

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
DEPARTMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGY  
CENTRAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
LIBRARY

---

CLASS Acc. No. 1921

CALL No. 901.0954 Sau

D.G.A. 79.

24D

87  
1

Harley, Paul Co  
New York



# A PAGEANT OF INDIA

BY

KENNETH SAUNDERS

LITT. D. (CAMBRIDGE)



1921

901.0954  
Sau



GEOFFREY CUMBERLEGE  
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Mr. Kenneth Saunders' *A Pageant of Asia: A Study of Three Civilizations* (1934) comprises three parts: Part I. India; Part II. China; Part III. Japan. The present book is (by arrangement with the author) a reprint of Part I, and was first issued in 1939, and reprinted in 1947

CENTRAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
LIBRARY, NEW DELHI.

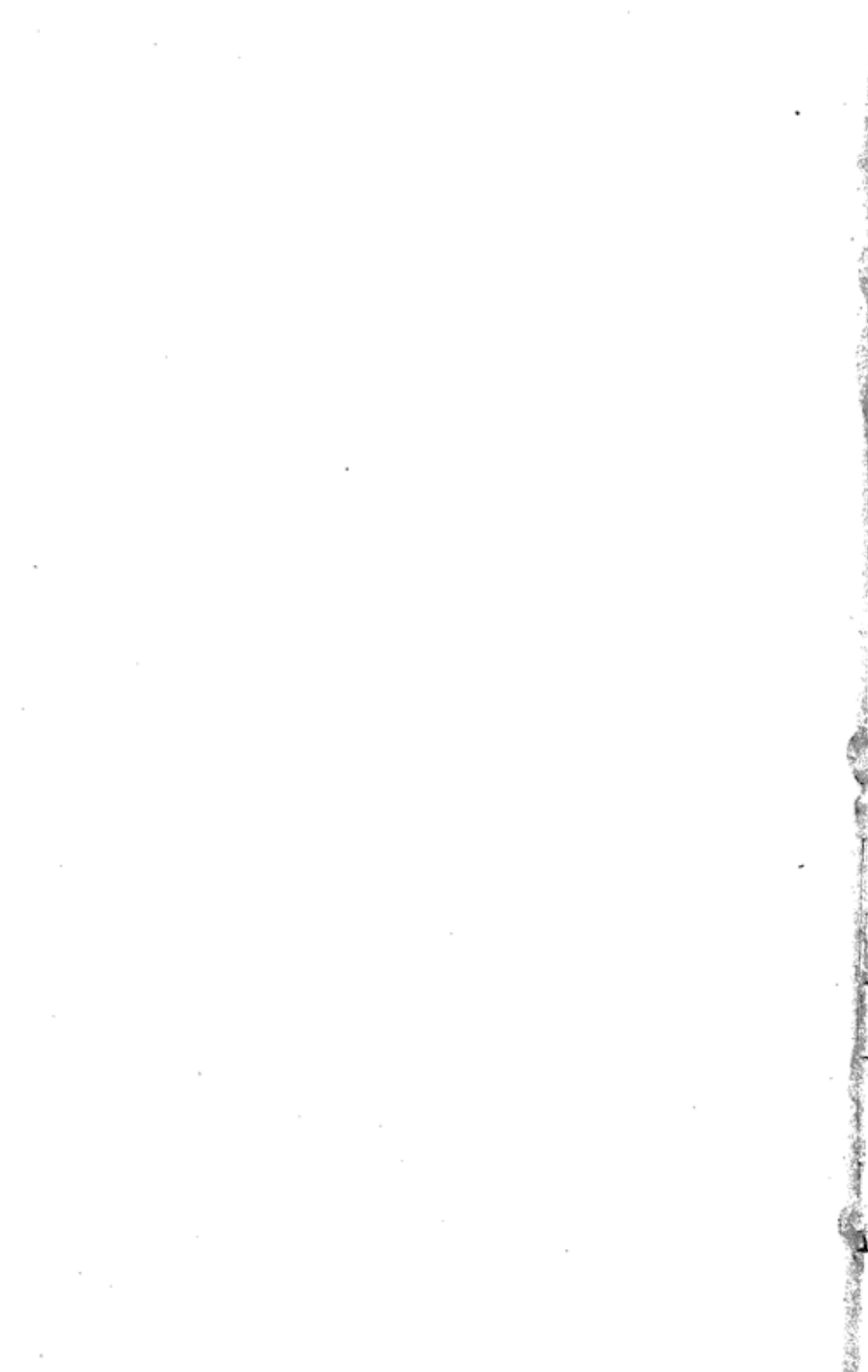
Acc. No. 1921

Date 31-8-54

Call No. 901.0954/Sau

Glenda, Book Co. H 81- 24.8.57

DEDICATED TO  
J. E. S.  
MOST FAITHFUL OF STEWARDS  
C. R. C.  
MOST DELIGHTFUL OF  
TRAVEL-COMPANIONS



## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE ARYANS BECOME INDIANS . . . . .	3
II. SAKYAMUNI THE BUDDHA, INDIA'S GREATEST SON	29
III. ASOKA AND HIS HOUSE . . . . .	49
IV. THE PRE-GUPTAN ERA . . . . .	74
V. THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE GUPTAS . . . . .	104
VI. THE POST-GUPTAN AGE AND THE SOUTHERN KINGDOMS . . . . .	134
VII. AKBAR AND THE GREAT MOGULS . . . . .	162



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

STATUES AND A SEAL. FROM MOHENJO DARO. FROM <i>Mohenjo-Daro and the Indus Civilization</i> , by Sir John Marshall. Copyright of the Government of India, by courtesy of Mr. Arthur Probsthain . . .	Facing page 4
ASOKAN SCULPTURE, BARHUT RAIL. A KING'S OFFERING: THE MONKEY-KING'S SACRIFICE. Indian Museum, Calcutta . . .	Facing page 37
AN ASOKAN CAPITAL. Indian Museum, Calcutta . . .	" " 49
POROS AND ALEXANDER. British Museum . . .	" " 49
A CITY GATE. FROM a relief at Sanchi. FROM <i>Early Indian Architecture</i> , by A. K. Coomaraswamy, in <i>Eastern Art</i> , vol. ii . . .	Page 55
SANCHI: MAIN STUPA AND PROCESSION PATH . . .	Facing page 58
MODEL OF A GATEHOUSE AGAINST THE CITY WALL, FROM AMARAVATI. FROM <i>Early Indian Architecture</i> , by A. K. Coomaraswamy, in <i>Eastern Art</i> , vol. ii . . .	Page 79
EARLY SOUTH INDIAN ART. THE TAMING OF THE ELEPHANT. A Stupa from Amaravati. Madras Museum . . .	Facing page 82
GUPTAN BUDDHA IN TEACHING POSE (Dharmachakra), Sarnath . . .	Facing page 85
ANDHRA BUDDHA IN MEDITATION (Samadhi), Anuradhapura. FROM <i>Visvakarma</i> , pt. viii, by A. K. Coomaraswamy (Luzac & Co.) . . .	Facing page 85
AJANTA FRESCOS. THE PRINCE IN PALACE AND CITY. PADMAPANI . . .	Facing page 115
PLAN OF CAVE XVII, AJANTA . . .	Page 118
THE DYING PRINCESS. FROM Lady Herringham, <i>Ajanta Frescoes</i> . . .	Facing page 122
PLAN OF THE KESAVA TEMPLE AT SOMNATHPUR, MYSORE. BY permission of the Government of Mysore . . .	Facing page 137
SOURCE OF THE GANGES WITH HERMIT, SHRINE, GODS, AND ANIMALS. MAHAMALLAPURAM . . .	Facing page 138
THE NATARAJA: DANCING SIVA OF THE DRAVIDIAN SOUTH IN TANDAVA DANCE. Collection C. T. Loo, Paris . . .	Facing page 142
'THE SEVEN PAGODAS' AND A SCULPTURED PANEL, MAHAMALLAPURAM . . .	Facing page 146
A CLOISTER AND A FRIEZE. ANGKOR WAT . . .	" " 147
BOROBODUR, GENERAL VIEW. BY permission of the Government of the Dutch East Indies . . .	Facing page 148

