no less remarkable. The Buddhist is obliged to depend upon himself for purging his nature of evil, whereas the Sufi becomes moral through knowing and loving God, and this is a very important difference. The Buddhist nirvana is reproduced in the Fana of the Sufis³—which means passing away or ecstatic negation of experience.⁴ Ecstasy as a religious experience is found more or less among the devotees of all highly developed religions. The mystic union between God and man through ecstatic phenomena is regarded as the highest form of religious experience. The God-realisation attained through ecstasy is the most immediate revelation of divine spirit and its dynamic value when genuine is superior to that of every other form of revelation.

and places. . . Mysticism, which is the living heart of religion springs from a deeper level than the differences which divide the churches."

¹ Roheim: *Animism, Mysticism and the Divine King*.

² Goldziher quoted by Nicholson: *The Mystics of Islam*.

³ Nicholson: *Ibid*.

⁴ Byazid of Bistan, the Persian mystic, may have received it from Abu Ali of Sind—Nicholson.

In ecstasy, mysticism finds its truest expression and immediate fulfilment.¹ Time and space cease to exist and the soul stands face to face with his Divine Maker. Christ had this experience at his Baptism, Zoroaster had it at the festival and Mohammad must have got it when he said that "God is near thee, nearer than your neck-vein."² Innumerable stories are told of the Sufi mystics about the almost incredible spiritual powers which some of them possessed. It is of course easy to disbelieve them; but facts cannot lie and even in this materialistic age such facts can be witnessed without much difficulty among the living Sadhus (saints) of India.

Like these Sadhus, the Sufis abstain from animal food and believe in re-incarnation. The use of the rosary and the mystery of the Great Name are some of the important resemblances between the Sufis and the Hindu mystics. Like the Hindu, the Sufi inculcates the virtue of "remembering" (Dhikr) God at every moment,³ and regards life and earthly things as valueless without it. Byazid of Bistan, when asked about his age, said, '4 years.' He explained that the past 70 years of his life were nothing, as they were years when "I was veiled from God by this world."⁴ The Sufis like their Hindu mystic counterpart believe that there is an element of evil in man ineradicable and strong, *viz.*, the passions and lust. These are called 'nafs' corresponding to 'flesh' of the Christians. The Prophet said "Thy worst enemy is

¹ When Narendra Nath Dutt, who became celebrated afterwards as Swami Vivekanand, wanted proof of the divine presence, the great Guru Ram Krishna touched him and made him pass through the ecstatic experience which alone can produce a compelling assent. Vivekanand never again questioned the reality of God.

² If My servants ask thee about Me, lo I am near (Qur. 2 : 182 and 50 : 15).

³ Cf. स्मर्त्तव्यः सततं विश्वरस्मर्त्तव्यो न जातुचित् ।

⁴ Seventy thousand veils separate Allah, from the world of Matter and Sense. And every soul passes before his birth through these seventy thousand veils. The inner half of these are veils of light; the outer half, veils of darkness. See Nicholson, p. 15.

‘ nafs ’ which is between thy two sides.”¹ The Sufi mystics lay great stress on the subduing of these evil passions. The Hindus, it may be remembered, draw a distinction between Pravritti and Nivritti, *i.e.*, inclination and renunciation, spiritual life being possible only through suppression and control of the lower appetitive nature. The Christian ideal lies in the direction not of suppression and negation but of a well balanced proportion between the two. The Greek philosopher also found the ideal in the Golden mean.

However, the Sufis realised the difficulty of controlling the nafs or the evil nature inherent in man and therefore enjoined on the disciples the necessity of approaching a holy man (Sheykh, Pir, Murshid), who directs him in the right path.² A seeker, who attempts to traverse the Path without assistance is said to have Satan as his guide. Here also one cannot fail to be reminded of the Hindu institution of Guru, who is indispensable in religious noviciate.

There are many other similarities between the Sufi and the Hindu and the Buddhist mystics, *e.g.*, regarding dress, mortification, etc. They are far too numerous to be regarded as mere coincidence.

The Sufi discipleship is a very arduous one. It consists of the following stages: (1) Repentance, (2) Abstinence, (3) Renunciation, (4) Poverty, (5) Patience, (6) Trust in God and (7) Satisfaction. If a novice fails to practise these stages, he is declared to be unsuitable for the path.

The aim of all these practices is to negate the self. “ All self abandon ye who enter here.” In order to do this, one must pass through a long period of fasts, vows of silence, prolonged meditation in solitude and renunciation of the pleasures and comforts of this life; because the Sufis thought that this annihilation of the self is necessary in order that God may be installed in the heart.³ The heart (qalb) alone is capable of seeing the light of the heavens and

¹ Cf. महाशनो महापाप्मा विद्मानमिह वैरिणम् —Gita VI. Know them (the passions) as your mortal enemies.

² Nicholson: *Mystics of Islam*, p. 32.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

the earth. The vision of the heart (ru'yat al-qalb) is defined as the heart's beholding by the light of certainty that which is hidden in the unseen world.¹

Matthew Arnold defined Religion as "morality touched with emotion." Whether this definition is accepted or not, the presence of emotion cannot be ruled out. In fact, emotion is the moving spring, the dynamic force in religion. Bare recital of certain formula, outward performance of prescribed movements, etc. are valueless, if they cannot evoke any emotion in the heart. The Vaisnava sect of the Hindus placed the greatest emphasis on this emotional aspect of religion. God can be contemplated only through love, the highest emotion of the human heart. If the thought of God does not produce the religious sentiment in you, your mere mentioning the name of God is nothing but mechanical. The Sufi therefore cultivated the emotion of rapturous love for God to such an extent that his whole being was absorbed in the thought of the Beloved. A prominent Sufi said 'I never saw anything except God.'²

Love deafens me to every voice but His
Was ever love so strange as this?
Love blinds me, and on Him alone I gaze:
Love blinds, and, being hidden, slays.³

The overmastering sense of God's presence destroys his capacity to distinguish what is agreeable and what is painful. One of the great Sufis exclaimed: If thou shouldst cut me up with affliction piece by piece, I shall only feel towards thee the greater love on love.⁴ Abu'l-Dada said:

¹ The whole theory of Sufism rests on the belief that when the individual self is lost, the universal self is found. *Ibid*, p. 59.

² Shibli quoted in Nicholson, p. 55. Compare the love intoxication of the Vaisnava saints.

³ Was this verse composed by Rabeya the woman mystic? In Arbery, it is said to be recited by the Prophet? p. 103.

⁴ आश्लिष्य वा पादरतां पिनष्टु मामदर्शनात् समहतां करोतु वा ।

यथा तथा वा विदधातु लम्पटो मत्प्राणनाथस्तु स एव नापरः ।

—Sri Chaitanya : Padyavali.

Whether he endears me by embracing or tortures me by withdrawing from me—Whatever he ordains, he and no one else is my Beloved.

I love death, for I long for my Lord; I love sickness, for then I may reflect on my sins; I love poverty, for I am submissive to my Lord.

The phenomenon of ecstasy through which the Sufis had a mystical vision of Truth is no ordinary spiritual exercise. It is induced by intensive contemplation or concentration on the attributes of God. Mere contemplation cannot induce a state of calm in the mind—a quietude in which the tumult of passions is hushed and from which all thought of the self is banished. It is akin to the artist's self-absorption in sublime beauty. Similarly the form of ecstasy in which the soul feels a mystical union with God takes place through strong emotion. There is no doubt that feeling plays a very prominent part in ecstatic condition and that is why it develops symptoms such as suspension of breathing, laughing, crying, etc. which resemble pathological phenomena.

Ecstasy therefore is that rare emotional condition in which God holds direct communion with human soul. It may be brought about by seeing a picture or image or a natural phenomenon or by music, singing, dancing, etc.¹ It is divine madness.

Ecstasy may be genuine or feigned. So a great deal of caution is required to find out the genuine commodity. The real transports of spiritual intoxication are no doubt rare. They can be attained only through divine grace. Hence spiritual teachers warn their disciples against the cheap trances which are produced by uncontrolled emotional moods.

The culmination of Sufi mysticism is reached in the feeling of union with God. This unitive process is the aim of all their spiritual sadhana (culture) and we are told that this is possible only through rapturous love *i.e.*, a transcendental love in which the soul becomes free from the least vestige of self interest. But a rather new phase of development appeared when Husain, son of Mansur² known as al-Hallaj declared

¹ Music is a divine influence which stirs the heart to seek God; those who listen to it spiritually attain unto God, and those who listen to it sensually fall into disbelief—Dhu'l-Nun (Nicholson, p. 65).

² Husain is sometimes called by the name of his father Mansur.

‘ I am the Truth : Ana’l Haq.’ This was, of course, too much for the orthodox Moslems to tolerate and they executed Hallaj for rank heresy (922 A.D.)

This pronouncement reminds us at once of the Vedantic pantheism : I am God. But in the Advaita Vendanta of Sankaracarya, it means that when the limitations or upadhis imposed upon the ego are removed by difficult spiritual exercises including highest knowledge and purification, the difference between individual self and universal self is obliterated. For the human self partakes of the essence of the divine self. Besides, the Vedantic pantheism says, God only is and nothing besides exists. The question is : Did the Sufi saint use the expression ‘ I am the Truth ’ in that sense ? There is no question of love-union in the Vedantic pantheism. All that the Vedanta means is that as soon as the veil of ignorance is rolled away, the Truth appears in its universal character. So far as the idea of incarnation is concerned, orthodox Moslems as well as the Sufis condemn it. So Hallaj could not have used the expression in the sense of an incarnation of God.¹

It has been suggested that Hallaj uttered Ana’l Haq in a moment of ecstasy when he felt united with the divine essence. But in that case there was no occasion to hang him for heresy, for other Sufis also shared that experience. Many Sufis believe that it was not Hallaj who spoke ‘ Ana’l Haq ’ but God himself spoke just as He spoke to Moses.² In one of his poems Hallaj says :

I am He whom I love, and He whom I love is I.

The teachings of Hallaj may be summed up thus :

1. The Immaterial and Immortal divine spirit becomes limited when associated with animal spirit.

2. The Supreme Being can neither be expressed nor thought of.³

3. The union with the divine Will is possible through suffering.

¹ As for instance, Christ claimed to be the Son of God or Montanus in the early years of Christian era claimed to be the Holy Ghost—Walker : *History of the Christian Church*.

² Nicholson : *Mystics*, p. 152.

³ This was the view also of the Mutazilites.

4. Prayer may be replaced by virtuous works.

The difference between Sufism and the orthodox creed of the Moslems has been expressed thus :

1. The orthodox depend upon external conformity to the rules; the Sufis insist on inner purity. The orthodox place too much emphasis on rituals.

2. The Sufis hold that love is the only means of God-realisation.

“ Through love the nature of things is changed. It is love which makes bitter taste sweet, turns copper into gold, transforms the king into a slave (of his beloved), converts the lion into a mouse and devil into a fairy.”

Jalaluddin Rumi's *masnavi*

3. For the orthodox, good deeds are essential for religious life. The Sufis think that without a pure heart the good deeds have no value.

4. The Sufis were opposed to the idea of free will or distinct and self existent personality apart from the Beloved but the orthodox Muslim's idea was precisely the reverse.

If I have dealt at some length on the creed of a particular sect of Islam, it is because in the first place so far as the realisation of God consciousness is concerned, there are very few people in the history of the world-religions who can compare with the Sufis. In religion, the realisation of God is the most essential thing and Sufism achieved an uncommon measure of success in that respect. It will be erroneous to ignore it after labelling it as a kind of mysticism. After all, religion is Mysticism.

In the second place, Sufism, though influenced by the devotional and pantheistic religion of India, influenced in its turn the course of religious movement in India. The conquest of India by Mohammadans not only produced cataclysmic changes in the political life of its people, but influenced the mass mind by its subtle Sufite creed. Khwaja Main-uddin Chisti, born in Siestan in Iran, came to India following the army of Sultan Shahabuddin Ghorî in 1192 and founded a sect in India. He settled at Ajmere where a big Darga still attracts pilgrims from all over the world. Nizamuddin Aulia was one of the successors of this Mohammadan saint. His tomb in the suburbs of Delhi is not only

a place of pilgrimage for Mohammadans but for many Hindus as well. Shaikh Salim who was the Pir of Emperor Akbar belonged to the Indian Sufis. It is conceivable that under the influence of his saintly guide, Akbar treated his Hindu and Muslim subjects alike, entered into matrimonial alliance with the Hindus and even went to the length of formulating a world-religion based on the universally accepted tenets of all religions.¹ It is due to the influence of this saint that Dara Shikoh the eldest son of Shah Jehan was led to appreciate the spiritual lore of the Hindus and translate the Bhagabat Gita and 50 other Upanishads.

I cannot conclude my remarks better than by quoting what Nicholson has said regarding Hallaj: He had uttered in two words a sentence which Islām has on the whole forgiven but never forgotten: "Ana'l Haq: I am God."²

I do not know what Nicholson exactly meant by these words but what I mean is that those are words of wisdom. The spirit of Islām has not only found its truest meaning in Sufism but it has been more or less revitalised by it.

The dynamism of Islam was reflected in its wonderful history—a history which spread over centuries and involved many continents. In the glorious days of Islam many Caliphates were established. For example, the Omayyads established themselves in Damascus and started a hereditary kingdom. The Omayyads conquered the whole of North Africa and pushed on to Spain. (1238-1498 A.D.).

The Abbasid Caliphate was established in Baghdad by Abul Abbas, descendant of an uncle of the Prophet. In its palmy days Baghdad under Harun'l Rashid was regarded as the richest and most enlightened city in the world. Then there was a Spanish Caliphate in Cordova (755-1236 A.D.) and a Moorish one at Granada. (1238-1498 A.D.).

The Caliphate of the Ottoman Turks became powerful towards the end of the 13th century. The Turks captured

¹ This is a far more reasonable explanation than the mere political consideration, viz., the idea of placating his Hindu subjects, which would seem to make the Emperor a hypocrite.

² Nicholson: *Mystics*, p. 150.

Constantinople in 1453 a date from which Renaissance is said to have started in Europe. This Caliphate continued during the First World War and created a great deal of commotion among the Indian Mussalmans when the Sultan of Turkey as Caliph, declared Jihad against the Allies—the enemies of the Moslems. This Caliphate came to an end when the Sultan was deposed in 1922. In India an independent Moslem kingdom called Pakistan or Land of purity has been created by the partition of India which took place on the eve of the withdrawal of the British who held sway over the country for nearly two centuries.

HINDUISM

I feel diffident to speak on Hinduism—a faith to which I myself owe allegiance. The reasons for my diffidence are twofold. In the first place, it is very complex and secondly the subject is very vast. Hinduism is an ancient religion and just as the Gangā rising from the heights of the Himalayas has gathered mud and other foreign matter in the course of its passage down the plains, the religion of the Hindus in its career through the ages has absorbed in its body various elements which it is now difficult to separate. It is, therefore, impossible to restore the religion to its pristine purity. Nor does it seem possible always to trace the history of these various elements.

Many writers have been at pains to represent this religion as faithfully as they can. Great credit is undoubtedly due to them for the tremendous efforts they have made in making the religion accessible to the educated people outside the fold of Hinduism. But in many cases such undertakings have proved less successful than they should have been. The fault is not theirs. The complexity of the study makes it difficult for scholars to do justice to all aspects of the subject. Besides prejudices and preconceived notions sometimes stand in the way of doing justice to the faith with which constitutionally they are incapable of sympathising.

Some writers have approached the subject with missionary zeal and condemned the religion outright with unfeigned disgust; others have handled it with more sympathy, but in so doing have damned it with a patronising pat. They have attempted no doubt to do justice, but the inextricable complexity of the religion and its innumerable shades have often defeated their efforts.

I have therefore grave doubts as to whether my treatment will meet with any greater measure of success. For nobody is more conscious than I am, that it is hardly possible for me to avoid the defects to which other writers have been liable. If they have missed the mark by reason of their prejudice and onesidedness, I may have done so through

familiarity and overzealousness. Familiarity is apt to cause blindness.

I shall try, in the course of these short lectures, to give, however, a succinct representation of the essential features of Hinduism, so far as I have been able to understand them, keeping in mind those features in particular which contributed to the dynamism of the faith.

What is Hinduism after all ? It is difficult to answer the question in one word. For as Christianity was founded by Christ, Buddhism by Buddha, Islam by Mohammad and Zoroastrianism by Zoroaster, Hinduism cannot be traced to any one man as its founder. It will be recalled that the name of Hindu is not the name given to themselves by the followers of the creed, nor Hinduism the name given to it by such followers. The name is derived from the river 'Sindhu' (Indus) which was mispronounced by the Persians.

But it will be retorted that whatever the origin of the name, Hinduism must have a definite connotation in order that the millions of men who now call themselves Hindus should be able to identify themselves as such and distinguish themselves from those who profess other religions.