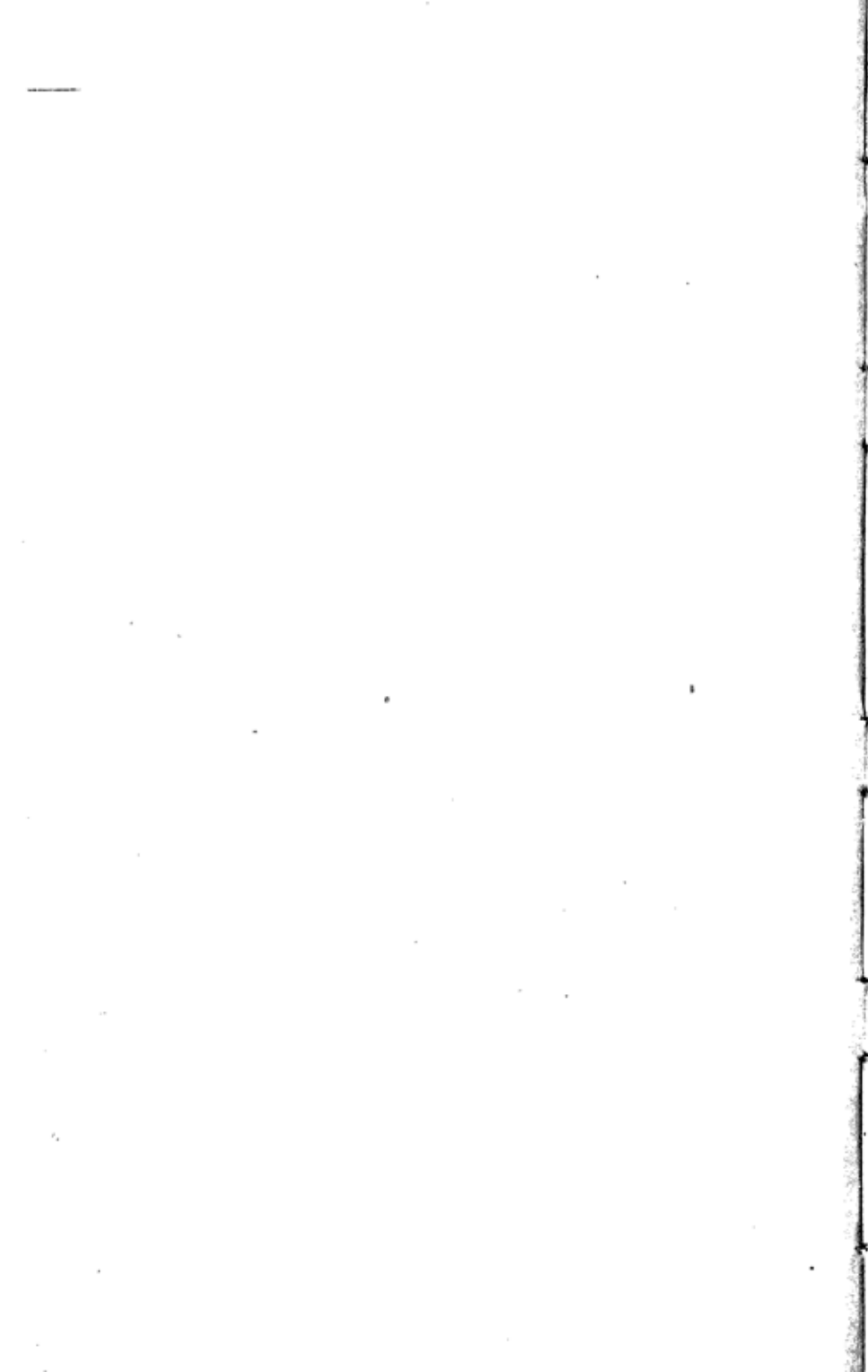
THE BUDDHA ANOINTED BY DISCIPLES . . . .	Facing page 148
DETAILS OF SECULAR AND RELIGIOUS LIFE, BOROBODUR . . . .	151
THE GROUND PLAN OF BOROBODUR. By permission of the Government of the Dutch East Indies . . . . .	Page 153
AKBAR'S SON JAHANGIR WITH HIS FATHER'S PORTRAIT. Louvre, Paris. Photograph, Archives Photo., Paris . . . . .	Facing page 167
THE BOY AKBAR ON 'SKY-ROCKET'. British Museum . . . . .	167
EMPEROR AND MULLAH. British Museum . . . . .	178
SANNYASIS (WATCHING DERVISHES). By permission of Captain Spencer Churchill . . . . .	Facing page 178
A RAJPUT IDYLL. DEER ENCHANTED BY THE RAGINI TODI. Indian Museum, Calcutta . . . . .	Facing page 181
A MOGUL IDYLL. ZEB-UN-NISSA MOURNS HER LOVER. From <i>Rupam</i> . . . . .	Facing page 186

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS and thanks for permission to include copyright material are also due to the late Professor A. A. Macdonell, and Drs. Laurence Binyon, A. K. Coomaraswamy, A. B. Keith, the late Sylvain Lévi, J. P. Vogel, and Langdon Warner; and to the following publishers for leave to quote passages from the books specified below: the Association Press (A. A. Macdonell, *Hymns of the Rig Veda*; H. A. Popley, *Hymns of Tamil Saints*; K. J. Saunders, *Gotama Buddha*), the Cambridge University Press (E. J. Rapson, *Ancient India*), Messrs. J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd. (H. A. Ryder, *Shakuntala*), the India Society (*The Influence of Indian Art*), Messrs. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., Ltd. (Sir E. Arnold, *The Song Celestial*); Messrs. Luzac and Co. (A. Rogers and H. Beveridge, *Memoirs of Jahangir*; M. M. Williams, *Indian Wisdom*), Sir John Murray (L. Cranmer Byng, *A Vision of Asia*; L. D. Barnett, *The Heart of India*; K. J. Saunders, *The Buddha's Way of Virtue*), Mr. A. Probsthain (Y. P. Mei and J. P. Bruce, translations in *Probsthain's Oriental Series*, vols. x and xix), University of Chicago Press (A. W. Ryder, translations of the *Gita* and *Panchatantra*)



PART I  
INDIA



# I

## THE ARYANS BECOME INDIANS

(*First Millennium B.C.*)

'Him, the Alone Real, sages call by many names.' RIG-VEDA. \*

# I

THE great peninsula of India, whose inhabitants number about one-sixth of the human family, is divided into three well-defined regions. First is the north-west, the country of the Indus, from which the whole sub-continent is named. Bounded by the great Himalaya range on the north, it is continuous on the south with Hindustan, the country of the Ganges and Jumna Rivers, a vast plain which makes up the main part of northern India. Below this is the Deccan, that is Dakshina, or the 'southern country', from the Vindhya Mountains to Cape Comorin.

Into the first of these regions have poured many invaders, and they have left their mark upon its many languages and national groups. It is a country transitional in physical character between India and central Asia, and is the key to India proper. The second great region has been the scene of imperial ascendancy, from which great emperors, Hindu, Buddhist, and Muhammadan, have ruled India, from which too the more lasting supremacy of the Brahmins has held sway. The third region differs from both in being the stronghold of darker peoples, probably representing earlier waves of invasion, and a distinctive type of civilization which has successfully resisted that of the north, or absorbed and assimilated it.

These Dravidian peoples of the south have contributed many characteristic elements to what we know as Indian culture, which is a blend of what the Aryan invaders brought into India with what they found there. And there are large groups representing racial intermingling and fusion; Turko-Iranian in the north-west, Mongolo-

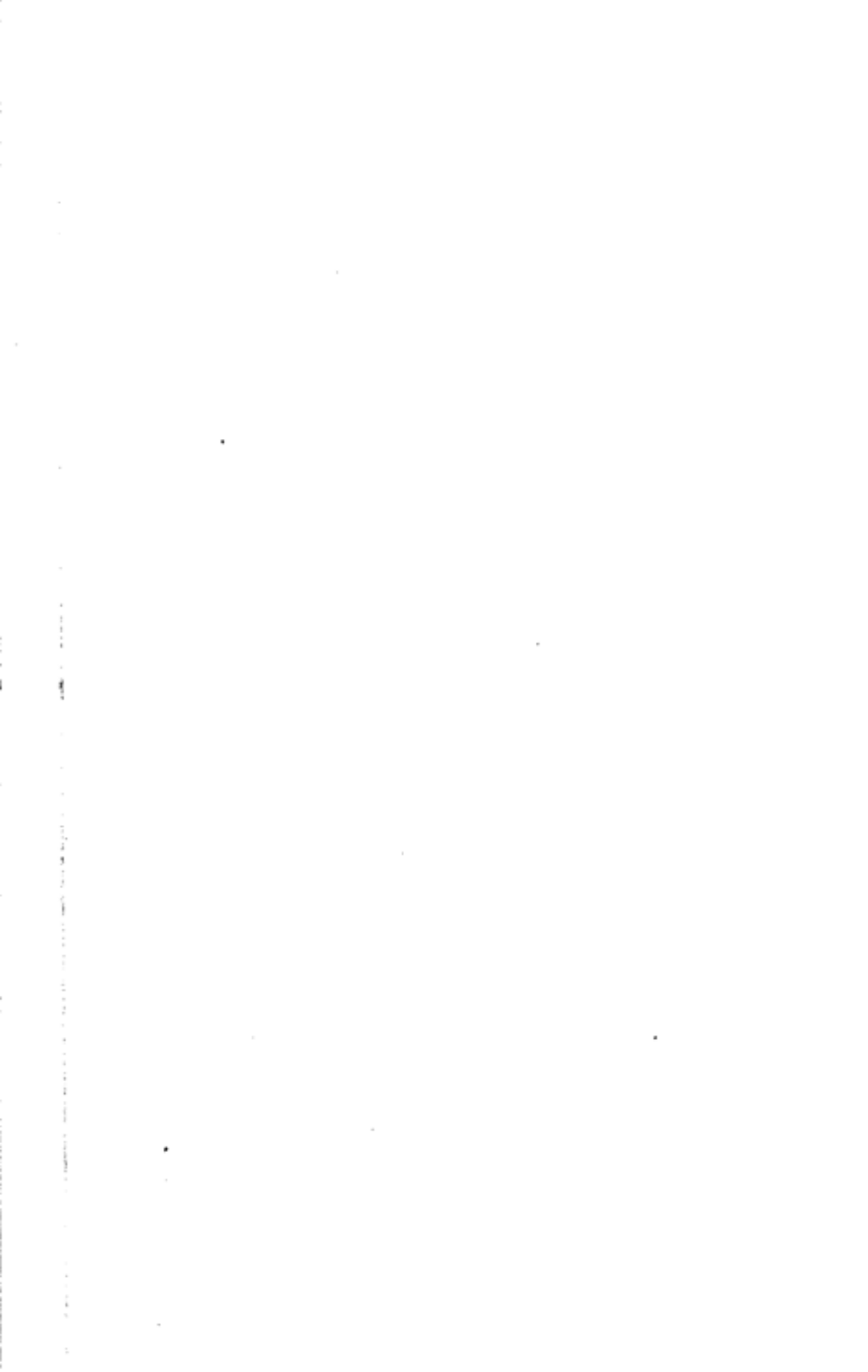
Aryan in the north-east, Scytho-Dravidian in the west, Aryo-Dravidian in the United Provinces.

Of the aborigines certain groups remain, about five millions still at a primitive stage of culture, using flint implements and hunting with bow and arrow—animists in terror of demons. Of pre-Aryan settlers we know much from recent excavations: they built fine cities of brick, such as those at Harappa (Punjab) and at Mohenjo-Daro (Sind), used gold jewellery and coins, and had a highly developed art which survives in images of superb modelling and seals of consummate craftsmanship. 'The best of the figures', says Sir John Marshall, 'are distinguished by a breadth of treatment and a feeling for line and form unequalled in the contemporary glyptic art of Elam or Mesopotamia or Egypt.' He identifies figurines of a much-jewelled woman with the 'mother-goddess' familiar in Mesopotamia and farther west. Particularly interesting are the animals, presumably sacrificial; the humped bull characteristic of India to-day, the elephant, the rhinoceros (now extinct). Here too are a cobra rearing its many-hooded heads over a human figure, which may be the prototype of Buddhist images, and a sacred tree which may be the Banyan (*Ficus religiosa*) prominent in Buddhism.

Colonists then, akin to the Sumerians, seem to have come to India some 3,000 years before Christ, and to have settled in the north and west, perhaps beginning the process of pushing south the dark-skinned Dravidians which the Aryan invaders continued fifteen centuries later. It may be, on the other hand, that the Dravidians are their descendants, or even that early Sumerians were settlers from India. It is noteworthy that a group of people in Baluchistan still speak Brahui, a language akin to the Dravidian. Are these a colony from the south, or a little group which budded off from an immigrant people on the march, who left colonies also in the Punjab and in Sind? The Coorgs of the south present a parallel problem, an island of Scytho-Dravidians in the midst of the darker peoples.



STATUES AND A SEAL  
From MOHENJO DARO



Interesting questions are raised by the discovery of cuneiform tablets belonging to the fifteenth and fourteenth centuries B.C., at Boghaz Koi near Angora in Asia Minor, on which treaties with kings of the Mitanni bearing Aryan names are recorded. These were Mesopotamians conquered by the Hittites, a group of whom still seems to survive in the near neighbourhood; and on these tablets they invoke certain gods, 'Mitra, Uruwana, and Indara', who are to be identified with gods of the Aryan conquerors of India whom we meet in the Rig-Veda. Does this mean that a group of Indians had taken their gods with them to the west, or does it not rather mean that we should date the coming of the Aryans to India as about contemporary with the exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt? This is the view accepted by most Western scholars; and the hymns of the Rig-Veda, which are songs of praise and prayer to the gods, just over a thousand in number, are thus of very great significance and interest. They are our earliest Aryan literature. Arranged in ten cycles, or mandalas, of which the tenth is the latest, and belongs to about the ninth century B.C., the bulk of them belong to the preceding five centuries. Eight of these mandalas are attributed to priestly families—the Gautamas, the Vishvamitras and others, and they are written in Vedic, the sacred tongue of ancient India. Used as early as the seventh century B.C., for rock inscriptions, this script was much later adapted to the making of books, and these hymns were for centuries handed down orally by priestly families.