It may perhaps be said in a tentative way that the Hindus generally agree in (i) accepting the authority of the Vedas and (ii) in obeying the caste rules. But in its impact with foreign culture the age-old caste system is crumbling to pieces, and the Vedas of hoary antiquity have ceased to exercise any living influence on a large scale.¹ But it may be said that Hinduism which is followed as a living faith in modern times is based on numerous texts which derive their authority from the Vedas.²

¹ Some years ago a symposium was held on the meaning of Hinduism. Prominent men among the Hindu community were invited to take part and a volume was published containing their opinions. It is interesting reading inasmuch as the leaders of Hindu thought were themselves undecided as to what precisely is meant by Hinduism and what conditions must be fulfilled in order that a person may call himself a Hindu. One of the contributors (Dr. Bhagwan Das of Banaras I think) expressed the view that any body who called himself a Hindu was a Hindu.—See Pratt: *India and Its Faiths*.

² Vaisnavism, Saivism, Tantrism, etc., recognise the authority of the Vedas.

The absence of a clear-cut definition is perhaps the reason why there is so much laxity in the matter of religious belief among the educated Hindu youths. So far as the masses are concerned they are content to follow with routine-like regularity the age-old fasts, Pujas, and festivals under the direction and dominance of priests.

The Hindu religion seems to have more or less the following characteristics :—

(i) Belief in God as the creator of the universe. Unlike the Buddhists or the Jains, the Hindus believe in some supernatural power as the cause and sustainer of the world.¹ God is described here in the singular as that from which the world has originated, by which it is maintained and in which it is absorbed. The Bhagabat Gita speaks of God as the thread which runs through all the existences as the pearls are made into a necklace by a thread which passes through them.²

It should be noted that the Samkhya system and the Purva Mimamsa school do not admit the existence of God. Still they are not excluded from the orthodox Hindu fold. On the contrary Kapila, the founder of the Samkhya, and Jaimini the exponent of Purva Mimamsa are venerated as great Hindu sages. In fact they claim the same rank with Gautama the founder of Nyaya, and Badarayana the author of Brahma Sutras. The Samkhya takes up a positivistic attitude in relation to the question of the existence of God and arrives at the conclusion that there is no proof for the existence of God. The Mimamsakas as well as the Samkhyas agree in acknowledging the authority of the Vedas. But there is this difference: the Samkhyas hold that at the beginning of every renovation of the Universe, it issues anew from the mouth of Brahma, but without his composing it. But according to the Mimamsakas the Vedas are eternal, they have always existed. They are infallibly authoritative but the Vedic gods are imaginary. Both of them hold the Vedas in veneration; that is why

¹ यतो वा इमानि भूतानि —Brahma Sutra.

² मयि सर्वमिदं प्रोक्तं सूत्रे मणिगणा इव —Gita VII.

they are included among the Hindu systems, although they openly deny God.¹

The Mimamsakas reason thus: All our strivings are for the attainment of reward; this reward being dependent upon works, and information about works being obtainable from the precepts of the Vedas. If we accept these three things, why need we accept more? If we hold the precepts of the Vedas true, what harm is there in our looking upon the rest of the Vedas as a romance? And, if reward comes of works, these ought to suffice; and what is the use of the gods and the rest? Again if works give rise to various fruits, then as a seed possesses an innate power of originating a sprout, so by maintaining that works possess an innate energy, we are enabled to account for the production of the world; and what necessity is there of a god? This mode of arguing leads us to the source from which Buddhism and Jainism derived their inspiration and technique.

(ii) Belief in moral retribution. The Hindus believe that every man is responsible for his action.² "One must enjoy the fruits of his good or bad actions; there is no escape from it." As you have sown, so you must reap.

This has led the Hindus to formulate the law of Karma (action). It is an extension of the physical law of causation in the moral sphere. It is inconceivable to a Hindu how this first principle of causation which is made so much of in science is not acknowledged in the sphere of human actions. The law of Karma is as universal as the causal law in the physical sphere. It is almost axiomatic, *i.e.*, it has only to be stated in order to be accepted. The chain of Karmic causation infallibly links together the different events of a man's life but does not end with death or dissolution of the physical body. No one can commit sin with impunity. Action is always followed by reaction. So far as the law of Karma is concerned, there is a close agreement between Hinduism and its two heretic off-shoots, *viz.*, Buddhism and Jainism.³

¹ *A Rational Refutation of the Hindu Philosophical Systems* by Nehemia Nilkantha Sastri Gore, p. 103.

² This belief in moral retribution is present in all religions.

³ Some scholars go so far as to suggest that the Law of Karma with the theory of rebirth was first propounded by Buddha, and those

Although this law is nowhere else regarded as a fundamental principle of religion and ethics, its truth is conceded almost universally. For example, we have in the Bible "Unto Thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy; for thou renderest to every man according to his work" (Book of Job). "They that sow iniquity and sow wickedness reap the same."

The Quran also agrees that 'whatever misfortune falls on one, of one's own doings it is the result.'

This law of Karma has two corollaries. One is the sense of justice which prevails in the moral world. God is just and that is why the good actions are rewarded and the evil deeds are punished. There is an arbiter of the moral world who is perfectly just and righteous. This is why the law of Karma works with such inexorable certainty.

The second corollary is transmigration of souls. Justice and righteousness are not found to work in this imperfect world with unfailing regularity. So sometimes the wicked are found to prosper and the virtuous, to suffer. Seeing this obvious maladjustment the Greek philosopher was prompted to say that virtue is its own reward. This may bring philosophic consolation to the suffering, but the Karma theory has brought peace and consolation to millions of souls for thousands of years. If the wicked escape punishment and are apparently rewarded, one can rest assured that in some future life, punishment is sure to overtake him.

It is said that the doctrine of transmigration¹ has no evidence to rest upon. Besides it is faulty inasmuch as

Upanishads that preach the above are of later origin. *Hopkins' Religions of India*, p. 302.

¹ Among the Greek Philosophers, Pythagoras preached the doctrine of Transmigration. Some scholars think that this was due to the influence of Indian Philosophy. "The coincidences (i.e., between Indian and Pythagorean ideas) are too numerous to be the result of chance."—See Hopkins, *op. cit.*, p. 559.

Buddhists and Jains are firm believers in Transmigration. The belief can be traced even to the Vedas.

The Jews admitted the truth of transmigration. The Hebrew word for metempsychosis is 'gilgulin.' See also Art. Kabbalah in *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

it fails to achieve the object for which it is intended. For if the people who are punished or rewarded do not possess the memory that they are thus dealt with for their deeds committed in a previous birth, the punishment or reward misses its very object.

But transmigration is not based, I think, on weaker arguments than the conception of heaven and hell in Jewish or Mohammanadan religions. The Jews believed at first that after death the souls are thrown into Sheol and therefore they did not worry themselves about what happened after death. The Zoroastrians believe that the souls are judged after death and their accounts balanced after weighing the good deeds against the evil deeds by angels appointed for the purpose. At the gate of heaven the souls are received by a beautiful damsel in the case of the righteous and by an old hideous hag in the case of the unrighteous.¹ The heaven and hell of the Hindus being bound up with an ethical law are not so fanciful perhaps as those of Zoroaster and the Jews.

(iii) Closely connected with Karma phenomenology is the institution of caste. However originated, the caste system of the Hindus is perhaps the most abused feature of their religion. Social distinctions exist among other peoples also, but the distinctions of caste prevailing in India are of an hide-bound nature carrying with them certain privileges and disabilities unknown among any other people. But the reason is that caste distinctions have behind them a religious sanction, and are connected with the law of Karma and transmigration. According to one's Karma, one is born a Brahman or a Kshatriya, a Vaishya or a Sudra.²

The Article on Transmigration in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* shows that the belief in transmigration is spread all over the world in one form or another.

Some sects of Moslems and Christians are known to believe in transmigration.

¹ A. V. W. Jackson : *Zoroastrian Studies*, pp. 145-47.

² That no sense of contempt is implied may be gathered from the fact that several Avatars or incarnations of God took place not among the Brahmans, the highest caste, but among other castes. Rama was a Kshatriya prince, so was Buddha. Krishna was born as Kshatriya, but brought up among cowherds. These and many non-Brahman teachers of Hinduism have received the highest reverence from all castes.

At first the division of caste was made on the basis of social necessity. The Brahmans answered to the philosopher class of Plato, the Kshatriyas to the warrior class, the Vaisyas to the artisans or producers. The Sudras made up of the conquered, but Aryanised, aborigines were admitted into the Hindu society as camp followers or servants.¹

The Purusha conception of Rig Veda and the origin of caste is obviously based upon a pantheistic view of Brahman. This explains also the hierarchy of castes. The Brāhmans having originated from the mouth of the Purusha are the highest in order. Next come the Kshatriyas who are created from the arms; the Vaisyas or the artisan class come out of the body and last of all the Sudras who are derived from the feet of Brahma. Here there is an attempt at explanation of the social structure in a theocratic manner. The life of a Hindu is altogether conceived as a religious phenomenon bound on all sides by a system of religious rules from birth to death. The Hindu society with all its well demarcated subdivisions is nothing but the body of the supreme reality, that is to say, a Divine organism.

Originally the castes were treated according to qualities and occupations.² But gradually the distinctions became hereditary, *i.e.*, the son of a Brāhman became a Brāhman although lacking in the high qualifications laid down for a Brāhman and the son of a barber became a barber although he practised as a Kaviraja (medical man). This hereditary caste system has its advantages as well as disadvantages. In the present economic conditions the disadvantages far outweigh the advantages, and the people belonging to the lower castes are found to be most disaffected by the disqualifications of birth. The greatest disqualifications are

¹ King Alfred's ideal society was fashioned after the Hindu model—'A king must have men of prayer, men of war and men of work.'—De Constantine quoted in Taylor's *Mediaeval Mind*, Vol. I, p. 189.

² चातुर्वर्ण्यं मया सृष्टं गुणकर्मविभागशः —Gita IV : 13.

The Gita goes on to enumerate the qualities of each caste, *e.g.*, the Brahmins must possess self-restraint, knowledge, uprightness, etc., the Kshatriyas valor, steadfastness, etc., the Vaisyas' concern should be agriculture, looking after cows (cattle), trade, etc., and the Sudras', service : Chap. XVIII; 41-44.

with respect to inter-marrying and inter-dining. These two barriers no Hindu can cross. When in course of time the caste distinction lost its meaning and to a certain extent its social utility, the disqualifications became positively irksome and even harmful. But the gulf began to grow wider and wider and the spirit of unity which was necessary for offering an effective opposition to aggression declined. This is supposed by many to be the cause of India falling a prey to foreign invasion. It may be noted in passing that no other people among the powerful nations of the world suffer from the disintegration which caste system has created in Hindu society. It is therefore felt in many quarters among the Hindus themselves that the sooner this archaic custom is abolished, the better for the Hindu society; and signs are not wanting that in the upper strata of modern society caste distinctions are no longer regarded as sacrosanct.

(iv) Every thing in this world is evanescent. Even the illiterate Hindus are found to possess this belief, *viz.*, that death, dissolution or destruction pervades the whole universe. Now that which by its nature is flitting cannot be real. If any thing begins in time and ceases to exist in time, it is unreal. The beginning and end being unreal the middle also must needs be unreal.

This highly philosophical conception of the unreality of the universe has found its way to the lowest strata of the Hindu society. This belief is connected with their eschatological views regarding the destiny of the soul. The soul is posited as a reality over against the perishable world.

The idea of perishableness and unreality of the world of things may have been borrowed from Buddhism, but it appears to be universally held by the Hindus. Of course the Buddhist doctrine of evanescence and flux is much more thorough-going and destructive. Heraclitus's theory of flux or change is based more or less on philosophical speculation, in an attempt to grasp the real character of the world of sense. But the Hindu view of *Anitya* or impermanence has, besides a metaphysical basis, a far-reaching ethical and spiritual significance.

The Hindu view of Impermanence leads to asceticism in conduct and mysticism in religion. If everything is evanescent and if the things for which we most care are doomed to disappear and die, then why cling to this life and chase a shadow? In matters spiritual, such an attitude makes the longing for the eternal, for permanent union with the Divine a matter of compelling necessity. Whatever be the ideal, it is certainly not on this side of experience, but on the other side. The religion of the Hindus is characterised by a spirit of other-worldliness.

(v) Hinduism has had a long history and in the course of that history, it has come into contact with many religions and many cultures—religions of aboriginal tribes as well as religions of the civilised world—and it is but natural to expect that those religions have contributed elements large or small which have been incorporated with Hinduism. In the history of religious development, it is often seen that consistency is not a strong point with religions. Logic has but a poor control on belief. Imagination, prejudice, primitive credulity of human mind easily enter into the composition of religious belief. What is derived from borrowing becomes in course of time part and parcel of the original dogma. For example, Siva as the name indicates is the God of propitiousness but he is depicted as the God of terrors; he is the lord of demons, he is the great destroyer.¹ Possibly the Vedic Rudra has mingled with some primitive myths. So he is the Supreme God of not only all that is good and gracious, but of much that is of doubtful propriety—of hunters, thieves and pilferers.²

Where, a religion has spent all its force, it makes an effort to survive by borrowing ideas from other faiths which are believed to possess greater vitality. In this way, the religion of the Sikhs has taken its rise by mingling the vital flow of Islam with the dried up stream of Hinduism in the Punjab. Guru Nanak the founder of Sikhism

¹ Elliot: *Hinduism and Buddhism*, Vol. II, Chapter XXV.

² In the Mricchakatika or the Clay Cart, the Son of Siva, Kartikeya, is invoked by a burglar to teach him house-breaking.

imported from Islam its vigour, its militant spirit and its monotheism.

“ I have appeared in this age to indicate the way unto men. I reject all sects and only know one God whom I recognise in the earth, the heavens, and in all directions.”

Granth Saheb, 179.

“ Like thee there is no other. Thou art in all ages the only one. Always thou art one. Without thee there

Granth Saheb, 179.

This is almost a verbatim reproduction of the teaching of the Quran. Idolatry is tabooed and the Hindu scriptures are repudiated. Caste system of the Hindus is also repudiated. Similarly Brahmoism is a reform movement within the Hindu fold. Although founded on Upanishadic monotheism,¹ it showed a decidedly Christian leaning in that it had a church in which weekly prayers after the Christian pattern are held. The Brāhmos or worshippers of Brahma (God) are opposed to idolatry. They also took upon themselves to reform the abuses of Hindu society including caste distinction.

Symbolism plays a great part in all religions. So far as Hinduism is concerned, symbolism together with allegory, imagery and analogy is responsible for many elements which seem to be otherwise unintelligible. For example a God is represented with many heads and arms. The conception when originally formed perhaps represented symbolically the multifarious functions which the particular god performed. Later on, the worshippers were enjoined to literally picture them to the mind (in ‘Dhyanam’) with the particular shapes and forms which were thus stereotyped. If the phallic emblem of Siva symbolised the power of reproduction or generation, it came to be forgotten. It has come to mean in course of time that the emblem was the god. One feels bewildered that a highly cultured people like the Hindus should of all things worship this emblem in

¹ ‘ God is but one, the first without a second ’ which is the kernel of Vedanta philosophy.

the name of god.¹ But the Hindu mind is not troubled; for to him symbolism is symbolism and nothing more. The Hindu is absorbed in the contemplation of God as the ultimate source of all living things. In the case of Kālī again, the dreadful aspect of the destructive force is symbolised. In the Hindu mind God possesses the double function of creation and destruction. Together with her consort, Siva the gracious god, she relentlessly carries on destruction of created beings who are their children² and at the same time they both protect the creation between them. The fierce look of the goddess is meant to remind that God is not all mercy and compassion but that it is Her duty also to destroy by Her supreme might (*sakti*) all that has been created, creation and destruction being facets of the same benign cosmic process. If death did not exist, the world would be dull and stagnant and human life would only perpetuate misery. Destruction is therefore a blessing in disguise and the goddess is represented so as to symbolise that aspect.

But the symbolism does not end there. Siva or the god of beneficent activities is placed under the feet of the dark goddess so as to symbolise that the force of destruction has a core of benignity. But whatever that may be, the symbolism is lost to most minds.

It is necessary to view the religion of Hindus in its threefold aspect :

(a) There is a form of Hinduism which consists in Nature worship. For instance the sun and sky, fire and water are worshipped. This is the form in which we find it in the Vedas. We shall speak about this later on.

(b) Philosophical aspect—It is traceable to the Vedic scriptures (*e.g.*, the theory of creation in the Tenth Mandala of Rig Veda), but it becomes dominant in the Upanishads which are a body of religio-philosophical treatises. In

¹ Many Hindus deny that the Linga is a phallic emblem, but the position can hardly be defended. For in Mahabharata XIII : 14, there is a clear mention of phallic worship.

² This destruction, however, is not in consequence of God's or goddess's anger, after the manner of Jews, but it takes place as a matter of necessity.

this philosophic aspect, a monotheistic spirit is manifest. Brahman is the only reality—it is the one Supreme Being pervading the Universe. It is identical with the Soul or Atman. So it is frankly a philosophical monism superseding the polytheism of the Vedas. The 108 Upanishads together with Bhagabatgita make up the body of knowledge which marks the highest peak reached by Hindu speculation.

(c) The popular Hinduism of the Puranas: The eighteen Puranas including the two great epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata, have determined to a large extent the shape which Hinduism has taken so far as the masses are concerned. Popular Hinduism is a large conglomerate of facts and fancies, allegories and metaphors, ethics and politics. There is in the worship which is held in temples a great deal which can be called idolatrous.