What do they tell us of the Aryans as they settled down in the Land of the Five Rivers? We find a military aristocracy despising native pani, traders, and moving southward with sword in one hand and spade in the other. We can hear their martial songs as they drive the original inhabitants before them, invoking Indra, god of battles, and claiming that he has smitten with his thunderbolt the Blacks or Dasyus, and given victory to the Aryans. Like Valkyrie the gods appear in battle-array to help their

worshippers—and in lightning and thunder Indra meets and quells the demon of drought. If they have been placated with food and with libations of soma, an intoxicating drink, often deified, and made from a plant which grew upon the mountains, these bright nature-gods will do their part. As to their worshippers, they will do theirs, with sword and plough. We see them driving their chariots, armed with javelin and battle-axe, and clad like their Greek cousins in helmet and cuirass, or we watch them at work in the fields of the fertile Indus Valley, with plough, mattock, and hoe; invoking the gods of fertility, digging canals, and using spells to bring rain. And if they use primitive medicine and drink healing waters and herbs they also employ spells to drive out fever—sending it into a black or yellow neighbour. But some regard sickness as the punishment of sin sent by Heaven.

Of their social life we get hints in these hymns, sufficient to reconstruct a clear picture. Kingship is hereditary, and there is a separate priesthood, which we see beginning when the king appoints a substitute to attend to the sacrifices. Neither child-marriage nor the burning of the widow on the pyre of her husband, practices characteristic of later India, are found among the Aryan tribes. But the exposure of infants and the infirm aged is practised according to the Yajur-Veda, the prayer-book of this early society.

Relationship is counted through the father, and monogamy is the rule, the wife having an honourable position; and the beginning of the joint-family may be traced. Beginnings, too, of settled civilization may be seen in the pur or fort, a rough palisade, into which they hurried their herds and other possessions in case of attack. In coalitions of tribes we see the beginning of the state, and the king is chosen to protect his people and to administer justice. The chief weapon is the bow, but slings, spears, swords, and axes are also used, the ordinary soldier fighting on foot, kings and nobles from a crude chariot. Horses are used for racing and for war, bulls and oxen draw the ploughs and carts. Seed is sown in furrows, especially



barley and wheat, which are made into bread and fermented to make sura or brandy. Weaving, spinning, tanning, carpentry, and metal work are practised, and there are artists as well as craftsmen. We read of an image of Indra carried into battle, no doubt a kind of fetish: and an early poem asks, 'Who will buy my Indra?' The images of the Dasyus, on the other hand, the Aryans condemn as indecent; and, as we find in the Indus Valley cities, phallic emblems were plentiful long before the Aryans arrived. The West still regards as obscene what most Indians worship as sacred.

Looking at the hymns in more detail we may choose a ploughing hymn 'the oldest pastoral in the Aryan world', a wedding ritual, and a funeral hymn, which give us vivid glimpses of Vedic society in its glad moments of work and play, and at the solemn hour of death. In all we find a sense of unseen presences, and of the kinship of men with mother-earth. The ploughing hymn reveals a cheerful society passing from nomadic to settled life:

O Lord of the field, give us sweet rain  
And copious: may the cows give us milk;  
May the Lord of the waters bless us.

May our crops be sweet, and skies rain sweetness  
May the Lord of the Field be gracious to us;  
So will we follow him unharmed by our foes.

May the oxen work gladly; gladly  
May ploughman and plough go forward;  
Gladly tie we the traces, gladly ply we the goad.

Of their home-life we get many glimpses, such as early rituals of marriage and death. After fire has been kindled on the family altar the bride is given away by the father, and the priest addresses bride and groom: 'Abide ye together. Leave not one another, but enjoy happiness with your children.' The groom takes the right hand of his bride and says, 'For weal I take thee by thy right hand, that we may reach old age together.' After the wedding-feast the bride is addressed in these words: 'Enter the

home of thy husband with lucky omens. Cherish his servants and his cattle. May thine eyes be free from anger: minister to the joy of thy husband. May thy beauty be bright and thy mind cheerful. Bear him heroic sons. Worship the gods. O Indra, bless this lady with worthy sons. May she be mother of strong men.' Then the bride and groom say in unison, 'May all the gods unite our hearts and may the gods of hope keep us united.'

An early funeral hymn reminds us of many an epitaph of Greek and Roman:

From the dead hand I take the bow he wielded,  
To gain for us dominion, might, and glory.  
Thou there, we here, rich in heroic offspring,  
Will vanquish all assaults of every foeman.

Approach the bosom of the earth, the mother,  
This earth, extending far and most propitious:  
Young, soft as wool to bounteous givers, may she  
Preserve thee from the lap of dissolution.

Open wide, O earth, press not heavily on him,  
Be easy of approach, hail him with kindly aid:  
As with a robe a loving mother hideth  
Her son, so shroud this man, O Earth our Mother.

This early society expects from its gods material blessings in return for sacrifices, but in it there is dawning a moral sense. This expresses itself chiefly in the hymns to Varuna, the sky-god; they declare that his friendship is worth more than all else, and they realize that sin separates men from him. 'Restore to us', says one hymn, 'our former friendship,' and others ask his forgiveness for cheating at dice, and for offences against justice.

Here in the concept of Rita, or Order, is the first germ of Indian philosophy. By keeping its laws the gods obtained immortality. Varuna, its guardian, guides the stars in their courses, 'stretches out the heavens like a tent', and watches over the moral law in the hearts of men. These are very early ideas, for the Iranian cousins of the

Indo-Aryans had the twin concepts of Arta or Asha, Order, and of Ahura Mazda, the Good: and the gods Mitra and Indra are further proofs of the common origin of the two groups, and of their common heritage. Gods like Dyaus Pitar, the sky-father, remain to show the kinship of Vedic India also with Homeric Greece, which worshipped Zeus Pater and had a civilization and a language closely akin. Their views of the life of the departed are also similar:

Go thou whither thy fathers have gone. Go thou and meet King Yama and King Varuna, who are pleased with our offerings. Leave sin behind, enter thy home, that happy heaven where our forefathers are. Go thou to King Yama, and reap the fruits of thy virtuous desire. . . . O ye shades, go hence and leave this place; for the fathers have prepared a place for the dead, and Yama makes it beautiful with day, with sparkling waters and light.

Depart, O Death . . . harm not  
Our children, nor the heroic dead.

Here there is no mention of hell or its tortures. Yama is a Lord of Heaven, not of Hell, and fear of hell has not yet driven men to human-sacrifice. The Atharva-Veda (a compilation from the Rig) forbids this practice, making Varuna, like Yahweh, appear in person to release the victim; but a very early sculpture shows us Indra on his giant elephant, and before him three human figures suspended to a tree—sacrifices perhaps to induce the god to send rain in time of drought: for the thunder-clouds are 'the elephants of Indra' and thunder is their trumpeting. The fear of hell and death gradually laid its cold hand on the Aryan heart—a contamination perhaps from native cults. Speculative thought also marks this period of transition, and though some resist it and poke fun at priests drunk with soma and croaking antiphonally like frogs, yet gradually the mind of the priest dominates this early society as it pushes west and south, and early colour-prejudice is rationalized into a divinely appointed social order. A growing other-worldliness, the belief in

Karma and Samsara—rebirth according to action—and the rigid law of caste all seem marks of Brahmin influence, growing potent as the Aryans settled down in their Holy Land, Brahmarshidesa. This is the upper part of the country between Jumna and Ganges: to it belong the priestly Brahmanas, as the hymns of the Rig-Veda belong to the north-west—Brahmavarta, the Holy Land.

Was it climate or the influence of the aborigines which cast over the Aryan mind this spell of contemplation upon the problems of life, and this fear of death-and-birth, and bound them hand and foot with a network of social tabus and practices from which they have not yet escaped? Probably it was the coincidence of such circumstances with the coming of certain great thinkers. Faced with the race-problem, with a growing division of function, with the obvious inequalities of human lot, they devised the ingenious theory of Karma-Samsara, which if it is unprovable is also irrefutable. We can see it in the making in the great mystic treatises, the early Upanishads, which belong to this region and to this era, the ninth, eighth, and seventh centuries B.C.

As the Greeks sought a sovereign power greater than the gods, so we see Vedic India seeking the One behind the Many. 'Him, the One Real, sages call by many names' says a hymn of the first cycle, and by the end of the Vedic Age the notes of speculation and of agnosticism are clearly sounded in the Creation Hymn of the tenth cycle: 'Who knoweth? Who can tell the Maker?'

The hymns of the Rig-Veda show a marked progress from the naïve nature-cults of the earlier to the more wistful speculation of the later age. And the tenth cycle is a bridge between the Vedic and the Brahmanic period. With it, the Aryans are becoming Indians—obsessed with the problems of whence, whither, and why, and of salvation from birth and death. Their great Seers are seeking Reality, and the Upanishads—the source of all later systems—are in the making.

## II

In contrast to the naïve naturalism of the Rig-Veda and the religiosity of the Brahmanas these 'mystic teachings' are full of grand intuitions of the One Reality; and they teach definitely and clearly that so long as man fails to realize it he is doomed to birth and death. It is to escape the round of rebirth that all subsequent religious systems in India and their philosophical teachings exist.

From the latest of the Vedic thinkers asking 'Who is the One whom men call by different names?' to the first of the Upanishadic mystics, seeing the One Reality, is a great step: and certain early seekers leave the crowded haunts of men, and as Vanaprasthas, Forest-Dwellers, court this Great Reality. This renunciation is the origin of Sannyasa, and the Sannyasi—ascetic—is one of India's most characteristic figures. The masses we may picture still worshipping their nature-gods, still offering sacrifice, still looking back to the Holy Land of the north-west; but aboriginal cults and the fear of hell have entered their souls and given intensity to their worship. The beliefs of a matriarchal people worshipping dark earth-goddesses have fused with those of the patriarchal Aryans to make Indian religion. The Aryans have become Indians—'Hindus'.

A great poet of this age has embodied in a mystery-play the story of a boy who goes to the realm of King Death and wrests from him the secret of Amritam, Immortality, which is final escape from Samsara, transmigration. In the Katha Upanishad the sage Vajasravasa of the Gautama clan becomes a sannyasi, and at the boy's own request 'gives to Yama' his son Nachiketas: 'Father, to whom wilt thou give me?' thrice the boy asked, and at last the father spoke: 'To Death I give thee.' The boy replies,

Full many go this road, and hide their face . . .  
 What, pray, will Yama do with me to-day?  
 Like corn is mortal man: he springeth up,  
 And, dying, cometh again like corn to birth.

Here perhaps we have some early fertility ritual expressed,

as among so many early peoples, in the sowing of the ear of corn, a symbol of immortality.

The boy, interpreting his father literally, goes down into the realm of death; and Yama, returning after three days' absence, allows him in recompense for such neglect of the laws of hospitality to choose three boons. He asks first that his father's indifference to him be overcome, and, when this is granted, goes on in these striking words:

There is a heavenly realm where fear comes not.  
Thou art not there, nor is there fear of ill;  
Death and decay come not; hunger and thirst  
Are left behind. So mortal men come there  
Where sorrow is not, tasting heavenly joy.  
Tell me, O Death—for thou alone canst tell—  
That Higher Sacrifice by which men win  
To Immortality. Pray tell it me!  
For I have faith. This is my second choice.

Death replies that an altar of a thousand bricks is to be made, and reveals the plan on which it is to be built. He promises that this sacrifice shall be known by the boy's name, and that the performer shall pass beyond birth-and-death to heavenly joy.

The boy's third boon is that Death shall reveal to him the nature of the departed soul: 'Some say the dead exist and some say no.' Death seeks to buy him off by offering him children, cattle, horses, elephants, gold, and a fine palace in which to live as long as he will, and grants him a vision of fair maidens and musicians, imploring him to ask no more about the life to come, of which 'the gods themselves are oft in doubt'. But the boy, shaking himself free from the snare, replies:

These things are transient, and undo  
The glory of man's powers. Fleeting indeed  
Is human life; keep for thyself thy gifts,  
Thy dances and thy songs. Never with things of sense  
Is man content. Shall we take joy in gold  
When we have seen thee? Can we be said  
To live when thou dost reign?

The rest of this remarkable mystery is the revelation to the ardent soul that there is but one Supreme Being, Brahman, indestructible Reality; that it and the soul are one; and that immortality consists in realizing this unity. Here we have passed beyond the unreflective nature-worship of the early immigrants to that central thought which becomes the light of all their seeing. And Yama uses words destined to become classical in India's later and greater mystery-play, the Bhagavad-gita: 'It dies not when the body dies. . . . There is no slayer and no slain.'

We are to think of the Aryans, then, as settling in the 'Field of Kurukshetra' where the scenes of the Gita are set, and of which the Great Epic says, 'They who dwell in this field dwell in Heaven.' The Brahmins are coming into power, and begin to lay down the law of Karma, which plays a vital part in later Indian thought. 'As a man acts, so he becomes,' they teach; and as this theory is linked up with the doctrine of transmigration, the natural order of society which divides it into the religious leader, the warrior, the cultivator, and the servant, hardens into the caste-system. Varna, colour, becomes jati, birth: a man is born into the class he deserves. Before the Rig-Veda closes we find the statement, used to-day at every Vaishnavite altar, that Brahma the creator made the Brahmins from his head, the Warriors or Kshatriyas from his chest and arms, the Vaisyas or cultivators from his loins, and the Sudras or servants from his feet. The white-skinned invaders are in fact beginning to rationalize their social order. They consign the dark-skinned peoples to the lowest of the four castes, just as later they will keep out of the caste-system altogether certain groups whose occupations and origins seem to them unclean. And they justify their colour-bar by accusing the Dasyus of filthy practices and phallic worships, and commenting on their snub noses and dark skins.

Now, too, we find the beginning of the teaching that Trishna, thirst or desire, is *the* enemy, and that it is this which 'brings death, again and again'. Death in fact is

becoming an obsession, and the living alone can help the dead, by caring for them with food and ritual. From such early germs has developed the doctrine of Samsara, or transmigration. The Aryan has begun to be obsessed with the longing for salvation from it. The soul 'which goes as a caterpillar from leaf to leaf', which 'puts on as a garment a new body', can escape by the conquest of Desire and of Egoism—realizing that it is itself the One Reality—Atman, Breath or Spirit. Ignorance is with Desire and Egoism the root of all evil: mystic insight is the way of escape.

To this period of transition belongs the great figure of Yajñavalkya, a pioneer in bridging the gulf between the later Vedic and the earlier Upanishadic ages, in leading India from naïve to ordered reflection, and in preparing the way for her greatest son. He is the first personality in Indian history, dim yet gigantic. A friend of the boy Nachiketas and of his father, we see this great thinker at the court of King Janaka, in North India. He has been called the father of Hindu philosophy, and is among the greatest of her rishis or seers.