In every religion perhaps there are a higher or more philosophical and a lower or more popular form. The popular form is often full of superstitions and myths. But nowhere perhaps is the divergence so wide as between the philosophical and the popular forms of Hindu religion. It is necessary to bear this distinctly in mind, because Hinduism has been so often made the target of attack and so divergent has been the criticism, that it is difficult to arrive at a correct appreciation, one way or the other, of the real position. For instance when Sister Nivedita (Miss Margaret Noble) writes about Hinduism,¹ she is accused of undue leaning towards Indian culture and when Abbe Du Bois² or Miss Mayo³ condemns everything connected with Hinduism, he or she is considered to have seen through coloured glasses.

As a matter of fact, there is much greater difference between popular and philosophical Hinduism than between Roman Catholics and Protestants. At the same time I must not be understood to mean that the two are ordinarily kept distinct and separate. The two paths intersect and cross each other at many points and then it becomes difficult to distinguish the one from the other. Just as the philosophical

¹ *Web of Indian Life.*

² *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies.*

³ *Mother India.*

minds sometimes follow the conventional worship with all its polytheistic and idolatrous practices, so the popular methods are more often than not based on the philosophical conceptions with their highly metaphysical and monotheistic ideals.

THE VEDAS

The word 'Veda' means knowledge.¹ The earliest of these is the Rig Veda (literally a laudatory stanza) which is more than two thousand years old at least. It consists of hymns and prayers. The Rig Veda is regarded as the most authoritative, and the Hindus of old were so particular about it that it has come down exactly in its original form and with fewer variant readings than, say, the Hebrew Old Testament.²

The Sāma Veda is the Veda of Saman (hymns) mostly from the Rig Veda.

The Yajur Veda contains sacrificial prayers (yajus). Some of these have been borrowed from the Rig Veda, but it contains besides original prose formulas. The Yajur Veda is divided into Black and White. Black Yajur Veda does not separate the formulas from their prose explanations and comments. The White Yajur Veda differentiates the two and calls the formula part Samhita and the prose-explanations part Brāhmaṇa.

The Atharva Veda is a later addition and was for long denied a place among the canonical literature. It is a miscellaneous collection and contains not merely hymns from the Rig Veda but magical spells and incantations, even sorcery and witchcraft. The above three constitute what is known as the three books of knowledge.³

¹ Sāyanācārya has explained the word as meaning that which gives knowledge not attainable by experience or inference. It is not the work of any human being.

² Deshmukh : *Religion in Vedic Literature*, pp. 189-90.

³ तथै वै विद्या ऋचो यजुषि सामानि .

—Satapatha 4/6/7/9. It is explained thus : Atharvan is not counted among the Vedas, not because it is later, but because the mantras of the other three Vedas are used in sacrifices.

But still Atharva Veda has importance in this that it gives a fairly true picture of the civilisation of the period during which it was composed. It forms an important supplement to Rig Veda allowing us a deep insight into the obscurer relations and emotions of human nature.¹

The Brahmanas, *i.e.*, books dealing with devotion or prayer are theological prose works attached to four Samhitas.

The Aranyakas and Upanishads are closely connected with the Brahmanas and sometimes with the Samhitas. Aranyakas or forest books are intended to be studied in the solitude of forests.

'Upanishad' is a part of Aranyaka as Aranyaka is a part of Brahmana. The sutras of Vadarayana, Upanishads and Bhagabat Gita make up what is known as the 'Vedanta' or the finality of the Vedas. The Upanishads represent the apogee of Hindu thought.² They are also called Brahma-vidya inasmuch as the knowledge of one, indivisible, ultimate reality called Brahma can be obtained through the Upanishads.

The Upanishads are the mature products of the intellect which being dissatisfied with the multiplicity of vedic gods plunges into the metaphysical or ontological question and ends by discovering a sole self-sufficing reality which is the root cause of the universe.

But before I take up this monotheistic mysticism of the Upanishads, let me give some idea of the gods in vedic literature.

The vedic gods may be considered under three classes : celestial, atmospheric and terrestrial³ according to the division of the universe into heaven, air and earth.

¹ Bloomfield quoted in Encyclopedia Britannica (Article Sanskrit).

² The meaning of the word Upanishad is, according to Deussen, 'confidential secret sitting.' The Rishis used to impart mysterious formulae to their initiated disciples. Sankaracarya in his commentary of Mundakopaniṣat explains the meaning thus : Upanishat is that kind of Brahma-knowledge, which destroys ignorance and other causes of Samsāra (birth and death, etc.), of those who exclusively depend upon it.

³ This division is proposed in the Vedas : "Ye gods who are eleven in the sky, eleven on earth and who in their glory are eleven dwellers in the (atmospheric) waters, do ye gladly enjoy this our offering."—Rig Veda.

It is needless to say that this classification can hardly be logically applied.—Deshmukh : *The Vedic Gods*, p. 212.

The principal celestial gods are Dyaus (Heaven), Varuna, the sun gods (Surya, Savitri, Mitra, Visnu and other gods), Usas, and Asvins. The most famous hymn of Riga Veda which every Brāhman is required to repeat in his prayers is dedicated to Savitri. Hence it is called Sāvitrī or Gāyatrī.¹

May we attain that excellent
Glory of Savitri the god
That he may stimulate our thoughts.

It must be borne in mind that the worship of Surya which is so general and obligatory in the Gāyatrī is nowhere else to be found.²

Usas (dawn) is the only female deity of the Rig Veda, who is frequently invoked.

Among the atmospheric gods, the following may be regarded as the most important; Indra,³ the national god of the vedic period, is the most prominent. He is the greatest god of the middle region and pervades the air. Varuna is the supreme god of the universe and the upholder of the moral law,⁴ while Indra is a valiant warrior and, like the Jewish Lord of hosts, helps the Aryans in their wars against the aborigines. Indra is connected with thunder, rain, etc.; Rudra, Maruts (sons of Rudra, therefore called the Rudras) and Parjanya (rain cloud) are other gods. Rudra has a twofold aspect. He is fierce and destructive; but he is also wise and beneficent. Apam Napat (son of waters)—stands for Agni in rain cloud,⁵ Trita Aptya prepared and purified Soma.⁶

The terrestrial gods are : Agni (fire) is the most important terrestrial god. He is second only to Indra. He is also spoken of as the messenger (*duta*) between earth and heaven. This office has been conferred on him both by men and gods.

¹ ओं तत्सवितुर्वरेण्यं भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात् : ऋग्वेद संहिता ।

² The reason why this particular hymn should be held so sacred is obscure. Deshmukh, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

³ The name appears in Boghus-Koi inscription for which the scholars have fixed 1400 B.C. as the date.

⁴ Varuna and all other vedic gods are free from any immoral traits, but Indra is not.

⁵ This name appears also in Avesta, and is, therefore, Indo-Iranian.

⁶ Trita goes back to Indo-Iranian.

Soma (Avestan Hauma) is of course the Soma plant or juice, and is celebrated in many hymns of the Rig Veda. As a god, Soma is next to Agni and Indra.¹

Brhaspati is connected with prayer or hymns. He is a Brahmana and is invoked also as Brahmanaspati (lord of prayer).

Saraswati is the river personified as a goddess of purity. In the Brahmanas, she is the goddess of speech.²

In the vedic hymns, several gods are invoked in pairs : Dyava—Prithivi (Heaven and Earth), Mitra—Varuna, Indra—Agni.

In the vedic period there is no mention of images. The practice of worshipping images was introduced later and, many think, under the influence of Buddhism. The religion of the Greeks must have influenced the Buddhists who by a curious irony of history became the inspirers of idolatry among the Hindus.

THE UPANISHADS

The Upanishads reflect all that is best and noblest in human thought and their influence has been commensurate with the veneration in which they are held. They are regarded as Sruti or Revelation by the Hindus and even in quite modern times whatever reform has been attempted in the Hindu religion, it has turned for its inspiration to the Upanishads.³ Western scholars have unequivocally paid their homage to the high moral and mystic tone of the Upanishads.⁴

¹ The Soma plant was brought to Indra by an eagle (*syena*). Its juice has an exhilarating effect upon the gods, pitris, etc. It intoxicates also.

² It is difficult to identify the river. Some have identified it with the Avestan Haraquaiti in Afghanistan.—Deshmukh.

³ *E.g.*; Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Dayananda Saraswati, etc.

⁴ Deussen has remarked: To every Indian Brāhman today the Upanishads are what the New Testament is to the Christian. The oft-quoted words of eulogy of Schopenhauer, the pantheistic philosopher of Germany, may be recalled: It (Latin translation of a Persian rendering of the Upanishads) is the most rewarding and the most elevating reading which (with the exception of the original text) there can possibly be in the world. It has been the solace of my life and will be of my death."

How from the naive nature-worship of the Vedas where the powers of nature were personified into gods, the conception of a monistic principle was evolved, is related in Kena Upanishad. Once upon a time, when the gods elated with their victory against the demons were boasting about their own individual achievements, an unknown being (Brahma) appeared before them. The gods sent Agni to enquire who that being was. Being asked by Brahma to disclose his identity, Agni vaunted about his powers. But when asked to burn a straw he tried with all his might but failed. When Agni, unable to find out who the unknown being was, returned, Vayu was deputed. But he also failed to blow away the straw. Then Indra approached the unknown being. It then became a beautiful woman (Wisdom) and explained that the unknown Yaksha was no other than Brahma, who is the cause of every thing and through whose power alone the gods could do what they had done.¹

The parable or allegory is intended to bring home to the mind that *that* without whose power even the gods are powerless is Brahma.

Wisdom consists in knowing that (1) the whole universe is pervaded by Brahma.² (2) All is Brahma. (3) The individual soul or ego is identical with the universal soul.³

At first the world was conceived as created and so having an entity of its own. It is said that Brahma "having created it, into it he entered."⁴

The unity of being is asserted in the Chandogya after combating the theory of Non-Being. "In the beginning,

¹ Kena, Part III.

² Isa, 1.

³ श्लोकार्हेन प्रवक्ष्यामि यदुक्तं गम्यकोटिभिः ।
ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन्मय्या जीवो ब्रह्मैव नाऽपरः ।

—(Its authorship is not known).

I shall say in half a verse what is propounded in innumerable texts, viz., Brahma is Truth, the world is unreal and the individual is no other than Brahma himself.

⁴ Tait. 2.6; Chand. 6.3 speaks of the 'Originally Existent;' after it had procreated heat, water and food, 'That divinity thought to itself "Come, let me enter these three divinities with this living soul, and separate out name and form."'

my dear, Being only existed.” But some people say that “In the beginning non-being only was.” From that Non-Being (Asat), Being was produced. But how can that be? How can Being be produced from Non-Being? So in the beginning, my dear, there was Being, one only, without a second. That Being bethought itself, “Would that I were many. Let me procreate myself.” Then heat was produced, heat produced water and water, food.¹

From the spirit world of the Vedas to the conception of a unitive world-soul is no doubt a far cry, but the transition was by no means unnatural. According to the Vedic view of life, even “the breezes were full of deities or spirits.” From this many-god-filled world to a world the essential nature of which is nothing but God seems to be by no means unwarranted.

At first the distinction was not entirely obliterated. There was a higher Brahma answering to the spiritual universe and there was a lower Brahma corresponding to the impermanent and mortal.² The lower Brahma is the actual world.

This is also affirmed by several other Upanishads.³ But the trend of Upanishadic thinking being towards a unitary principle, the two Brahmas were correlated and Reality was conceived as One. He is the Real of the Real (*Satyasya satyam*). The phenomenal world has no reality—it is an appearance only.⁴

It is interesting to see how gradually the monistic idea emerged into clearness. At first Brahma seems to be a logical deduction. When different shapes like the pitcher, pot, cover, etc., come out of the common substance, viz., earth, the earth alone is the reality,⁵ and the pitcher, etc., are only modifications (vikara) labelled with names or as the

¹ Chand. 6.2.

² Maitri Up. 6.15. “There are assuredly two forms of Brahma : Time and the Timeless. The timeless is prior to the sun (a-kāla), and without parts (a-kalā)” —Hume, p. 434.

³ Mundaka, Prasna, Svetasvatara.

⁴ Brih. 2.1.20.

⁵ वाचारम्भणं विकारनामधेयं सृत्तिकेव सत्यम् ।

Visnu Purana puts it “ As gold is still one substance, however diversified as bracelets, tiaras or earrings, so Hari is one and the same, although modified in the form of gods, men and animals.”¹ If we follow this process, we arrive at a substance or noumenon which is none of these bewildering varieties of things but which underlies them all.

The reality that underlies the whole panorama of appearances is Brahma. Originally Brahma meant prayer, but in the process of unification it came to mean the essence of the universe, the soul of the world and the only one God without a second. So the final conclusion arrived at by Hindu speculation is a logical monism and a philosophical pantheism. All is Brahma. For truly everything here is Brahma.²

The doctrine of Maya can be traced to Rig Veda where the word Maya (plural) is used to denote ‘supernatural powers’ or artifices. This is expressed in the Svetasvatara idea of cosmic illusion which is quoted by the Sankara school as their authority. The Brahma is the only real, but he is veiled by name and form (which are supposed to give to things their individuality). Since the One alone is real, the manifold cannot be real; they are appearances merely and as such illusion—Maya.³ But how does that which is unreal arise? Brahma by a sort of “supernatural magic” makes himself appear as many.⁴ ‘Maya’ which has been made so much of in the Vedanta Philosophy of Sankara is the same as Brahma, *i.e.*, the magic and the magician are not distinct. They are one.

¹ Visnu Purana III. See p. 86, *India and Its Faiths*.

² Mundaka 2.

³ Life verily is the Immortal. Name and Form are the real. By them that Life is veiled.—Brih. 1.6.3.

⁴ The Inner Soul (Antarātman) of all things makes his unity appear as many. Those wise men, who realise this reality in their inmost self can realise the eternal Bliss and none else.—Katha 2.2.12.

एको वशी सर्वभूतान्तरात्मा
एकं रूपं बहुधा यः करोति
तमात्मस्थं येऽनुपश्यन्ति धीरा-
स्तेषां सुखं शाश्वतं नेतरेषाम् ।

But the question is: what led the Supreme One practise this magic? Since there is no other reality than Brahma, the Reality and Illusion are but aspects of one and the same thing. Herein lies the mysticism of Sankara Vedanta.

We can, like Berkeley, understand the resolution of all phenomenon to subjective ideas or follow Bradley in drawing an absolute distinction between noumenon and phenomena, between reality and appearance; or again draw a distinction after Plato between sense phenomena and reason. But it is difficult to understand the theory of Maya superimposed upon the only reality in the universe, *viz.*, Brahma.

The mysticism of the Upanishads consists in postulating the unreality of the phenomena; the Absolute cannot be encompassed by reason.¹ Those only who are instructed (by Gurus who have the realisation) can understand. The Katha Upanishad goes further and lays down categorically that he alone can know to whom He chooses to reveal Himself.²

He who aspires after Brahma knowledge should make strenuous efforts; for therein lies the highest goal of man. That which is soundless, touchless, formless, imperishable, likewise tasteless, constant, odorless, without beginning, without end, higher than the great, stable—by discerning That, one is liberated from the mouth of death.³ We are told that in order to grasp the Absolute, one should be in it, as the arrow is in the mark. Concentration is the only key which opens the chamber of Truth. Taking the

¹ नैषा तर्केण मतिरापनेया

—The wisdom cannot be attained (?) by reason or argument.
Katha 1.2.9.

² This soul is not to be obtained by (mere) study, nor by intellect nor by much learning. He is to be obtained only by the one whom He chooses. To such a one that Soul (Atman) reveals His own person.—Katha 1.2.23; also Mund. 3.2.3.

नायमात्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्यो

न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन ।

यमेवैष वृणुते तेन लभ्य-

स्तस्यैष आत्मा विवृणुते तं स्वाम् ॥

³ निचाय्य तत् मृत्युमुखात् प्रसु यते —Katha 3.15.

metaphor from hunting, the Upanishad says that one should make the mystic syllable Om as the bow, the soul arrow and Brahma the mark (lakshya).¹

But the difficulty is that Reality is such that it cannot be defined nor described, for all determinations are negations. The Upanishads therefore are never tired of asserting that "the speech returns baffled with the mind" in trying to grasp him.

Sometimes various similes are used to indicate, however imperfectly, the nature of this Eternal Truth, *e.g.*, a white lotus flower, a sudden flash of lightning, a flame of fire, etc. But the true Upanishadic position is: that which underlies the phenomena cannot be made known by any sensuous representation whatsoever. Neti Neti, Not thus. Not so. That is, it can be expressed by negative characteristics only.² This then is the final idealistic position to which the Upanishadic monism leads. Brahman is all spirit. What is regarded as the material world is really a product of our ignorance or Avidya. "As an independent substance, matter does not exist. The universal soul posits the not-I, but does so only to deny it."³ This sounds like the idealism of Berkeley, or Fichte. The cosmic ignorance or Avidya is, of course, an eastern conception. True wisdom consists in regarding the world as permeated through and through with the Absolute spirit. It is identical with Brahma. The supreme Absolute constitutes the true inner being of all things.

The human soul is conceived by the Upanishads as identical with God. So long as ignorance or Maya casts its veil on things, the soul is seen to be individual, *i.e.*, having a certain name and form. But when its true nature is realised, the individual soul is "drowned in the boundless sea" as the Christian mystic says. Herein lies its liberation. Here also is the immortality.