With a company of wandering scholars he is met by the King, who gives him a hundred cows for his pre-eminence in discussion. It is characteristic of this stage of development that the King, a Kshatriya, is found instructing as well as rewarding Brahmins. At another time we find Yajñavalkya at the King's court on the occasion of a great horse-sacrifice. This, known as the Asvamedha, was the most elaborate and important of later Indian sacrifices.<sup>1</sup> It was the special privilege of kings, and had a political as well as a religious significance. In early spring, a week before the full moon, the priests assembled. On the sixth day a horse, chosen as the best in the country, was purified, and the gods were invoked with music and singing to protect it. It was then let loose to wander at will, accompanied only by a body-guard. Wherever it wandered was proclaimed a royal domain. Meanwhile the festival went

<sup>1</sup> Later editors of the Upanishads have added this part of the story.



on; and after a year the horse was brought back, and sacrificed with other victims to the accompaniment of elaborate chants and rituals.

It was to some such sacrifice that King Janaka invited all the learned men of his country. Desiring to find out which of them was the wisest, he offered as a prize one thousand cows, with coins of gold tied to their horns. Yajñavalkya, we read, bade his followers drive away this great herd, claiming victory without trial. But the others insisted upon the test, and eight, a woman among them, entered the lists against him. One of his most distinguished competitors was the father of Nachiketas. Their discussions centred about Brahman or Ultimate Reality. 'He', says Yajñavalkya, 'is the unseen seer, the unheard hearer, the unthought thinker . . . he is thine inner self, immortal.' To his woman-competitor, Gargi, he describes Brahman as Reality, Consciousness, and Joy (Sat, Chit, Ananda), and silencing all in turn, establishes himself as the greatest teacher of the age.

The King, moved by his insight, offers him the kingdom. But a Brahmin leaves to Kshatriyas the work of ruling and Yajñavalkya reveals the secret of Karma: Each is what he deserves to be: the doer of good becomes good: the doer of evil becomes evil. When men are freed from Trishna they become immortal. This teaching too the Gita develops. It is India's greatest contribution to ethics: 'Do thine own caste-duty: in doing that of another is great peril.'

The secret of the influence of this great man lay, like that of the Buddha after him, not only in the clarity of his teaching but also in the fact that he embodied the reality of his teachings, living on the high plane of mystic realization, though he showed some arrogance and greed in claiming his reward!

Here then is a stage in which India has advanced to a high spiritual and intellectual level, where men and women meet freely and discuss ultimate truth. Now has begun her age-long quest for salvation. It is summed up

in the beautiful prayer, perhaps the most perfect of all mystical utterances:

From the unreal lead me to the Real;  
 From darkness lead me to Light  
 From death to Immortality.

Lead me, in a word, from delusion to enlightenment. Now, too, India makes articulate the division of the life of man into the asrams, or stages of discipline. He is first a boy in the house of his father, and of his religious teacher, learning to study the Scriptures and to fit himself for the duties of life. He is next a householder, doing the duties of citizenship and of religion, such as alms-giving, meditation, and worship, until he sees his children's children. He is then free to wander away, and become a vanaprastha, or forest-dweller; and later ages added a fourth stage, that of the monk with no ties to bind him to earth.<sup>1</sup>

The speculations or 'guesses at the truth' of these solitary thinkers are collected in rather haphazard fashion in the Upanishads. Like the Rig-Veda they contain much that is childish, side by side with so much that is profound that all Indian systems are based on them, and that Deussen could say, 'To every Brahmin to-day the Upanishads are what the New Testament is to the Christian,' and that Schopenhauer could call them his own 'solace in life and death'.

Our illustrative readings will perhaps suffice to indicate both aspects of these early works of Indian genius in which ritual, legend, cosmogony, and other speculations are presented side by side with sublime intuitive utterances, and impossible etymologies annoy the critical reader just as he has been rapt into the presence of the Unseen. But India maintains that criticism and worship go haltingly together, and is not troubled by bad etymology or uncritical judgements. What has the One to do with trifles of scholarship?

Impersonal in the earlier Upanishads, the Unseen be-

<sup>1</sup> For the guru's precepts to his chela see Illustrative Readings II(e).

comes a personal Lord in the later ones, such as the Svetasvatara and the Bhagavadgitopanishad, which hymn Siva and Vishnu, incarnate for men and their salvation. For all alike there is the sublime faith that Ultimate Reality is spirit, and that man is saved by realizing his oneness with it. *Tat tvam asi*, 'Thou art it'; this is the personal realization of the great truth, 'Atman alone is the whole world.' But if this Reality is ineffable, 'that from which words turn back', it is also usually moral, 'that from which evil turns back'. 'As water clings not to the lotus-leaf so evil clings not to him who knows this.'

The Indians have arrived then by about the eighth century at a Platonic concept of an Unseen more real than the seen, which can be realized by the man of pure life and devout meditation. Like Heracleitus they believe that all is transient; like Plato, that One abides. But this reality is not yet for the masses, who continue to worship the old gods and to be more concerned with a good rebirth than with Nirvana, or escape.

That the Upanishadic ideal was too abstract seems clear, and the later Upanishads were dedicated to personal gods like Vishnu, a sun-god, and his incarnation Krishna. The Unseen Reality is here revealed in the form of a personal saviour.

Another great but dim figure emerges from the age of the early Upanishads: this is Kapila, founder of the dualistic Sankhya. If the mysticism of these early utterances can be monistically interpreted it can also be made the basis for atheism. Kapila, taking his stand upon the same ground as Yajñavalkya, began a century before the Buddha to teach an atheistic doctrine. There are, he said, two eternal Realities, Prakriti, nature, and Purusha, spirits, which enter into union, until spirit triumphs and asserts its freedom from matter. Once the mirror frees itself from the objective world it ceases to reflect objects, and is saved from entanglement with them: once the dancer frees himself from his partner he is no longer deluded by the lure of sense.

If later Hinduism returns to the mystic monism of the Upanishads it also makes much of this view of salvation; and the Buddha, who must next engage our attention, was probably aware of both schools of thought.

By the sixth century before Christ, then, India has philosophies and theories enough. What masses and leaders alike need is a saviour to show men Reality. That such an embodiment in a human life was needed is clear from the success of the heretical movements which we know as Buddhism and Jainism. These were reforms within Brahminism which gathered momentum and developed into new religious sects, and in studying them we shall see that the power of the Brahmins was now to be challenged, that the sacrifice of animals had become abhorrent to the awakened conscience, and that a developing ethical ideal began to reform the older religion, till powerful social customs such as those of caste were attacked in the interests of humanity. It is a movement as heretical and as ethical as that of Hebrew prophecy; but it has no such flaming sense of the wrath and love of God. The new teachers are seers—like the old: not prophets who have 'heard the whisper of God'.

They agree with the Rishis in finding egoism the root of evil, and in offering escape from samsara; but they re-define the goal in more clearly ethical terms, and they offer to the lay-people a more ringing challenge, especially emphasizing Ahimsa, innocence of life, harmlessness. The founders were laymen who challenged the priests, and their appeal to the second and third castes is an important element in their success. Before we study these movements, therefore, we must consider the life of the lay-people as contrasted with that of priests and monks, and keep in mind the great difference between the masses and their spiritual lords.

### III

We have very full evidence for the secular civilization of these times in the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, the

two great epics of India, edited at a later date, but embodying many of the traits of this early society. These great poems have long been for the masses a treasure-house of song and story, of moral ideals and of religious instruction.

Recited by some bard to a fireside audience, or carved on the walls of temples, they are a veritable bible for the masses; and through them, as through strolling singer and actor, the wisdom of the ages has filtered down among the people, and Indian civilization has been safeguarded, but also crystallized. Illiterate yet not uncultured, the women of India have been moulded for nearly three thousand years by the example of the loyal wife Sita; and her soldiers, hardly more literate, have been inspired by the exploits of Rama and his companions; while in Krishna, the ever-youthful shepherd, they have found the perfect lover, human and divine. In these their ancient sun-god Vishnu is incarnate, and the qualities of Indra the warrior find ever new expression.

The Epics have been so edited and re-edited that it is probable that they contain elements some six centuries later than the early Upanishads. Fortunately we have also the early Buddhist writings as a check, and we may say that the salient feature of this age is a growing resentment of the Kings and Warriors, Kshatriyas, against the claim of the Brahmins that they are themselves gods, and have power over nature itself. Many of the Upanishadic seers were non-Brahmins, and were already challenging these claims. Both Kings and Brahmins are revered. The King is both commander-in-chief and supreme ruler in civil affairs, consulting his counsellors when it suits him. The kingdoms of Kasi and Videha are ruled by men whom we meet in the Upanishads, and gradually there emerge not only the revolt of these laymen against the priests, but also their wars against one another. If the Epics can be read as in any sense history, the great struggle of Kauravas and Pandavas went on for centuries, and by the beginning of the Buddhist era the field of civil war had moved east—

the rising power of Magadha challenging the great kingdom of Kosala, to which the Buddha's own clan was feudatory. These Kings and those of Videha and Avanti rule a civilized people with great capitals and market-towns. They are entitled to one-sixth of the produce of the country, and are expected in return to dispense an even-handed justice. If the King fails he may be deposed: 'a bad ruler is like a leaky boat'. Kingship was either elective or hereditary, according to local custom, and rajas were of many kinds. Some, like the Buddha's father, were petty chieftains, others kings of great and powerful realms. Kosala, for instance, stretched from the eastern foot-hills of the Himalayas to the Ganges at Benares, and its claim to a wider empire, challenged by Magadha and the Licchavis, is the outstanding political event of this era.

The chiefs meet in a hall for public business, and the villagers have local assemblies. These are the forerunners of panchayats, councils of five, which for two thousand years or more have made each village a little republic, caring for the affairs of temple and well, of common lands and boundaries, and settling local disputes with a rough and ready justice. For bigger questions there are judges, magistrates, and other officers.

The Magadhan capital of Rajgir or 'The King's House' was first a hill-fortress, whose cyclopean walls attest a very early date, and it was moved in the time of the Buddha to the foot of the hills. The fortifications of both cities, four and a half miles in circumference in one case, three in the other, show how far the Indians have advanced from their early mud forts. Their construction is, however, not more elaborate than that of the Indus Valley cities nearly two thousand years earlier. India is soon to enter upon an era of great architectural and artistic achievement, but for domestic purposes wood and brick still suffice; and nothing has yet been unearthed to tell us in detail of the style and nature of palace or house or temple. We read in early Buddhist works of seven-story buildings, and Indus

Valley remains suggest that these were Ziggurats, as was argued long ago by Rhys Davids. Hot-air baths are also mentioned in Buddhist works; and again the Indus Valley remains tell us of a very highly developed bathing and drainage system, long before the Buddhist age.

The discovery of these towns means the re-thinking of much that has been accepted by scholars. Hitherto we have conceived of the art of writing as brought back at a later date by Indian scholars from Mesopotamia. But if the Aryans passing through the Punjab met the earlier colonists, they would learn this art and many another from them; and there is no reason to reject the idea that this early civilization lived on in parts of India after it had been destroyed elsewhere. It seems to be part of a widespread chalcolithic culture which extended from the Adriatic to Japan, but gathered chiefly in the great river valleys; and India passed through the same phases of culture as her neighbours. Apart from their seals, not yet deciphered, we can trace the use of writing among the Indians back to the seventh century B.C. and we have coins of about the same time: but these may both be links in a much longer chain. We can watch the growth of the art of incising birch-bark and of blacking-in the characters; Buddhist monks, who still use this method, seem to have invented it.

The coming of Gotama Buddha is an epoch of the greatest importance to India and to the rest of Asia, and he should be studied as the climax of one era and the beginning of another. With him India emerges into history, and becomes the teacher of the Asiatic nations. But creative as was the Buddha he could not but build upon the foundations of the Rishis, and there are Vedic as well as Upanishadic elements in his system, which was at once a Way of Mystic Realization for the specialist and a Way to Heaven for the masses. In blending those Ways or Paths he achieved a new and far-reaching synthesis.

## THE ARYANS BECOME INDIANS

## THE SPIRIT OF ANCIENT INDIA

## I. PASSAGES FROM THE VEDIC HYMNS

*(a) An Early Hymn to Indra*

(Soma is offered and Indra is asked to destroy the enemy).

For thee O mighty here is strong drink  
And potent unto victory, as thou  
Victorious Indra, hero, conqueror,  
Urgest to victory the chariots of men.  
Burn thou the lawless Dasyu as a flame,  
Who stolest from the sun his chariot wheel  
To quell the demon of destroying drought.  
Mighty is thy rapture, thy might sublime,  
O slayer of foes, giver of bliss, winner of steeds,  
O joy of ancient singers; as drink to thirsty men  
Send food to us who sing thy praises now,  
And lead us to water and safe bivouacs. (i. 175.)

*(b) To Agni—God of Fire*

Put on thy robes, O Lord of prospering power,  
Thyself worthy of offerings, offer our gifts.  
Stand as our priest, our chosen, ever young,  
Through whom the father intercedeth for the son,  
Friend for his chosen friend, and here  
Upon the sacred grass may gods as men  
Gather—the victors, Varuna and Aryaman  
And Mitra—all we offer gifts through thee.  
Rejoice thou Herald-God in rite and hymn.  
May we be dear to thee, beloved priest,  
Lord of our hearths for whom we kindle fires. (i. 26.)

*(c) To Varuna*

The tribes of men are wise by His great might  
Who stayed asunder wide heaven and earth:  
Who moved the high and mighty sky, and the ancient stars and  
spread out the earth:  
With my own heart I commune 'How shall Varuna and I be at  
one?  
What gift will He accept unangered?



When may I confidently await His gracious favour?  
 Seeking to know my sin, I question the sages, O Varuna,  
 And all make answer 'Varuna verily is wroth'.  
 What, O Varuna, is my great sin, that Thou slayest him thy friend  
 and psalmist?  
 Tell me, O Lord of Might who may not be deceived, and straight-  
 way will I put away my sin and give Thee homage.  
 Loose us from our fathers' sins and from our own.  
 Loose us, O King, as the thief looses cattle from the halter.  
 Not our will, but weakness of the flesh and thoughtlessness made us  
 stray, O Varuna: wine, dice or anger seduced us!  
 The old are at hand to tempt our youth: slumber leadeth us to evil.  
 I thy servant would serve Thee, bounteous Lord:  
 Sinless would I serve Thee and propitiate Thy wrath.  
 Thou, gracious one, givest wisdom to the simple:  
 Thou, wise one, leadest the wise to riches.  
 O Lord Varuna, may my meed of praise come nigh Thee, and creep  
 within Thy heart.  
 So may we prosper in work and rest.  
 Preserve and bless us evermore, ye gods.

Rig-Veda, vii. 86.

Here ancient India trembles on the brink of an ethical monotheism, yet in her love of Varuna does not forget the other gods. All her prayers to Varuna contain a cry for forgiveness. He is the embodiment of Law, physical and moral. But she never shook off unworthier concepts of God, and in the following passage we seem to be contemplating one of the great and tragic turning-points of her religious history.

I, Agni graceless one, desert the Gracious:  
 I leave the Father, for my choice is Indra.

Rig-Veda, x. 124.