This is the spinozistic ideal of viewing everything *sub specie eternitatis*. This also corresponds to the Greek

¹ Mundaka 2.4.

² Brih. 2.3.6.

³ Dr. Barnett's *Introduction to Bhagabat Gitā*.

view that the universal alone is true. “ One who tries to apprehend by means of the senses ” says the Greek philosopher, “ is disturbed, distracted and staggers like a drunken man ” and such a one is contrasted with the man of pure and tranquil action who contemplates eternal things.¹

But the question is, if the universal is the truth, and the individual is not, *i.e.*, if the individuality of the human soul is swallowed up in the Absolute, how can the finite mind retain its identity ? ‘ I am He ’ is true, in so far as the essential unity of the individual self and the supreme Absolute is concerned, but how can the identity be maintained so as to save the selfhood from the flood ?

In other words, the question of all questions, so far as the Upanishadic teaching is concerned, is : Is the individual self different from the Infinite Brahma ? Different answers have been given to this question by persons no less inspired perhaps than the Rishis of the Upanishadic age. Acarya Sankara² denies any distinction—and this is the view of the Vedanta which is largely accepted by the people all over India. Sankara’s view is that the Brahman without attributes is pure spirit and free from everything which is distinct from it; for the scripture says : “ As a lump of salt has no inside and no outside, but consists of salt taste through and through, so has this self no distinguishable inner or outer, but consists through and through of knowledge.” This means that this self is through and through nothing but spirit : the spiritual is its entire nature, as the salt taste is that of the lump of salt.

According to Ramanuja, however, the individual soul is identical with God, but is not wholly so. He therefore held a

¹ Caird’s *Evolution of Greek Theology I*, p. 136.

² Sankaracarya was born at Kaladi, a small village in Southern India in the seventh century A.D. He was a Nambudri Brahmin belonging to the Kaipalli Illam. On the site of the Illam, by the side of the river Alwaye, stand two temples, one dedicated to Sankara and the other to said in his early days to have composed a commentary on the thousand names of Vishnu (see Krishnaswami Iyer—Sankaracarya : *His Life and the tutelary deity of the math*. There is another temple, which contains the image of Sri Krishna said to be installed by Sankara himself. He is *Times*).

qualified monism. In fact, Madhva,¹ Nimbarka and Vallabhacarya as well as Ramanuja himself emphasise the duality of the self and God. They show a strong reaction against the absolute monism of Sankara. Unless there is duality, there cannot be any relationship between the worshipper and the worshipped. In order that worship and prayer may have meaning, there must be difference between the two: God and the human soul.

But do not the followers of Sankara believe in prayer and worship? Undoubtedly most of them do. Strictly speaking however, the transcendental idealism of Sankara, if strictly interpreted, leaves no room for a personal relationship with the Absolute which is Nirguna or attributeless. Most of these Vedantins are worshippers of Siva. The ascetics who roam all over the country in quite large numbers belong to the ten orders founded by Sankara and they are mostly found to be worshippers of Siva, who is a Saguna Brahma or Brahma with select attributes.

Whatever that may be, the Upanishad literature is a monument to the speculative genius of Indians. Considering the early age when the Rishis of India discovered the highest truths attainable by the human intellect in respect of God, soul, future life and man's place in the Universe, it reflects no small credit on the contribution which India made in that early age to the religion and philosophy of mankind.

To the western scholars, the Vedantic view that the world is unreal or as Sankara puts it, it is Maya or illusion often proves a stumbling block to the proper appreciation of the Indian mind. While the practical Zoroastrian or Jew is speaking of moulding a moral life the fulfilment of which is regarded as a *sine qua non* for the entry into a religious life, the Indian mind takes a contemplative turn and tries to get an insight into the root cause of the Universe.

¹ Madhva was an incarnation of Vayu for the purpose of destroying the false doctrines of Sankara, which were more like the doctrines of the Lokāyatas, Jainas and Pāsupatas, but were more obnoxious and injurious,—S. N. Dasgupta: *History of Philosophy*, Vol. IV, p. 52.

Much in these speculations was no doubt mixed up with poetry. Poetry and imagery were characteristics of the early thought current of mankind everywhere. That is why along with the sublimest philosophy one finds much that is pure fancy, *e.g.*, the story of Naciketa going to the Hades or Yama's place for learning from the god of death the secrets about the nature of the soul and its future. Hegel speaking of the Upanishads has accordingly remarked 'If we wish to get the so-called pantheism in its poetic, most elevated and, if one will, its coarsest form, we must look for it in Eastern poets; and the largest expositions of it are found among the Indians.'¹

But the estimate of European scholars regarding the Bhagabat Gita, the Divine Song or song celestial, which is also counted among the Upanishads is, generally speaking, different.² It is regarded as the gospel of India, the gospel of Theism. The Gita teaches that Krishna, who is called Vishnu and Vāsudeva is the Supreme God. Still he is a Personal God and the highest aim of religion is union with this personal god through complete self-surrender. Religion consists in a personal relationship between god and soul, which is not possible with an Impersonal god. There can be metaphysics or ontology with an attributeless Impersonal Being but not religion.

The Bhagabat Gita forms a part of the Mahabharata and is introduced in Chapter V at a very critical moment when the political, social and moral life of greater India was threatened. The great civil war waged on the historic field of Kurukshetra was not only a political war in which one party or another wins, but it was a war involving two ideologies—Dharma and Adharma—Righteousness and Unrighteousness. The question was whether the righteous or the unrighteous would win the battle. Krishna, as charioteer of invulnerable Arjuna, was on the side of the righteous

¹ Quoted by Hume : *Thirteen Upanishads*, p. 70.

² "A living book devoutly read and studied by tens of thousands of Hindus throughout the length and breadth of India."—Howells—Quoted by Pratt : *India and Its Faiths*, p. 85.

"The song is the earliest and still the greatest monument of Indian religion."—E. J. Thomas : Introduction—*Song of the Lord*.

and the whole armed strength of India was involved in the Civil War.

On the eve of the battle when Arjuna's mind was oppressed with the thought of killing his kinsmen and others, Krishna explained to him the ultimate truths concerning the nature of the soul, the duties of man and his ultimate relation with God, etc. In such dramatic setting, the Bhagabat Gita containing the highest principles of philosophy and religion was expounded by Krishna. It is a debatable point whether Gita actually had its origin in the situation narrated or not, but the teaching contained in it still continues to be the greatest monument of Indian wisdom.

The tenets of the Gita are : (1) the human soul is indestructible; death is only apparent; (2) it passes through a series of births; (3) the duties of the station (caste) of a man are binding on him; (4) the best way to reach God and therefore salvation is Bhakti or devotion; (5) Krishna is the sole object of love and devotion. This devotion is variously understood in different schools. Some say that it is not an emotion at all, but it is the same as ultimate knowledge of reality ¹ (Tattvajñānam); others say that it consists in propitiating God through action or sacrifices. But the view of the Gita which has been generally accepted, is that it is of the nature of ecstasy in its highest stage which, as the Sufis also thought, ended in the union of the finite soul with the infinite. 'Have thy mind fixed on me alone, be devoted to me, sacrifice to me, do reverence to me. To me thou shalt come.' ²

The Upanishads and the Samkhya agreed in maintaining that Ignorance or Avidya was at the root of all sorrow and suffering and as soon as true knowledge is attained the Avidya melts away like mist and the sun of salvation is visible. We may recall here the Socratic identification of virtue and knowledge. The Gita while extolling the

¹ तत्त्वज्ञानमेव भक्तिः—स्वामिटीका—Gita XVIII.

² मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु ।
मामेवैष्यसि सत्यं ते प्रतिजाने प्रियोऽसि मे ॥ —Gita XVIII : 65.

importance of knowledge as a means of salvation laid emphasis on the emotional side of a man's nature. It is psychologically true that feeling, not unmixed perhaps with knowledge, is a great solvent. It melts the heart of both the worshipper and the worshipped, and the union that is thus formed is most strong. Sri Krishna says: "Not through the Vedas or austerity, not through giving away of wealth or sacrifice can be seen thus (*i.e.*, His universe-comprehending form) as thou hast seen me; but by simple minded devotion, O mighty Arjuna, can I be thus known as I am in reality, and be entered." ¹

In many of the passages in the Gita, the superiority of Bhakti over Jnana and Karma (intellect and work) is established. Perhaps for the first time in the history of the Vedanta ², the attainment of salvation by devotion is extolled. The Upanishads insisted that the dispelling of Ignorance by wisdom (knowledge of reality) is the only means of enjoying immortality and that there is no other means ³ but in the Gita the centre of gravity is shifted from intellectual apprehension to the religious sentiment of Bhakti or devotion. This pure, unalloyed sentiment is free from all selfishness or thought of personal gain. It is love for the sake of love which seeks God's satisfaction only and nothing else.

Preliminary to a religious life, the mind must be purified by a proper course of self-control. "The self can elevate itself by its own efforts only. The self is the only friend of itself and also its only enemy," ⁴ *i.e.*, if any harm comes to the self, the self itself must be the contributory cause.

¹ Bhagabat Gita XI : 53-54.

² See my article on the Evolution of Vaisnavism : B. C. Law Volume.

³ तमेव विदित्वाऽतिमृत्युमेति नान्यः पन्था विद्यतेऽयनाय ।

—See Sridhar Swami's Tika XVIII : 78.

⁴ उद्धरेदात्मनात्मानं नात्मानमवसादयेत्
आत्मेव ह्यात्मानो बन्धुरात्मेव रिपुरात्मनः ।

—Gita VI : 5. The self is indeed the friend of the self; the self is indeed the self's enemy.

Who can benefit you but yourself and who can harm you but yourself? No more encouraging words have been uttered anywhere about the moral dignity and responsibility of the individual.

In the Dhammapada which the Buddhists value as much as the Hindus value the Bhagabat Gita, the same sentiment is expressed regarding the potentiality for good and evil which belongs to Ātmā. “Self is the Self’s protector, master, lord, who other can be such? If you control your self you gain a friend. Self only is a self’s final goal and refuge.”

The Gita does not, like the Buddhists, support an ascetic ideal. It is the duty of every one to struggle on and attain perfection and not to escape from the world. But one can realise the ideal of the Sannyasi or ascetic in another way—by controlling desires, passions etc.—by Yoga.

But what is Yoga? There is a system of philosophy of that name and the Bhagabat Gita is certainly not speaking of that philosophy,¹ but Yoga is extolled as a method—a method of controlling the passions by concentrating on the attainment of the highest ideal. Yoga literally means ‘yoking’ or harnessing and refers to the training of the mind. The Gita enjoins the avoidance of two excesses in the application of this method.² The middle path is the best.³

Without Yoga, the self can never attain its goal. Yoga practice consists in the control of the self. Unless one succeeds in controlling the impulses, the base propensities of lust and anger, there is no chance of attaining peace. For the Gita says, “When his mind is restrained and fixed

¹ There is one great difference between the teaching of the Gita and the Yoga philosophy: *viz.*, the Gita posits a supreme God in the person of Krishna. The Yoga admits a god, who contains more goodness (sattva) and is more powerful than human beings, but not the all embracing God of the Gita.

² नात्यन्नतस्तु योगोऽस्ति न चैकान्तमनश्नतः ।

—Gita VI. Yoga is not for one who eats too much nor for one who fasts excessively.

³ This reminds us of the Buddhists and of Aristotle’s Golden mean.

on the self, without longing for any desires, then he is called 'trained'—Yogi or Yukta."¹ "As a lamp in a windless place flickers not, so is it deemed to be a likeness of the Yogi of restrained mind, who practises Yoga of the self."² The mind must be prepared, therefore, by Yoga for the reception of the highest love of God—Bhakti.

But Yoga as a method is by no means a substitute for Bhakti or love. Yoga, as described in the Gita, consists in an arduous training of the self, and, as such, is a powerful means—an ally of Devotion.

But independently, *i.e.*, not regarded as a means to an end, Yoga is a process of rigorous self-discipline by means of which contact with the Absolute is established. Bhakti or devotion seeks to realise God through the beauty of song, dance and hymn. The Yogi tries to suppress his desires, Bhakti trains the desires in such a way as to bend them to the attainment of the highest goal. To the Bhakta, Joy, bliss is the goal; to the Yogi, peace, quiet. The Yogi is individualistic, seeking his personal salvation; the Bhakta renders happiness an object of social pursuit.³ The Yogi contemplates the Absolute, the Bhakta adores a personal God such as Rama or Krishna.

Whether God is personal or absolute, whether the method of worship is devotion or yoga, there is no doubt but that peace is the goal of human activities. Action must be performed, work must be done, for no one can remain, says the Gita, without action. Every moment of our life we are doing something or other. Therefore the Gita does not advocate quietism. The goal of man must be realised through activity, through energising. But the dilemma is that you cannot engage in activities without attachment,

¹ Gita VI: 18.

² Gita VI: 19.

³ मञ्जिता मद्गतप्राणा बोधयन्तः परस्परम् ।
कथयन्तश्च मां नित्यं तुष्यन्ति च रमन्ति च ॥

—Gita X : 9.

With their minds fixed on me, their lifebreath dedicated to me, they enlighten one another; and even conversing about me, they are content and happy.

without weaving a net round yourself. Work you must, but work creates bondage. It is only unselfish work that is free from the taint. The Gita therefore prescribes selfless action—action without the thought of consequences. Do not expect any thing, any personal benefit, from the actions you may have to perform. “Thy business,” says the Gita “should be with action never with the fruits; let not thy motive be the fruit of action, nor be attached to non-action.”¹ This is one of the most outstanding contributions of the Bhagabat Gita, viz., the philosophy of action. Actions are prompted by desires. Desires have their root in some pleasure either real or imaginary which forms the motive force. Desires are never satiated. One desire leads to another and that to a third. In this way the whole life becomes a chain of desires which binds the self. Unless the desire is controlled, the self cannot be freed from this bondage. The main spring of desires comes from a feeling and feeling is aroused by the thought of consequences (fruits). If therefore the thought of consequences can be eliminated, action does not produce bondage.

But Karma can be done in a purely detached and disinterested way. Thus the Gita supplies quite a new formula : Do your duty, the duty of your station, but never desire the consequences. Let thy business be with action, never with the fruits, nor be attached to the non-action. Do your duty, but banish from your mind all thought of consequences.²

You cannot help doing action. Your nature will goad you to action of some kind or other. There can be no cessation of activities as the Buddhists inculcated. Action creates bondage, they said. Good action is as much the cause of bondage as bad action. The Gita, therefore,

¹ कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥

—Gita II : 47.

Cf. in this connection, Kant's moral maxim ‘Do your duty for duty's sake.’

² This ethical principle : Do your duty for duty's sake—propounded in the West by Immanuel Kant in the 19th century, was forestalled at least more than 2000 years before Kant,

supplies a *via media*. It is the consequence, the pleasure which follows the fulfilment of desire—which causes attachment, and attachment causes bondage. Therefore while doing your work, abandon fruits of the works.

Now, disinterested love is the only factor in human nature which enables you to forget the self totally and drown yourself in the Beloved. This is supported by experience; love disinterested can destroy the attachment of the soul to the world.

The Gita reveals a threefold approach to God, *viz.*, Jnana (knowledge), Karma (action) and Bhakti (religious sentiment or devotion) and seems to regard the last *viz.*, Bhakti as the most potent of all.¹ But a very strict standard of morality is demanded of the person who desires to tread the path of Bhakti and attain salvation by its means. “Who can come to me?” The Lord says, “Evil doers do not worship me.”² Men who have, after striving in the path of righteousness for a number of births, come to know me to be the All—they only can come to me.³ They in whom sin has ceased and who act virtuously, released from the bewilderment of pairs⁴ and firm in their vows, worship me.

The duties of men are determined by their caste rules. The caste distinctions as formulated by the Gita are almost Platonic in their practical application. They are based upon the distribution of the constituent elements⁵ of human nature and the nature of occupation. But they appear to have been made hereditary in course of time. The action and function of the Brahmans are peace, restraint, austerity, purity, forgiveness and uprightness or straightforwardness; those of the Kshatriya are heroism, splendour, firmness, skill,

¹ पुरुषः स परः पार्थ भक्त्या लभ्यस्त्वनन्यथा

—Gita VIII: 22. The Supreme Purusha is attainable by single-minded Bhakti.

² न मां दुष्कृतिनो मूढाः

—Gita VII: 15.

³ बहूनां जन्मनामन्ते

—Gita VII: 19.

⁴ ते द्वन्द्वमोहनिर्मुक्ताः

—Gita VII: 28. The pairs are pleasure-pain, gain-loss, heat-cold, etc.

⁵ Sattva, Rajas, Tamas.

not fleeing from battle, alms-giving, the character of a ruler; those of a Vaisya are farming (agriculture), cattle tending and trade; the duty of the Sudras is service, *i.e.*, they are to serve the other three castes.¹

Whether the frame work of societies thus organised is an ideal one or not,² the Hindu society has been from the earliest times based upon the caste system and four Ashramas or stages. Hence the religion of the Hindus is said to be based on Varnashrama, *i.e.*, colour or caste and ashrama. The ashramas or stages into which the life of a man has been divided, *viz.*, Brahmacharya (student life or bachelor life) adopted for training and study—a life of simplicity and purity, Gārhastya (the stage of a householder—after marriage), Bānaprastha (retirement—literally forest dweller) and Sannyāsa (renunciation of the world). The idea of dividing the life of a Hindu into four stages was that one should learn the various branches of knowledge and art, when young, and then enter into the responsibilities of house-keeping. The third stage is the stage of retirement into the quiet of solitude for perfection of self by meditation and then the fourth stage is to renounce the world, *i.e.*, cut off all the ties of attachment to the world and prepare for death.

The caste-fabric is interwoven with this four-stage life, but the practices contemplated in the four stages are not observed in many cases. The last two stages, *viz.*, Bānaprastha and Sannyāsa are hardly observed by the Hindus of modern times. An echo of this may sometimes be heard when people leave their family and all in old age and repair to Benaras, Brindaban and such other holy places to settle down for the rest of their life. The rule

¹ Gita XVIII : 42.

² According to the Madhva school, all castes, including the lowest, even Sudras and women are entitled to acquire ultimate knowledge. See Purna Prajna Darsanam :

अन्यजा अपि ये भक्ता नामज्ञानाधिकारिणः ।

स्त्रीशूद्रद्विजबन्धूनां तत्त्वज्ञानेऽधिकारिता ॥

Caitanya said emphatically that in the matter of religious devotion, there is no distinction of caste. Buddhists did not recognise caste distinction.

about the first stage, *viz.*, that of a Brahmachari is also more honoured in the breach than in the observance. In olden times boys of a certain age, belonging to the first three castes used to be sent to some Guru or preceptor for their studies and they were required during the period to do menial service and to practise austerities and purity, so that they may be, when grown up, fitted for undertaking their responsibilities in life. This also is not observed now.

It will appear, from the brief survey of the Gita, one of the foremost books of the world, that the religion of the Gita contains much that is mystical. The mysticism of the Gita lies in the combination of the Theistic elements with the Upanishadic pantheism. How the impersonal and universal Brahma becomes a personal one remains an insoluble mystery.¹ Then the combination of the law of Karma with the doctrine of grace is also a profound mysticism.² In fact the doctrine of grace with a strong bias for practical conduct of life is what has made the Gita universally popular among the Hindu scriptures. We may also mention the mystical aspect of the devotional worship of God (Bhakti Dharma) which is stressed in the Bhagabat Gita perhaps for the first time in the history of the Hindu religion and which was destined to play such an important role in its subsequent development.

The Gita contains a reference to the Samkhya philosophy from which it derives some elements :

(1) In the thirteenth chapter which deals with the field (Kshetra) and its knower, the Samkhya principles of Prakriti and Purusha are distinctly mentioned. Both Prakriti and Purusha are regarded as primordial, *i.e.*, without beginning.

(2) The qualities (or constituents of Prakriti), *viz.*, Sattva (light), Rajas (movement) and Tamas (heaviness, darkness) are mentioned and after the fashion of the Samkhyas their undisturbed equilibrium state is called Avyakta or unmanifested. By the combination of the above constituents Prakriti causes different things to exist.

¹ This led Garbe to conjecture that the pantheistic elements were subsequently added.

² Sri Krishna says "Come to me, the only refuge, abandoning all duties, and I shall free you from all sins, sorrow not." Gita XVIII : 66.

The Purusha or soul is inactive, says the Samkhya and therefore it is Prakriti or unconscious nature which causes the changes. The soul merely acts as the spectator and feels pleasure and pain.

(3) Just as the *gunas*, i.e., Sattva, Rajas and Tamas by their combination in different proportions produce diverse cosmic changes such as mind, senses, pleasure, pain, etc., so they produce in the moral sphere of the individual, differences of character which have important bearing on the final attainment of the goal of human existence. Although in the Gita the Samkhya doctrine of metaphysics was not adopted in its entirety, practically it has had a great influence on its ethical speculation. In individual man Sattva, Rajas and Tamas appear as goodness, passion and dullness in different proportions.

But in spite of these similarities, the divergence is great. For example, with regard to the ideal, the Purusha of Samkhya becomes free as soon as the true nature of Prakriti is revealed after the disappearance of ignorance. But salvation in the Gita, on the contrary, is in the gift of a forgiving personal god. Unlike the Samkhya school the Gita lays down the code of personal virtues such as purity, want of attachment to the world, doing one's duty unselfishly and worship of Krishna with a singleness of devotion, etc.

Samkhya, however, is not a religion but the Gita is; it is regarded as the New Testament of India. It claims kinship with Vedanta which formulates a unitive Brahma as the supreme God. God exists in the heart of all sentient beings and directs their activities. The soul is like the Antaryamin (inner controller) of the Upanishads and is one in essence with God. But the Gita does not like Vedanta accept Maya as the inevitable veil of reality. The Gita understands Maya in the original sense of the magic power of God which deludes men but which according to the Gita can be overcome by surrendering to God.¹

¹ दैवी ह्येषा गुणमयी मम माया दुरत्यया

—Gita VII : 14. (For) this my divine delusion (maya), due to the constituents (Sattva, Rajas and Tamas) is hard to overcome.

The merit of the Divine Song lies in its knowledge and analysis of human nature, its monotheism and the theory of grace. In Buddhism, the initiate is asked to take refuge in Buddha, Order and Law but Gita inculcates that refuge should be taken only in God who is in everybody's heart.¹

From this and similar passages, it is more than probable that the Song of the Lord was composed after the birth of Buddha. With regard to the date of its composition opinions are widely varied. But so far as internal evidence is concerned, it seems to point to a date before the Christian era but after the Buddhistic age.²

THE PURANAS

It will be remembered that I proposed to consider Hinduism under three aspects, *viz.*, the vedic, the philosophical and the popular. After having disposed of the first two, I come now to discuss the popular or Pauranic aspect. But before I do so, I would like to say how the study of the popular form of this ancient religion is complicated by a multitude of considerations.

(1) As a reaction against the highly metaphysical conceptions of the Upanishads, the Puranas (literally old tradition) went to the other extreme of formulating many gods and goddesses, the principal of whom are Krishna, Rama, Siva, Ganesha, and Kali.

(2) This polytheistic tendency was furthered by impact with the religions of the aboriginal tribes with whom the Aryan Hindus came into contact. But in most of the Puranas there is always a substratum of monotheism. The different gods are either various forms of or emanations from the supreme god.

¹ See my article "the Religion of Love in Bengal" (বাংলার প্রেমধর্ম) in my book : বৈষ্ণব রস সাহিত্য—pages 1 to 13.

² Dr. Radhakrishnan takes the same view. Dr. Belvalkar (Srigopal Basu Mallik Lectures) placed the Gita before Buddhism. Telang and S. N. Dasgupta are of this view for the following principal reasons : (1) There is no reference to Buddha or Buddhism in Gita; (2) the presence of many Upanishadic texts in Gita and (3) the author does not seem to have been acquainted with Yoga philosophy or even the accepted Samkhya.

(3) The Avataravada or theory of incarnation made it possible for the Supreme God to take any shape he chose.¹ There are generally recognised nine past Avatars and one yet to come.² But in the popular mind there is no limit to the number of Avatars, as there is no limit to the free choice of the Supreme God.

(4) An important point has to be carefully borne in mind which, if missed, may lead to misconception of the whole structure of popular Hinduism. The religio-mythological works such as Mahabharata, Ramayana and Bhagavata were not only scripture but literature. In fact the Puranas are literature, theology, philosophy, poetry, allegory, fiction, romance, history—all combined. It will not therefore be right to take the Puranas strictly as gospels or even as religious literature pure and simple. Although in the popular mind these Puranas or at least a few of them are regarded without discrimination as Scripture, it will not be fair to Hinduism if they are taken literally in the sense in which Scripture is taken in other religions. Many of these are poetry first and Scripture afterwards.

(5) It is a rather delicate point that the pantheistic conception of God for which the Hindu mind has shown great fondness during the past millennia, has led to the idea that God is above good and evil or in other words that the conventional standard of morality which mankind has

¹ In the Gita, Krishna says 'Whenever there is a decay of righteousness, O Bharata, and a prevalence of unrighteousness or evil, then I create myself in order to save the good and to destroy the evil-doers; to establish righteousness I am born from age to age.'—IV : 7-8.

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।

अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥

In Markandeya Chandi, another highly popular book, the Goddess says the same thing.

इत्थं यदा यदा बाधा दानवीत्या भविष्यति ।

तदा तदावतीर्याहं करिष्याम्यरिसंचयम् ॥ —Chandi 11 : 55.

Both these statements are believed to be literally true and offer a real consolation to Hindus who are oppressed with the sense of wrong and injustice prevailing in the world. This is more than the Jewish belief in the advent of Messiah or the Christian belief in the coming of a Paraclete.

² Buddha counts as one of the Incarnations of Vishnu, but he is supposed by some to have come in order to mislead.

created does not apply to the gods. This accounts for the riotous eroticism to be found in many of the Puranas and for the deterioration of morality among various Hindu sects in consequence. Where imagination is allowed to run riot, it is difficult to separate the corn from the chaff.

But it must be admitted that the Puranas have kept the dynamic current flowing. The most elevated pantheism of the Upanishads practically lost this dynamic force in the sea of quiet contemplation. Besides, for its high intellectualism, it was accessible only to the intellectuals and the initiated, just as the religion of Buddha was intended for the monks. The Puranas by their story-telling method intelligible even to the illiterate people brought Hinduism within the reach of the mass mind. Most of the stories, of course, had their morals, but even those who could not catch the morals got the stories which held the imagination of the lay people captive. The Ramayana for instance does not enjoin on any one to be like Rama and not to be like Ravana—but insidiously the story invariably carries that lesson. The Mahabharata teaches “wherever there is righteousness, there is victory.” The Bhagabata preaches superiority of the selfless love for Brahman.

Let us take the case of the Bhagabata Purana. This work was produced in South India in the 11th century A.D. It was in South India that the Alvars cultivated devotion to God as the best method of union with God. In the eleventh century, the great saint Ramanuja wrote his celebrated Vaisnava commentary called Sri Bhāṣya on the Vedanta sutras. Under these favourable auspices, perhaps the Bhagabata Purana was composed extolling the worship of Krishna. The author of Bhagabata was aware of the three methods of attaining God, *viz.*, knowledge, action and devotion or Bhakti, as they are discussed in the Gita. But Bhagabata establishes the superiority of devotion. The sacrifices enjoined in the Vedas are only efficacious so far as they help to purify the mind and purge it of inclinations and desires. They can even help in attaining heaven which as an ideal is much lower than the union with God. The Bhagabata, while laying emphasis on the Bhakti aspect of God-realisation, is never tired of insisting on its demand for

purifying the mind. But the allegory it represents, *viz.*, that God as Krishna sported with innumerable cowherd damsels, is often misunderstood and made the target of attack on ethical grounds.

The story of the Purana is briefly this : Krishna is born of Devaki ¹ and Vasudeva. He was born where Kamsa, the king of Mathura, being afraid of their son, who was foretold to be the slayer of the king, had the parents thrown into prison, and a strict watch was kept on the birth of an issue. But somehow the child Krishna was born and carried surreptitiously to the house of Nanda, a cowherd chief. There he grew up, performed many miracles and killed some terrible asuras or demons, the agents of Kamsa, who were deputed to kill all children of a certain age on the off chance of doing away with Kamsa's future slayer. But Krishna by his miraculous powers came triumphantly out of all perils.² The maidens of Brindabana who were incarnations of God's energy, became enamoured of him. Krishna, however, while still young, departed from Brindabana, went to Mathura, killed Kamsa and had himself installed virtually as the King of the Yadavas.³

The subsequent history of Krishna, his participation in the Kurukshetra war as a charioteer (Parthasarathi) and upholder of righteousness is detailed in the Mahabharata. But his dalliances at Brindabana in early boyhood have been described in the Puranas in such an erotic vein, that many people feel puzzled. Krishna is not an incarnation: he is God himself.⁴ Why should God indulge in riotously ribald conduct? The author of Bhagabata Purana has

¹ In Chandogya Upanishad III : 17 : 4, Krishna is referred to as Devakiputra and as a pupil of Ghora Angirasa, who taught him penances, ahimsa (non-injury), truthfulness, etc. In Mahabharata, Krishna is described both as a sage and as a great warrior.

² History repeats itself. Herod. King of Asia Minor similarly perpetrated a massacre of children when he heard that a child, who was destined to be King had been born in Bethlehem. Failing to kill Christ, who had been secretly conveyed by Joseph to Egypt, he ordered the massacre of all children of Bethlehem of two years and under (See the Gospel of St. Matthew).

³ In fact Krishna made Ugrasena, Kamsa's father, who had been deprived of his throne by his turbulent son, King of Mathura.

⁴ कृष्णस्तु भगवान् स्वयम् ।

himself raised the question and tried to answer it in his own way.¹ But the real answer seems to be that just as the killing mighty asuras popularly establishes his omnipotence, so his love sports with young girls are intended to bring out that Krishna was the object of a soul-consuming passion. The Lila or playlike activity of the divine being is nothing but a symbolic illustration of a principle (Tattwa). To the devotee the Lila with all its mystical embellishments and erotic exaggerations is, of course, as much real as the eternal truths themselves and produces ecstatic transports which are quite genuine. This is the mysticism of the Krishna cult.

In this cult, however, the love episode of a short duration is turned into lifelong pangs of separation and this is the key-note of the Lila. It is not the joy of union, but the pain of separation following Krishna's unavoidable departure for Mathura which is the culmination of the short-lived amorous sports. The parents miss their beloved son, the cowherd boys lose their loving play-mate and the nymphs miss their dearly loved sweetheart. These therefore are the three Mukhya or principal modes of God-realisation, *viz.*, Vatsalya or filial affection, Sakhya or friendly sentiment and Madhura rasa, *i.e.*, conjugal love or love of a woman for her lover. There are two other principal kinds of devotion, *viz.*, Dasya (servitude—loyalty of the servant to the master) and Santa (calm contemplation, *i.e.*, the philosopher-like attitude of the sages free from strong emotion) but they are not of equal importance.

Sri Caitanya, born in Nabadwip towards the end of the fifteenth century, a contemporary of Martin Luther, realised in his own life the emotional raptures described in Bhāgabata. He renounced the world at the age of twenty-four and, being a learned scholar himself, interpreted the religion of love by practical realisation in his own life. He realised the intense feeling of separation experienced by Radha herself, and

¹ तेजीयसां न दोषाय Bhag. X. In the Bhagabata, this question was actually attempted to be answered by Sukadeva, the narrator of the Lila to King Parikshit, who was fasting unto death in order to expiate his sin. What Sukadeva said virtually amounts to the admission that the gods, such as Brahminā, Rudra, Indra, etc., are above good and evil. तेजीयसां न दोषाय reminds us of the modern legal fiction that King can do no wrong.

tears flowed in copious streams, consciousness was suspended, and the other symptoms, like hairs standing on end, cessation of all physical motion and obstruction of speech, followed—exactly those that were experienced by the Christian mystics and the Sufis. St. Francis of Assissi is considered to be the nearest approach.¹

Caitanya's mystic experience of union combined with his rigorous personal asceticism has provided inspiration to millions of his countrymen. He did not write any books or commentaries as some other founders of religious sects like Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhva, etc., have done. Nor did he claim to have received any revelation as the founder of Islam did, but he has left behind the legacy of his inimitable personality, like Jesus Christ, to be followed by multitudes of devout men and women. The novel feature about Sri Caitanya,—if it can be called novel at all,—is that he laid stress on passionate love (Prema) as it is found between a lover and his sweetheart.² This anthropomorphic interpretation did not rest satisfied with likening the divine sentiment with nuptial love but ran through the whole gamut of love-psychology and found its most profound significance in the illicit love between two lovers who are not bound in wedlock.³

The antesocial character of this relationship has sometimes earned for this cult unequivocal condemnation from the main religious groups of the world. I know that there

¹ St. Francis of Assissi in Italy flourished two or three centuries earlier than Caitanya. He followed the model of Christ and lived in poverty and prayer. He was full of compassion for the suffering. He bore in his person the wounds of Christ, but how those wounds were received is a mystery.

² In the Gita, the excellence of Bhakti, Prapatti (self-surrender) and Saranāgati (complete dependence) is spoken of. In the Bhāgabata the stages are Sraddha (faith), Rati (attachment), and Bhakti. It remained for the Vaisnava school of Bengal, to speak of Prema, Priti, Pranay, etc., which is the name for ardent love.

³ Cf.

परञ्चसनिनी नारी व्यग्रापि गृहकर्मसु ।

तदेवास्वादयत्यन्तर्नवसङ्गरसायनम् ॥

Just as a woman in illicit love enjoys in her heart the love delights, even when busy with her household duties, so does the devotee engaged in his secular pursuits enjoy the blissful memory of God.

is so much prejudice against non-marital love in the mind of civilised man that it will not be easy to get a hearing in the court of modern civilisation.

All symbolism is exaggeration. In the love symbolism of the Vaisnavas, all the phenomena incidental to human love are brought back in imagination and imputed to the soul's relationship with God who is none other than the sweetheart of the devotee. The devotees are lovers, they are so many milk maids whose only passion is to love God. In the language of Cardinal Newman, the soul becomes like a woman in love. This is the mysticism of the love philosophy of the Vaisnavas of Caitanya school. In this cosmic sport, personality is transmuted.

But before we condemn this sentiment which gives such a rude shock to our moral conventions we must bear in mind that—

(a) Caitanya and his followers are regarded as monotheists. Krishna is Supreme Brahma, who split his being into two, male and female, *i.e.*, himself and Radha, so that there may be 'another' to enjoy him. Radha is the mirror that shows the God in all his loving splendour.¹ Imitating Spinoza, we may say that Radha's love is the love with which Krishna loves himself. Divine love is personified in Radha.² So the question of morality does not arise. Radha symbolises a devotee and her love,—the passionate love of the devotee who enjoys it in the solitude of his own contemplation.

(b) Caitanya, who had renounced the world at the age of twenty-four leaving his young handsome second wife and widowed mother, most strictly enjoined on his immediate followers to shun bad company and the company of women. Many of his immediate followers were celibates.

¹ In the thoroughgoing pantheism of Spinoza, the love of God is explained as the intellectual love with which God loves Himself. In order to avoid this difficult, if not impossible, feat the seeming duality is postulated.

² Cf.

প্রেমের পরম সার মহাভাব জানি ।

মহাভাব স্বরূপিণী রাধাঠাকুরাণী ॥—চৈতন্যচরিতামৃত

The highest essence of love is 'Mahabhava' and Radha is this essence—She is Mahabhava or highest love personified.

(c) The male and female principle uniting to form the full godhead was perhaps influenced by the dual conception of Prakriti (Nature) and Purusha (Soul) in Samkhya philosophy of which quite a large use is made in the Bhagabat Gita.

(d) In Brhad Aranyaka (I. 4 : 1-5) the story is told of how the soul (Ātman) split itself into two—husband and wife. In the beginning, of the world was Soul (Ātman) alone in the form of a person (Purusha). Looking around he saw nothing else than himself. . . . He desired a second. He was, indeed, as large as a woman and a man closely embraced. He caused that self to fall (pat) into two pieces. Therefrom arose a husband (Pati) and a wife (Patni). . . He copulated with her. Therefrom human beings were produced.¹

(e) Even in the austere Vedanta of Sankara, Brahma is coupled with Maya which the popular mind takes to be nothing but an inalienable female principle.

(f) In the system of Ramanuja which is also regarded as a qualified Adwaitism, a female principle named Sri or Lakshmi is introduced perhaps in imitation of the Saivas of South India.²

(g) A distinction is drawn in the Caitanya school between sensual love (Kama) and divine love (Prema) which is transcendental and based upon complete self-abnegation. This is no mere distinction between two sentiments which are seemingly alike. It contains the keynote of Caitanyism and forms an important landmark in the development of the Vaisnava conception of the relation of the individual to the Deity. The distinction between Kama and Prema is thus explained in Caitanya

¹ Hume : *Thirteen Upanishads*, p. 81.

² Sri or Lakshmi is the consort of Visnu, as in the Visnu Purana and Srimad Bhagabat. But she is introduced in order to save the transcendental nature of the Supreme Being. Sri or the Sakti of Visnu and not Visnu Himself is responsible for creation, sustenance and absorption of the universe. But Sri is not a different principle. In any case she is subordinate to the Supreme Being. Dr. Schrader's view is that "in spite of frequent assurance to the contrary, Visnu and Sri are actually regarded as distinct." (Introduction to Pancaratra, pp. 29-30.) See B. Kumarappa : *Hindu Conception of the Deity*, p. 103.

Caritamrita a biography of Sri Caitanya by Krisnadas Kaviraj (late sixteenth century). Kama is the desire for the satisfaction of one's own organs of sense and Prema or love is the desire for the satisfaction of the sense organs of Krishna. The one, says the Kaviraj, is blind and dark and the other (Prema) is pure and shining. In this way human love is sublimated so as to be acceptable to God.

(h) Love being a human sentiment forms the subject matter of Psychology and is treated fully in treatises on Rhetoric (Alankara) of which there is quite a vast literature in Sanskrit. Psychology is regarded as a modern Science. But long before its rise in the west, psychological problems used to be dealt with in India as a part of literature (Rhetoric). So in the love theory of Caitanya School, literature (Kavya), Rhetoric and devotion were mixed together into an artistic whole which has proved an unfailing source of inspiration to poetry, philosophy, and piety.

(i) The poets Jaydev, Vidyapati and Candidas in their immortal poetry supplied the emotional background of Caitanyism.¹

Under its inspiration, philosophers like Rupa and Sanatan Goswamis, Kavi Karnapur, Jiva and Baladev Goswami, poets like Govindadas, Jnanadas, Balaramdas, etc., biographers like Kavi Karnapur, Lochan, Brindabandas, Krishnadas Kaviraj and others flourished. They are outstanding men each in his own sphere. If the Vaisnava poetry of Bengal is considered matchless to this day, the credit must go to Caitanya and his creed of love and devotion (Prem-Bhakti). Take away the love romance of Radha Krishna and the poetry, art and music of medieval Bengal will vanish like mist.

¹ Jaydev was born in the 11th century; his Gita Govindam, regarded as highly erotic poetry, has won the admiration of western savants like Sir Edwin Arnold. Gita-Govindam's mellifluous poetry is still unparalleled. Vidyapati flourished in the fourteenth century and was the court-poet of a king of Mithila—his Radha Krishna poems are rich in imagery and musical in diction. Candidas, a contemporary of Vidyapati, was a Bengali poet of immortal fame. His love songs remain to this day unsurpassed in any language in point of purity, inwardness and depth of emotion.

Whether on account of the emotional nature of Bengalees or on account of the want of missionary zeal of the followers of this sect, the Vaisnavism of this school is mostly confined to Bengal. A disciple of Thakur Narottam, a prominent member of the Caitanya school carried the faith to Manipur on the Burma border where Vaisnavism can be seen as a living faith even now. The faith has civilised the people and made their culture, particularly music (dance), famous throughout India. Even now the Manipuri men and women throng in large numbers at Nabadwip, the birth place of Caitanya. At Puri on the sea side where Caitanya lived for the most part in his later life the Oriyas imbibed the spirit of his teaching and one can hear the Bengali Vaisnava lyrics sung with all their passionate appeal and melodious cadence even to this day.

Caitanya lived for the most part as a recluse in Puri in Orissa and worshipped his God Krishna (or Hari) in the seclusion of a small ill-ventilated room near the sea side where some relics of him are still shown to the numerous pilgrims who visit the famous temple of Jagannath. Nityananda a devoted companion of Caitanya, a few years older than him, made it his business to spread the cult of Caitanya in Bengal through melodious Kirtan music in which the name of Krishna and his *lila* together with the devotional life of Caitanya were sung. It was the first time that the life story of a human being was elevated to the dignity of divine sport (*Lila*) which used to be embodied in poetry and clothed in musical tunes to form part of the daily worship of the devotee.¹ It has one far-reaching effect in this that Sanskrit lost its exclusive hold in religious matters and Bengali a vernacular language sprung from Sanskrit was elevated to a co-ordinate position. Kirtan or devotional songs of this period mainly composed in an artificial language called Brajabuli, in imitation of Maithili, a sister language, had a singular devotional appeal to the mass mind.

¹ Caitanya is deified, and thought by his followers to be one in essence with Krishna. In one of his aspects, he is a devotee, a lover of Krishna and in another, he is Krishna himself. This was woven into a beautiful legend that he is both Radha and Krishna—the lover and the beloved, rolled into one. अन्तः कृष्णः बहिर्गौरः

Bhagabata Purana¹ is looked upon as the scripture of Caitanyism. In this Purana as also in Harivamsa and Vishnu Purana, Radha² is not mentioned by name, but Krishna is described in the Bhagabata as sporting with the cowherd girls one of whom was looked upon as his special favourite. But whether this one was his married wife or not remained an open question. Different commentators have interpreted the relation differently.³

We may in this connection consider the other forms of the Krishna worship preached throughout the length and breadth of India before the time of Caitanya.

Four important Vaisnava Sects were founded, *viz.*, Sri Sampradaya, Brahma Sampradaya, Sanakadi Sampradaya and Rudra Sampradaya. The Sri Sampradaya was founded by the Saint Ramanuja whose name has been mentioned before as the founder of Visistādvaita philosophy or qualified non-duality and who flourished in South India in the eleventh century. In the apostolic succession of this school, the first of the teachers is Nathamuni who was called Muni because he had renounced the world and turned an ascetic. Nathamuni is said to have arranged the songs of Alwars. Yamunacarya who was the teacher of Ramanuja became known as 'Albandar' (Victor) after defeating the court poet Kolahala. Yamunacarya wrote Albandar Stotra or "the hymn of the victor" in Sanskrit. These hymns are overflowing with love of God. Ramanuja had profound regard for his teacher and mainly followed the doctrines

¹ Bhagabata was composed two centuries before Anandatirtha or Madhvācārya, who flourished between 1199 and 1278

Emerson used to say of Bhagabata Purana "Ah, this is a book to be read on one's knees.—Quoted in Dr. Bhagaban Das's Essential Unity of all Religions, p. xlviii.

² The name of Radha occurs in Hala's Gatha Saptasati (7th century), Brahma Vaivarta Purana and Jayadeva.

³ There was a keen debate on this point among scholars of Brindaban and Nabadwip—two great seats of Vaisnava learning—at the instance of Maharaja Sawaji Jai Sing of Jaipore and the theory of non-marital relation (Parakiya) was established as more in accord with the spirit of the Bhagabata. (See *Vanga Sahitya Paricaya* by Dr. Dineschandra Sen, pp. 1638-40 and 1641-43.) Two documents were executed establishing the superiority of the theory of Parakiya—one dated 1717 and the other 1732 A.D.

propounded by him, *viz.*, that the world of spirit and matter is the body of Brahma, who inhabits it as its soul (Atma) or the indwelling spirit.¹

Ramanuja preached the worship of a loving God and postulated the existence of Sri or Lakshmi as the consort of God whose motherly function consists in pleading to God for mercy² on behalf of the sinners. Salvation or Mukti is obtained by meditation on and knowledge of God assisted by His grace. It consists in a blissful existence near God but not in absorption into His Being.

He held with Pāncarātras that God exists in five modes, *viz.*, (a) the Supreme Spirit as such (Para); (b) the fourfold manifestation or Vyūhas as Vasudeva, Saṁkarsana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha;³ (c) incarnations such as Rama and Krishna; (d) Antaryāmin (internal controller); (e) duly consecrated images.

The worship of images is no doubt a part of the Vaisnava creed.⁴

In the Brhad Aranyaka (III : 7 : 3) the earth is said to be the body of Supreme Brahman. 'He is your Soul, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.' Following this, Ramanuja taught that the Supreme Soul is the Antaryāmi, Inner Controller of the individual, as well as of the external world. "The individual soul and the material (insensate) world are the attributes of the Supreme Soul."

Isvara or God is free from all faults or defects. He is the Creator, protector and destroyer of the world. He possesses a wonderful celestial body of unsurpassable beauty and has for his consorts Lakshmi, Bhu (the earth) and Lila (Sport).

¹ The History of Vedanta Philosophy (in Bengali)—Swami Prajnananda Saraswati.

² It is sometimes thought that the introduction of Mercy is due to the influence of Christians, who established a church on the Malabar Coast as early as the sixth or seventh century.—See Dr. B. N. Seal's Paper on Vaisnavism and Christianity. See also Hopkins : *Religion of India*, p. 545.

³ See Caitanya Caritamrita also (Adilila where mention is made of the four Vyūhas).

⁴ Mahatma Gandhi when asked why he did not disbelieve in idol worship, replied that idol worship is a part of human nature. It is the

Ramanuja was influenced by Bhagabat Gita as Sankar had been by the monistic Upanishads. He imbibed the influence of the Alvars (Arvars)¹ who had flourished from the early centuries of the Christian era. Ramanuja collected their hymns. These hymns breathe a passionate love for Visnu. Ramanuja ultimately settled in Srirangam and the great temple of Ranganatha Swami contains the tomb of Ramanuja and a shrine where his image is still worshipped.²

The followers of Ramanuja very soon separated themselves into two schools: Southern and Northern. The difference between them is mainly this: One Section (Northern) while not denying the authority of the Tamil Veda, insists on the authority of the Vedas. The other section (Southern) does not recognise the authority of the Vedas or any Sanskrit texts but regards the Tamil Veda (Nalayiram), *i.e.*, the canonical literature of the Alvar Saints as the only authoritative scripture. It is interesting to note how the two schools interpreted the nature of Prapatti, which means resignation (or self-surrender) to the deity. One school maintains the doctrine which is called

frailty of the human mind which hankers after symbolism. Romain Rolland: *Mahatma Gandhi*, p. 32.

It may not be out of place to recall that there was an image-controversy even in the Christian Church in the 8th century. The veneration of pictures in the Churches increased to such an extent that it had to be forbidden by the King. The result was a religious revolt which had to be put down with the aid of the military. By the decree of the Council called by Constantine VI, pictures and the Cross and the Gospels were allowed "due salutations and honourable reverence, not indeed that true worship which pertains to the divine nature." This was done under the idea that the honour paid to the image passes on to that which the image represents. See Walker: *History of the Christian Church*.

As an example of excessive reverence paid to the image in Roman Catholic Church may be cited the case of St. Peter in Rome, one of whose toes has worn off in consequence of the fondness of the votaries for kissing the bronze statue.

¹ The Alvars were not Brahmins, but they received homage from them for their devotion. The names of Namma Alvar, or Shatkopa Swami and Andal, are among the twelve most important poet saints.

² In the course of his travels in Southern India, Caitanya met various people, some of whom were Sri-Vaisnavas, *i.e.*, followers of Ramanuja, some were worshippers of Rama and some metaphysicians. See Caitanya Carita-mrita—Madhya 5.

markata-nyaya or monkey theory and the other marjara-nyaya or cat theory. The names may be ridiculous, but the distinction appears to be an important one so far as the attitude of the devotee is concerned. In depending upon God's grace, one may completely surrender himself to the Lord—as the kitten is got hold of by its mother, the kitten being passive and helpless; or one may supplement the efforts of the Lord by one's own active co-operation as the young monkey catches hold of its mother.

Madhvacarya, a Vaishnava saint of South India, flourished in the thirteenth century. His sect was known as Brahma Sampradaya, because Brahmā himself is said to have revealed the religion. God is worshipped under the name of Vishnu or Narayana. “Krishna is adored but not in his pastoral aspect.”¹ Brahmā and Vāyu are the sons of Vishnu and Lakshmi. There is no salvation except through Vayu.² Madhva held that the souls are separate and innumerable. They are related to Vishnu as subjects to a King.

Madhva was a Sivaite at first but afterwards became a Vaishnava. He asserted the principle of duality and denied the identity of individual soul with the Supreme Being and the Madhvas are violent in their attack on Sankara whom they consider an incarnation of a demon called Manimat.³

Madhva is also known under the name of Ananda Tirtha or Purna Prajna and his followers prefer to be known as Sad Vaishnavas. They hold that souls are of three classes: (i) those that are destined to eternal bliss, (ii) those that are subject to transmigration—eternal cycle of births and deaths, (iii) those that are doomed to eternal suffering.

To this sect, Caitanya of the Bengal School of Vaishnavas is said to belong. Since he did not expressly found any

¹ Elliot, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 239.

² This is perhaps the reason why Madhva was regarded as an incarnation of Vayu who along with Vishnu and Ramā seems to constitute a Trinity. If Vāyu is likened to spirit or Logos, a strong similarity with Christianity can be discovered.

³ Manimat is supposed to be a demon who interpreted the Vedanta. He is a widow's bastard and therefore he was called Sankara which, when spelt with ऋ may mean a bastard. He learnt the Vedanta through Siva's grace and interpreted it to delude people (S. N. Dasgupta: *History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. IV, p. 52).

school, Caitanya's name is mentioned in the Guru parampara or succession list of Preceptors or prophets headed by Madhva.¹ But Caitanya is claimed to be the founder of the School of Bengal Vaisnavas, who differ from the Madhva Sect in many important respects.

Nimbarka founded a sect which was called 'Sanakadi Sampradaya.' He was a Telegu Brahmin and lived some time after Ramanuja and before Madhva.² His theory is known by the name of Dvaitadvaita Vada, which means the theory of Duality-non-duality. According to this theory, the relation is one of difference as well as of non-difference. Both difference and non-difference are real. Hence the world cannot be dismissed as an illusion. Nimbarka criticises the Vivarta or illusion theory of Sankara. The three principles of Jiva, the world and Isvara are not one of absolute identity, nor can they be said to be absolutely distinct.

The pure nature of Jiva is obscured by Karma, the result of Avidya, which is beginningless but which can be terminated through the grace of God. Prapatti or complete submission to God is the way to deliverance. God gives Bhakti to the Prapannas, that is to those who have completely surrendered themselves to God.³ Krishna and Radha are the supreme deities. Bhakti is not meditation (Upasana) but love and devotion.

The view held by Nimbarka is almost the same as Ramanuja's, but while Ramanuja emphasises identity, Nimbarka regards agreement and difference as equally real.

¹ See Dr. S. K. De : *Vaisnava Faith and Movement*—Baladev Goswami at the beginning of his commentary on Vedanta Sutra, which is known as Gobinda Bhasya and in his Prameya-Ratnāvali mentions the affiliation of Caitanya to the Madhva Sampradāya. Kavikarnapura also mentions it in his Gouraganoddesa Dipika (1576 A.D.).

² See S. N. Dasgupta : *History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. III, and Radhakrishnan : *History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, pp. 753-55.

³ तेषां सततयुक्तानां भजतां प्रीतिपूर्वकं ।
ददामि बुद्धियोगं तं येन मामुपयान्ति ते ॥

—Gita X: 10.

To those who are ever trained, and who worship with affection, I give the Yoga of the intellect through which they come to me. (E. J. Thomas.)

Ramanuja like Spinoza regards chit and achit, soul and material world as two attributes of Brahman but Nimbarka disputes this view.¹

Another sect of Vaisnavas is known as Vallavacari after Vallabha Acarya (1470 A.D.) who was a contemporary of Caitanya. This sect was known by the name of Rudra Sampradaya which was founded by Vishnuswami an emigrant from South India. This Rudra Sampradaya was so called because they claimed that the religion was revealed by Siva to Vishnuswami who was fifteenth in spiritual descent from Siva. The view of this school which is named after Vallava is also called Suddhadvaita, *i.e.*, pure non-duality.

The Vallavacharis worship God as Bala Gopala or divine child. Their doctrine is known as Pushti Marga or way of wellbeing or comfort. The philosophical view of this school is monistic, making God and the human soul identical in essence. So Vallavacharya inclined more towards Sankara than Ramanuja. But although he shunned the dualistic tendency of the Vishnuites, his followers in their practical life emphasised the side of enjoyment and threw the door open for all sorts of sensual pleasures,² so much so that they were regarded as Epicureans among Vaisnavas. The teachers acquired great renown and were known by the proud title of Maharajas. "In the temples, the Maharajas do homage to the idols, and men and women do homage to the Maharajas." The best mode of propitiating Krishna is by ministering to the sensual appetite of his vicars on earth."³ The conduct of the Maharajas, *i.e.*, the teachers of this sect once came up before the Bombay High Court which condemned the sensual practices in no uncertain terms. 'Since the human soul is identical with God according to this school the body should be 'reverenced and indulged.'

God, according to this sect possesses three attributes, *viz.*, Sat, chit and ananda, *i.e.*, existence, consciousness and bliss. In human or animal souls, bliss is suppressed, and

¹ Radhakrishnan, *Op. Cit.*, p. 756.

² Elliot, *Op. Cit.*, p. 248.

³ M. Williams: *Brahmanism and Hinduism*. p. 309.

in matter consciousness is suppressed too. When the soul is liberated, it becomes identical in nature with God.

In spite of the sectarianism of the Vaisnavas there is a common link between them inasmuch as they worship either Rama or Krishna—both manifestations of Vishnu—and they agree more or less in teaching devotion (Bhakti) to be the means of attaining salvation.

In the school of Sri Caitanya, liberation has been given a secondary place. The Bhaktas love to serve Krishna; they do not care for Mukti or liberation in any form.¹ Man is by nature a servant of Krishna and a servant he desires to remain for ever. Love of God in order to be perfect must not contain any self-seeking in any form and the desire for salvation or Mukti is a form of self-seeking after all.²

The religion of Bhakti essentially consists of the Upasya (the deity to be worshipped) who is Supreme Brahman in the form of Krishna; the Upasaka (worshipper) and the Upasana (worship) which consists in love or devotion called Prema or love in the Bengal school. It is stated that the Upasana or worship in the school of Caitanya takes the form of a sweet relationship or loving service as conceived by the Gopis in Brindaban. 'The faith is monotheistic whether the object of worship be Vishnu, Narayana, Vasudeva, Rama or Krishna.'³

The point to be noticed is that in these popular religions, what has preserved the creed from stagnating is the emotion of love or devotion and whenever this sentiment shows signs of decadence, some invigorating principle is discovered and the fountain is again found welling and bubbling forth with new life.

¹ सार्ष्टि, सालोक्य, सायुज्य, सारूप्य, सामीप्य are the five forms of Moksha, viz., (1) possessing or sharing divinity (with God), (2) living in the same loka with God, (3) possessing the glory of God, (4) identity or absorption, and (5) nearness with God.

² Cf. भक्ति भक्ति पिशाची *Bhaktirasamritasindhu*.

That is, so long as the desires for enjoyment and for salvation remain in the heart alluring like evil spirits, there cannot be any love. Dr. S. K. De : *Fact and Movement of Vaisnavism*, p. 3.

³ Dr. Bhandarkar, *Op. Cit.*

Krishna belongs to a nomadic tribe of Abhiras known as Sāttvatas who inhabited the country near Mathura. These Sāttvatas or more properly the Yadavas of whom they were a branch were mentioned by Panini. The Sāttvatas were also known as Bhāgabatas¹ or people of the Lord. Their religion is also called Ekāntika Dharma or the religion which professes one God.

Pancaratra or Pāncaratra is the chief among the literature of the Bhāgabatas. It is so called because it was revealed by Narayana during five nights.² Pancaratra is mentioned in the Mahabharata (Sānti Parva) where Narada is said to have received Pancaratra in Svetadvipa.³

The Pancaratra school, therefore, is the oldest Vaisnava sect, which takes us back a few centuries before Christ. Pancaratras are worshippers of Vishnu in the form of Krishna but they do not give any prominence to devotion, nor is there any reference to the pastoral life of Krishna.⁴

We may mention also the name of Tukaram, who lived in the Maharashtra country about the beginning of the seventeenth century. This Mahratta poet who was a contemporary of the great Mahratta chief Sivaji was inspired by Vithoba⁵ of Pandharpur, who was no other than Krishna.⁶ Before Tukaram, Namdev flourished in the Maharastra country; he composed hymns both in Mahratti and Hindi and his sentiments are like those of Nanak.

RAMA CULT

I have remarked before that Vishnu is worshipped in many of his forms or Avatars (incarnations) or manifestations. All the Avatars are by no means equally important. The

¹ 'Bhagabata' has two meanings: The Purana of that name and the people devoted to the personal god, Bhagabān.

² According to Ramanuja, Pancaratra sastra was composed by Vasudeva himself.

³ This story of Svetadvipa has been taken by some scholars to mean Asia Minor or Christian country. The date of Narada Pancaratra is uncertain. The name of Radha is found in Narada Pancaratra.

⁴ Elliot, *Op. Cit.*, p. 198.

⁵ Vittala, Vittoba is dialectic variation of Vishnu.

⁶ Krishna is the god of love as in Bengal, but instead of Radha we find Rukmini as his consort. Rukminipati is a common appellation of Krishna there.

two most important are Rama and Krishna, Rama being older as he was born in Treta or the second 'age' (Yuga) and Krishna in the Dvapara or the third Yuga.

The story of Ramayana first appears in the Ramayana of Valmiki, who is regarded as the Adi Kavi or earliest poet. Rama is described as a historical person who was obliged to invade Lanka (Ceylon) with the aid of an army of monkeys or aborigines to recover his wife Sita, who had been stolen by the demon King Ravana of Lanka. Whether this actually means in a mythological setting any historical fact of the Aryan colonisation of Ceylon, it is doubtful to say.

But Rama by reason of his heroism and his sense of justice and kingly virtues came to be deified. Ramanuja in the 11th century mentions Rama along with Krishna as incarnations of Vishnu. Ramanand in the 14th century preached the divinity of Rama, and his disciple Kavir took up the worship. In the sacred books of the Sikhs, *viz.*, the Guru Grantha Saheb, the name of Rama is often mentioned as a variant of Hari and Vasudeva. Caitanya coupled the name of Rama with Hari in his Kirtan.

The worship of Rama was popularised in Bengal in the 14th century by Krittibasa whose Bengali version of the Ramayana is read with great interest by the masses even to this day. I think there is no other book which is so popular in Bengal as the Ramayana of Krittibas Ojha. But the Hindi poet Tulsidas who wrote two centuries later made a much greater appeal to the Hindi speaking people in the whole of India.

Neither Krittibasa nor Tulsidas has followed the original Ramayana of Valmiki. While keeping mainly to the outline of the story of Rama's life, they have struck into a new direction inasmuch as they have clothed Rama with all the attributes of a supreme Personal God, and of these attributes Karuna (compassion) is the greatest.

It became clear that religion in order to touch the heart of the people must no longer be a code of sacrifices and rituals nor a metaphysical conception however cleverly elaborated, but it should be an affair of the heart. If it is to have a philosophy, that philosophy should be 'touched with emotion' in the language of Matthew Arnold.

'Tulsidas in his *Ramacarita Manasa* ¹ has just struck on the harp of life and raised tunes of undying sweetness to please the devotees. He is a great figure in Indian religion, and the saying that his Ramayana is more popular and more honoured in the Northwestern provinces than the Bible in England is no exaggeration.²

The popularity enjoyed by the Rama cult is next to that of the Krishna cult. According to the worshippers of Krishna, Rama cannot be the supreme God (Para-Brahma) as he is a fraction though a main fraction of the Godhead who distributed himself among the four brothers. However, in point of fact Rama receives universal reverence among almost all sects of the Hindus. In Upper India and also in South India, people greet each other with 'Ram, Ram'. To express the feeling of disappointment or disgust or shock, the name of Rama is uttered.³ When a Hindu is dead, the bearers of his corpse repeat 'the name of Ram is true,' just to remind themselves and others that all else is vain. The idea also is there that the dead bodies are blessed if their departure from this world is sanctified by the name of God.

While Tulsidas charmed millions of men with his Rama songs, Suradas,⁴ a blind poet, tuned his lyre with the idylls of Krishna. He flourished about the middle of the 16th century and was thus a contemporary of Tulsidas. Tulsidas and Suradas are often spoken of as the sun and the moon of Hindi poetry.

SIVA WORSHIP

Closely parallel to the worship of Vishnu there is among the Hindus the worship of a deity who has a multiplicity of

¹ In the mind of the devout poet, the life story of Rama was like the Mānasa lake (in the depths of the Himalayas) in the quiet solitudes of which the devout minds will swim like the mythical geese.

² Elliot, *Op. Cit.*, p. 245.

³ Mahatma Gandhi uttered 'Hey Ram (हे राम)' when his assassin fired on him pointblank. He took the name of his God in the customary fashion. But who knows that there was not the feeling of being shocked by the ingratitude of his countrymen?

⁴ It is said of Suradas that Krishna was so charmed with his lyrics that He came down and acted as his amanuensis.

forms and character. This deity is Siva. He is as important as Vishnu and claims with Vishnu supremacy in the Hindu pantheon, though both the deities are worshipped side by side by many devout Hindus. They are persuaded that Vishnu and Siva are not two deities but the same supreme God under two aspects. The one protects and maintains the Universe and the other destroys. That the destructive attitude is as much necessary as the creative and protective is admitted by everyone. Destruction as a function of the beneficent God is recognised by one of his designations as Siva or the auspicious.

Siva creates as well as destroys; he is the lord of time (Mahakala) and death. He is the supreme God (Maheswara). He is the great ascetic and is pictured as a mendicant living by begging his food, although the goddess of food and plenty is his consort. He is the god of the ascetics or Sanyasis and the source of Agamas—Scripture of the Sivaite. He is represented by the symbol of Linga.¹ The Linga is supposed to have originated from the primitive mystery that surrounds creation or reproduction. The mysticism of the creative force and virility is therefore expressed in the worship of “Linga.”

In the Mahabharata (Asvamedha Parva) it is said that the Phallus is called a spiritual thing.² But along with this recognition, there goes a little hesitation which shows itself in the prohibition that the Nirmalya or prasada of Siva (offerings) should not be partaken of.³ In Padma Purana, the munis deputed Vriha to ascertain who among the gods possessed a spotless character, because no god who does not

¹ Linga has a double meaning : A mark, Phallus (लिङ्गं चिह्नसंज्ञयोः Amar Kosha). Sivalinga looks like a column. Whether this double meaning and the column-like appearance were responsible for the transition to Phallic significance, it is difficult to say. It has been suggested (See Elliot) that the conical emblem might have had its origin in the Buddhist stupas which were venerated. According to Medini (a lexicon) Linga means a particular form of Siva. In Nyaya or Logic, Linga means cause; Siva is no doubt the cause of the world.

² प्रजनो सर्वभूतानाम् उपस्थोऽध्यात्ममुच्यते ।—महाभारत

³ निर्माल्यमस्य चाग्राह्यम् भविष्यति न संशयः ।—शब्दकल्पद्रुम

possess pure character should be worshipped by the Brahmans.¹

The descriptions given in the Puranas of Sivalinga are of various kinds—some are shaped round, some like hen's eggs, some like ripe berries² and others have human forms. The lingas are of different kinds: Vāna Linga, Svayambhu linga, Vaisnava linga, etc. The Vaisnava linga is described as adorned with conch shell, disc, lotus, etc.³ Then there are Jyotirlingas or pillars of light: twelve such are mentioned.⁴

Phallic worship is no doubt an ancient institution⁵ and is by no means confined to Hindus.

There is no mention of Phallic worship in the Vedas. On the contrary, those who worshipped it (Sisnadevas) were looked upon as enemies of the Aryans, as they disturbed the performance of their holy rites.⁶ The Mahabharata however mentions it.⁷ The eroticism in Phallism may be due to the popularity of Tantras which flourished during the decadence of Buddhism.⁸ In other countries also there

¹ शुद्धसत्त्वगुणभेदां यस्मिन् संविद्यते मुने
स एव पूज्यो विप्राणां नेतरस्तु कदाचन । पाद्माक्षरखण्डौत्रे

—Chapter 78.

² पक्वजम्बुफलकारं कुक्कुटाण्डसमाकृतिः

³ This is hardly possible for phallic emblem.

वैष्णवं शङ्खचक्राङ्कगदाज्जादि-विभूषितम् ।

⁴ In the Linga Purana the story is related how Linga came to be worshipped. Brahma, Vishnu, Vasistha and several others called on Siva one day, when he was sporting with his wife. As he failed to do honour to his distinguished guests, they cursed him. "But Siva on hearing the curse turned the table upon them by saying that the Linga was his double self and that whoever would worship the symbol would get all their desires fulfilled and ultimately go to Kailash," which is the highest heaven of the Saivas, the abode of Siva Himself.

⁵ See article on Phallism E. R. E.

See also Dr. Wall 'Lingam,' p. 382. Among the Greeks the male organ with the testicles was called phallus (*Sex and Sexworship*). There is no such obscene suggestion in Siva Linga.

⁶ Bhandarkar, *Op. Cit.*, p. 163.

⁷ Parva VII, Sections 202, 203 and Parva XIII, Section 14.

⁸ There was in popular Tantrism a great laxity in sexual morality. It received support from the theory of the sun and the moon, whose union was prescribed in practice by Natha Siddhas and this union was that of the

has been phallic symbolism in early times.¹

Many young girls from a very early age are taught by the elderly ladies to take to the worship of Sivalinga before their marriage, in the hope that Siva will confer on them his blessings and that they will be lucky, like Gouri, to get husbands as wise and benign as Siva himself.² Siva as the highest God is conceived as consisting of absolute purity, highest knowledge and total renunciation.

As regards the different aspects of God there is a Bengali saying : “ how is God? ” “ Just as one thinks.” This is beautifully illustrated in the Bhagabata Purana, where Krishna affects different people in different ways. As a consummate wrestler, Krishna appeared to the wrestlers as lightning (which reduces the hardest mountains to stonechips), to human beings as a perfect man; to handsome damsels as Cupid personified; to the cowherds as a dear relation; to the wicked kings as a chastiser; to his parents as a boy; and to Kamsa (his enemy) as veritable Death.³

But Siva often combines in himself contradictory attributes. He is the Lord of the Universe, but is a beggar. He is a God but his followers are ‘ ganas,’ *i.e.*, demons and ghosts (Bhutas). He has a wife who is the mother of the whole world, but Siva is an ascetic, a Sanyasi, and an old bullock is his only vehicle. He is Asutosha, *i.e.*, a god who is very easily pleased and is hence approached by the demons who invoke his aid in order to overthrow the

male (moon) and the female (sun) principle. (See Dr. S. B. Dasgupta—*Obscure Religious Cults.*)

¹ In Pompeii phallic representation can be seen on the stone paved street more than two thousand years old pointing towards the quarters, where prostitutes used to live.

But there is nothing in linga worship in India which can even remotely suggest immoral practices. Rather the followers of Siva are taught to realise the virtues of Nivritti or strict asceticism and selfcontrol.

² This is rather peculiar, as the story of the marriage of Gouri, the consort of Siva, is that of a very young girl given in marriage to a very old man.

³ मल्लानामशनिर्नृणां नरवरः स्त्रीणां स्मरो मूर्त्तिमान् ।
गोपानां स्वजनोऽसतां क्षितिभुजां शास्ता स्वपितोः शिष्यः ॥

—Bhāgabata 10 : 34 : 17.

sovereignty of the gods of whom Siva is the Great Lord. Siva represents the ideal not only of self-sacrifice and renunciation but also of self-control and moral purity.

The qualities enumerated above do not seem to be compatible with the conception underlying Linga worship.¹ It is likely that the god of some aboriginal tribe got amalgamated with Vedic Rudra. This accounts for his partiality for serpents and of his being the lord of spirits or Bhutas. The influence of serpent worship and devilry points to the association of this deity with savage tribes whose mystic cult of generative force must have entered into the later conception of Siva linga.²

In this connection, it is not irrelevant to remember that the Vishnu cult also has an emblem, *viz.*, Salagram, which is a round shaped piece of consecrated stone. I do not know if it takes us back to the Stone Age, but this much is certain that Salagram is worshipped either singly or along with an image or images of Vishnu. The round shape is perhaps intended to convey the idea of the Supreme God being essentially without form.

It is interesting to note, however, that no vulgar rite is associated with Linga worship as we find for example in Greece and Rome in connection with Priapism.³

The Chinese traveller Hiouen Tsang mentions about the worshippers of Siva (Pasupatas) and saw in Banaras

¹ In Kalidas's Kumar Sambhavam an elaborate description in adoration of Hara is given, but there is no mention of Linga. Kalidas belonged to the fourth-fifth century A.D. Patanjali does not mention it. Dr. Bhandarkar says that it was unknown even to Wema-Kadphises—a Kushan king. In his coins, the image of Siva—and not phallus emblem—appears on the reverse.

² Dr. Wall has discovered in the forests of India many shrines with realistic figures of the Lingam to which sterile women make pilgrimages that they may touch these images with their vulva. Not only this, as virgins cannot enter heaven, there is a practice among some Hindu sects for virgins to go to some of these stone lingas to have their virginity destroyed. Most fantastic conceptions, if true.—*Sex and Sex Worship*, p. 389.

³ The images of Priapus were with erect male organs and young girls were taken to his temples, where priestesses instructed the girls in the uses of the organ.—Dr. Wall: *Sex and Sex Worship*, p. 165.

ten thousand naked Sivaïtes with their bodies besmeared with ashes—a sight which by no means is rare even now.

There are innumerable temples in India dedicated to Siva. The greatest centre of Siva worship in Northern India is Banaras. Pilgrims flock to this town from all parts of India and the worship which consists in an offering of flowers and Bel leaves and the pouring of Ganges water on the lingam goes on from morning till late at night. No caste restriction seems to be observed and the universality of the deity is proved by all castes and sects, ascetics and householders, the rich and the poor worshipping the deity at one and the same time. There are innumerable emblems of Siva and old men and women may be seen everyday going their round after a dip in the Ganges, with a jugful of water and making it a point to pour water on as many of these lingas as possible. This proves unmistakably the popularity of Siva. The ease with which the worship of this deity is performed also accounts for the great popularity of the God. Although priests officiate at the worship, it is no vicarious worship. The worshipper touches the emblem, besmears it with sandal paste and pours water and flowers with his or her own hand.

Siva is called Mahadeva or the greatest among the gods. He is Mahakala (Time) and Death. Siva as Ardhanarisvara represents the intimate association of the male and female principle typifying the cosmic phenomenon of procreation. "He dwells in Mount Kailasa; he has three eyes; above the central one is the crescent of the moon and the stream of the Ganges descends from his braided hair; his throat is blue and encircled by a serpent and a necklace of skulls."

In Southern India, temples with gigantic Gopurams (gates) abound which are dedicated to Siva. At Madura, Tinnevely, Tanjore, Rameswaram, Trichinopoly, etc., there are temples of Siva which are famous throughout the world. Most of these temples date from the eleventh or twelfth century and have attracted devotees and sight-seers from all parts of the world. Siva-worship received a great impetus from Sankaracarya, a Nambudri Brahmin, who was born in South India about 788 A.D. He was a great exponent of Hinduism. Invincible as a dialectician, his polemics were

mainly the cause which brought about the downfall of Buddhism and its virtual disappearance from India. By his exposition of the Advaita Vedanta for which he became famous, he succeeded in overthrowing the two heretic offshoots of Hinduism, *viz.*, Buddhism and Jainism which had also been flourishing in South India along with Brahmanism. The monastery at Sringeri in Mysore founded by Sankara became the head of the Brahmanical society of the Smarta (traditional) school. This Math was handsomely endowed by the Kings of Vijayanagar (in the fourteenth-fifteenth century), who were great upholders of the Hindu faith. Sankara himself preached in his monistic philosophy an impersonal God, but his followers particularly the orders of ascetics founded by him worshipped Siva. In order to make the position of Hinduism invulnerable in the land, Sankara not only wrote learned commentaries on the Upanishads including the Gita but also caused four principal monasteries to be established in the four frontiers of India—one in the North among the Himalayas called Jyotir Math, Sarada Math in Gujerat in the West, Bhogabardhana or Gobardhana in the East on the seaside at Puri and Sringeri in Mysore in the South.

In the literature of the South which received an impetus from the religious movements, many works of high merit were composed in honour of Siva and Vishnu. The Saiva works contain among them Tiruvacagari of Manikka Vacagar “one of the finest devotional poems which India can show.”

Manikka Vacagar was a Tamil poet-saint of the ninth century, who composed hymns in honour of Siva which are full of passionate love for the god. Just as the Alvars composed hymns in honour of Vishnu, this saintly poet sang of Siva, who is represented as a God of love. Just as we find described, in the Bhagabata Purana, about the devotees of Krishna, this Saiva saint “used to shed tears, the hair of his body stood erect, his tongue trembled . . . his mind melted like wax dissolved in the fire.”

In Vedic times, *e.g.*, in the age of Svetaswatara, Rudra Siva was the Supreme God. He was also the god of love. But when Vasudeva-Krishna-Narayana came into the field, he appealed more to the hearts of people than Siva. “In

the monotheistic religions of other countries ", says Dr. R. G. Bhandarkar, " the same god is feared and loved; but in India the god that is loved is Vishnu or Krishna while the God that is feared is Rudra-Siva."

In Kashmir, Saivism flourished in the ninth and tenth centuries A.D. The two branches are Spandasastra and Pratyabhijna Sastra. Spandasastra was founded by Vasugupta and Kallata. Kallata lived in the reign of Avantivarman, 854 A.D. The Pratyabhijna school was founded by Somananda, who may have lived in the first quarter of the tenth century. In Saivism the individual is god himself, although he does not know it. But when he is led to believe by his *guru* that he possesses the divine attributes, then the serene bliss dawns upon him.¹

THE SĀKTAS

The wife of Siva is also worshipped under a multiplicity of names and forms. The worshippers of the female principle are known by the name of Sākta. " The worship of goddesses is both ancient and widespread." Among the Egyptians and Semitic peoples, among the Greeks and Kelts this practice was found to exist. For instance, Ashtoreth or Astarte of the Old Testament was a goddess of fertility or productiveness. She both created and destroyed; she visited with disease all those who disobeyed her commands. Ashtoreth was even a goddess of war.² The Assyrians laid less stress on her milder side as mother goddess and dwelt more upon her martial aspect. There is thus a very close resemblance between Astarte, the Assyro-Babylonian goddess and Kālī or Durgā, the spouse of Siva, who is the universal mother and at the same time the goddess of destruction and death. This is symbolised by her sword, string of human skulls worn round her neck and protruding tongue signifying that she is finding pleasure in her devastating activity. But the symbolism is not complete until it is supplemented by Siva lying prostrate under her feet. Siva or the Good signifies that the destructive activities of Kali cannot be

¹ Plotinus said that one must be god to realise God.

² Hastings: *Dictionary of the Bible*.

understood in isolation from the ultimate good of the world, which is the main objective. Durga is represented with ten hands just to imply that the goddess controls all the ten points of the compass.¹

Durga has been conceived also as representing the spirit of modern nationalism in India. “Durga” says Mr. Bepin-chandra Pal “represents the perfected type of nationhood.”² There is no doubt that the goddess, though old, has been connected with the growth of the national spirit in Bengal in the middle of the last century and for her popularity in this aspect Bankim Chandra Chatterji, the celebrated novelist, is mainly responsible—particularly his famous national song “Bande Mataram.”³

The relation of God to man has been variously conceived. The Jews addressed God as Father, the Vaishnavas and Sufis as the Beloved, the Upanishads have also emphasised this aspect by saying that the Atmā is dearer than the Son, dearer than wealth, dearer than everything else.⁴ But the Hindu mind has always been very susceptible to the idea of God as mother. Protection, affection and power as the chief constituents of this mother concept.

Different ways of propitiating the goddess are known to exist among different peoples—including human sacrifice,⁵ prostitution, wine, dancing by naked women, etc.

In certain schools of Tantrism in Assam and Bengal where Sakti worship is more prevalent than elsewhere in India, all the above methods of sacrifice and ritual were known. Whatever the symbolism underlying the various rites and sacrifices, it is gradually giving place to more rational ideas.⁶

¹ See Bepin Chandra Pal *Soul of India*, p. 144.

² *Ibid.* p. 145.

³ For this reason, Bande Mataram was practically proscribed by the British Government, who wanted to crush the growth of the national spirit among the Indians.

⁴ प्रेयः पुत्रात्, प्रेयो वित्तात्, प्रेयः अन्यस्मात् सदैव स्मात्
—Bṛhad Āraṇyaka.

⁵ See Elliot, *Op. Cit.* *Ibid.*

⁶ Cf. Ramprasad's songs. In Bengal, Ramprasad and many other poets have composed songs which breathe a pure philosophical spirit.

There are other goddesses also, such as Radha, Lakshmi, Rukmini, etc., Vishnu's spouse, Sitala and Mariamman (South India), goddesses of small pox, Manasa the goddess of snakes, Saraswati the goddess of learning and fine arts, but they enjoy varying degrees of popularity inferior to that of the mother goddess.

As regards their powers, the female principle is generally held to be more active than the male deities, although the contrary view is by no means rare. Prakriti or nature is more active than Purusha, in Samkhya Philosophy; Kālī is more energetic than Siva. The Devas or gods found in her a champion to fight their battles with the Asuras and this is elaborately described in Candi, a book which is designed to extol the warlike achievements of the goddess of that name who is identical with Kali.

The cult of the Mother as preached by the sage of Dakshineswar, Ramkrishna Paramahansa reached in the 19th century a form which in point of purity and sincerity equalled some of the most ethical religions of the world. His celebrated disciple, Vivekananda, based the teachings of his master on Upanishadic monotheism and preached with effect before English and American audiences. One of the cardinal principles of Ramakrishna's faith was that every religion leads to God.

CONCLUSION

I have come to the end of my task. Apart from the satisfaction which accompanies the completion of a rather arduous duty, there is the further pleasure of the company of many worthy friends whose learning, piety and reputation make it a matter of great gratification to me to have the privilege to speak before them. Believe me when I say by your presence you have encouraged me, sustained me and inspired me so as to bring my best efforts to bear on the performance of my duty.

I know my limitations and imperfections but the greatness of the theme has never ceased to thrill. For what theme is more interesting than the ultimate goal of human activities? What talk is more meritorious than the lives and teachings of god-like persons who have hallowed the earth by their advent?

Zoroaster taught the principle that God is the embodiment of good. God is nothing but good and religion consists in promoting the good alone in the great cosmic struggle between good and evil. "Say good words—think good thoughts and do good deeds"—this is what the Parsees preach and practise. The Greeks proclaimed the Idea of the Good as the ultimate cause or reason of the Universe. Buddha showed the unreality of the world and taught that by Ahimsa, Samyag Dristi, Samyak Sankalpa, Samyag Vac, etc., man can effect his deliverance from the world of sorrow. The religious genius of the Jews established an intimate contact between man and the living God. Christ exposed the hypocrisy of his times and focussed attention on the purity of heart which alone is an acceptable offering to the Heavenly Father who is good, just and merciful. Confucius insisted on a strictly moral code. He taught that correctness in external conduct and purity in internal are binding on everybody. Hinduism taught that peace and happiness are closely interwoven with renunciation. The eternal cycle of religious life is divided into two arcs—one of them is Pravritti and the other

Nivritti, in order that salvation may be attained. The tumult of the passions must be hushed in order that the divine voice may make itself heard in the inner recesses of our heart. The Hindus found out that religious life was not attainable by enjoyment. Know God, know thyself—Arise, awake and learn the highest truths from teachers; the wise men declare that the path of the ultimate goal is as difficult to traverse as the sharp edge of a razor.¹ But the Vaisnavas said: nothing is difficult before love; no obstacle is insurmountable if you can love God with a single minded devotion. God saves the sinners from the greatest sin provided they surrender themselves completely to Him. Islam enjoined submission to God. The vigorous faith in one God and in His words, belief in Paradise and Hell make Mohammadanism as in tune with the rest of the religions of the world. The Sufis further spiritualised the creed by substituting for mere submission to Allah a vital relation of loving union.

So we see that the different world religions in spite of their divergence which are often very deep and far reaching teach essentially the same lessons.² So far as the eternal verities are concerned, there does exist a wonderful identity between them. If human civilisation means the sum total of certain values which have come to be recognised as more or less permanent in human life, then it may be said without fear of contradiction that man is what he is by reason of his religion.

The question, human nature being essentially more or less the same all over the world, how could the religions be different—not only different but sometimes at war with each

¹ उत्तिष्ठत ! जायत ! प्राप्य वरान् निबोधत ।

क्षुरस्य धारा निशिता दुरत्यया दुर्गे पथस्तत् कवयो वदन्ति ॥

—Katha, 3rd valli : 14.

² Sri Aurobindo maintains, like Ramkrishna Paramahansa, that every religion is good so far as it goes. 'Paganism enhanced in man the sense of beauty, heightened his feelings and broadened his outlook on life; Christianity vouchsafed to him the vision of divine love and quickened his sense of purity; Buddhism showed him the path to wisdom, gentleness and calm; Judaism and Islam taught him how to combine action with devotion to God; Hinduism opened to him profoundest possibilities.' Sri Aurobindo : *Thoughts and Glimpses*, p. 37.

other, is not easy to answer. It is perhaps due to the fact that in the wonderful diversity of faiths, the essential freedom of man is re-asserted with the greatest emphasis. Every nation, every tribe, every race of man claims to have the genuine goods, but God is not like chattel to be owned, appropriated and exhibited by any one. Religion is an affair of the heart. Only the man of God can say what He is like; no body else can. 'Columbus discovered America' is true only so far as history is concerned. But history is not everything. The man who wants to know America has to re-discover it for himself. A man who wants to know the taste of mango has to make an effort to get hold of a fruit and taste himself; otherwise it will be like the Shah of Persia's parody of enjoying the taste of mango. Community worship is possible so far as ritual, sacrifice and formula are concerned. But there cannot be any sharing so far as the inner spiritual realisation is concerned. That is solely the individual's own concern.

If religion wielded so much influence on the human mind, it is because man felt the need for it in the inmost recesses of his being. Think of the time when man roamed in the forest or in the solitude of mountain caves in search of God. And when the soul experienced the thrill of a contact with God, it was filled to the brim with joy, and the message spread from man to man over hills and dales, over rivers and oceans. This joy was reflected in music and art, poetry and science, literature and philosophy. The whole universe resounded like the numerous aisles of a church and the diapason of heavenly music rolled from soul to soul. This is called the Dynamic of Faith, that which made the streams of life combine into a mighty stream transforming, transmuting and vitalising the essentially evil nature of man and gliding towards Truth, God and Beauty.

This is why we find man where we find him today. Religion has a unique message for all time. Because the values which it has established are, in spite of madness and folly, perennial. Justice, Philanthropy, Truth. Peace, Love are the great springs of human nature and, religion opened the mouth of those hidden springs and made them flow far and near-inundating and purifying.

No religion ever taught discord and hate, greed and lust. These natural propensities were kept down, subdued and often eradicated by religion. Christ said that it is easier far for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to go to God. What is the reason? If the flame of greed or lust is continually fed by desires, man cannot ascend towards heaven but is dragged to the lowest depth of degradation. God is eclipsed. 'The lust-dieted man,' as Aldous Huxley says, "slaves the ordinances of Heaven". That is to say, he subordinates the laws of Nature and spirit to his own craving. Man does not live by bread alone, says the Bible.

न वित्तेन तर्पणीयो मनुष्यः says the Upanishad.¹

Humanity has arrived at the cross roads when decision must be taken one way or the other whether man should worship God or man or the blind forces of physical nature. The study of nature has never been discouraged. In fact from the earliest times God, Man and Nature have been the subjects of human pursuit. In Russia, in modern times, Literature, Art and Science have become members of the new humanistic trinity. But what art and literature will be with God left out, it is not possible to conjecture. What we say is: Walk as much as you like on the mundane plane, but without the pleasant sunny heights of divine presence, art and literature are bound to be drab and common place. We can say with Sri Aurobindo, "The touch of Earth is always reinvigorating to the son of Earth, even when he seeks a superphysical knowledge. It may even be said that the superphysical can only be really mastered in its fullness—to its heights we can always reach—when we keep our feet firm on the physical. 'Earth is His footing,' says the Upanishad, whenever it images the self that manifests in the Universe." ²

¹ Katha 1.1.27. Not with wealth is a man to be satisfied.

² Sri Aurobindo, *Life Divine*, Vol. I, p. 16.

Let me end with a prayer.

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात् पूर्णमुदच्यते ।

पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः

The other world is full of Brahma, this world is full of Brahma. The whole arises from the whole, and the whole, if taken away from the whole, leaves the whole behind, *i.e.*, when the world as Brahma Hiranyagarbha arises from the supreme (attributeless) Brahma, the Brahma Himself remains a whole. PEACE.