(d) *A Late Vedic Hymn*

The One Above the Gods

(c. 900 B.C.)

Non-being then existed not nor being:  
 There was no air, nor sky that is beyond it.  
 What was concealed? Wherein? In whose protection?  
 And was there deep unfathomable water?

## THE ARYANS BECOME INDIANS

Death then existed not nor life immortal;  
Of neither night nor day was any token.  
By its inherent force the One breathed windless:  
No other thing than that beyond existed.

Darkness there was at first, by darkness hidden;  
Without distinctive marks, this all was water.  
That which, becoming, by the void was covered,  
That One by force of heat came into being.

Desire entered the One in the beginning:  
It was the earliest seed, of thought the product.  
The sages searching in their hearts with wisdom,  
Found out the bond of being in non-being.

Their ray extended light across the darkness:  
But was the One above or was it under?  
Creative force was there, and fertile power:  
Below was energy, above was impulse.

Who knows for certain? Who shall here declare it?  
Whence was it born, and whence came this creation?  
Then who can know from whence it has arisen?

None knoweth whence creation has arisen;  
And whether he has or has not produced it;  
He who surveys it in the highest heaven,  
He only knows, or haply he may know not.

Rig-Veda, x. 129.

Translated in the original metre by  
A. A. Macdonell.<sup>1</sup>

This great hymn is the climax of speculative thought in the Rig-Veda. It belongs to the Tenth Mandala, the latest collection, and is a link with the monism of the Upanishads. The singers of these hymns give pre-eminence first to one and then to another of the Gods, and at last turn to seek an Absolute or Ultimate Reality above and behind them and all phenomena.

## II. PASSAGES FROM EARLY UPANISHADS

(c. 800 B.C.)

(a) *Chandogya Upanishad* (iii. 19)

In the beginning this world was non-existent: (*Asad*) It began to be. It became an egg. It lay idle for a year, and then split open.

<sup>1</sup> *Hymns of the Rig-Veda*, Oxford University Press.

Of the two parts of the shell one was silver, one gold. The silver shell is Earth; the gold is Sky. The outer membrane is Mountain; the inner cloud is Mist. What were vessels are rivers. What was fluid is Ocean.

(b) *Yajñavalkya instructs Gargi*

Brihad-aranyaka (iii. 8, 9)

Verily at the command of that Unchanging One, Sun and Moon stand apart. At His Command Earth and Sky are separate. At the command of that Unchanging One, moments and hours, days and nights, seasons and years are separate. At His Command some rivers flow east from the high mountains, some west. He is the Unseen Seer; the Unheard Hearer; the Unthought Thinker; the Unapprehended Apprehender. Other than Him is naught, seer or hearer or thinker or apprehender. From this Unchanging is space woven as warp on woof.

(c) Ibid. (ii. 4)

As, when a drum is being beaten, one would not be able to grasp the external sounds, but by grasping the drum or the beater of the drum the sound is grasped:

As, when a conch-shell is being blown, one would not be able to grasp external sounds, but by grasping the conch-shell or the blower of the conch-shell the sound is grasped:

As, when a lute is being played, one would not be able to grasp the external sounds, but grasping the lute or the player of the lute the sound is grasped:

So by comprehending Atman or Brahman, everything is comprehended.

(d) *From a late Upanishad, The Svetasvatara*

*'Invisible we view Thee.'*

Beyond the darkness I know Him the great Spirit, shining in the sun: Knowing Him is immortality: that only is the Path by which men escape Death:

Naught is there so high, so intangible, so powerful:

As a tree He standeth in the heavens firmly rooted:

His spirit filleth all the universe.

Without form, sorrowless is the Most High:

Knowing this man escapeth Death; knowing it not he cometh utterly to grief.

Pervading all things He dwelleth within; He the Lord whose

Countenance is in all places, the gracious One whose Presence is everywhere.

Within the heart, as the heart and mind conceive Him, dwelleth He in the inward Soul of all.

To know this is Immortality. . . .

Himself void of sensation, He revealeth Himself in all Senses, Lord of all, of all Ruler and Refuge. . . .

Handless He holdeth, footless He speedeth:

Eyeless seeth He, earless He heareth. Knowing all

Himself unknown: yet known of man as the First, the great Spirit. . . .

Yes I know Him ageless ancient of days,

All-soul pervading all things, birthless, eternal.

(e) *Practical Precepts to a Student*

Having taught the Veda, a teacher further instructs a pupil:

Speak the truth,

Practise Virtue,

Neglect not study:

One should not be negligent of truth;

One should not be negligent of virtue;

One should not be negligent of welfare;

One should not be negligent of prosperity;

One should not be negligent of study and teaching.

One should not be negligent of duties to the gods and to the fathers:

Be one to whom a father is as a god;

Be one to whom a mother is as a god;

Be one to whom a teacher is as a god;

Be one to whom a guest is as a god.

Those acts which are irreproachable, and no others, should be practised.

Those things which among us are good deeds should be revered by you, and no others.

One should give with faith;

One should not give meagrely;

One should not give without modesty;

One should not give without respect;

One should not give without sympathy.

Taittiriya Upanishad.

## III. FROM THE ATHARVA-VEDA

*A Charm for Luck*

Oh dice, give play that profit brings,  
Like cows that yield abundant milk:  
Attach me to a streak of gain,  
As with a string the bow is bound.

Translated by Arthur A. Macdonell.

IV. FROM THE AITAREYA BRAHMANA  
about 600 B.C.*On the Importance of having a Son*

In him a father pays a debt  
And reaches immortality,  
When he beholds the countenance  
Of a son born to him alive.

Than all the joy which living things  
In waters feel, in earth and fire,  
The happiness that in his son  
A father feels is greater far.

At all times fathers by a son  
Much darkness, too, have passed beyond:  
In him the father's self is born,  
He wafts him to the other shore.

Food is man's life and clothes afford protection,  
Gold gives him beauty, marriages bring cattle;  
His wife's a friend, his daughter gets him pity:  
A son is like a light in highest heaven.

Translated by Arthur A. Macdonell.

## TENTATIVE CHRONOLOGY OF EARLY INDIAN HISTORY

About 1500-600 B.C.

<i>External Events</i>	<i>Indian History</i>	<i>Religion</i>	<i>Literature</i>
Akhnaton's Reforms. Israel in Egypt. Exodus, c. 1300.	Aryans immigrate:  into Punjab.	Gradual formation of Triple Priesthood.	Gradual forma- tion of the Ritual Hymns: Com- pilation of Rig- Veda.
Moses and the Judges.		Rise of priestly education.	Compilation of Sama-Veda (Chants).
The Trojan War.			Compilation of Yajur-Veda (Chants).
Hebrew Poetry and Prophecy begin.		Theory of Four Castes.	Compilation of Atharva-Veda (Incantations).
David in Israel, c. 1000.	into Kurukshetra.	Priestly supremacy.	The Brahmanas. (Ceremonial Treatises).
The <i>Iliad</i> composed.			
Elijah the Prophet, 9th century.	into the Mid-Land.		Aranyakas and Upanishads (Works of my- sticism and speculation).
Roman Beginnings. The Avesta.		Laymen emerge as speculative thinkers.	The earliest of these are pre- Buddhist.
Isaiah, 700.			
Zarathustra in Iran.	Rise of Hermits and Friars.		

## II

### SAKYAMUNI THE BUDDHA, INDIA'S GREATEST SON

(563-483 B.C.)

One thing only do I teach, O Monks: Sorrow and its extinction. . . .

SAKYAMUNI.

I lay no wood, Brahmin, for altar-fires: within the self burn the fires I kindle.

Ibid.

## I

THE first clear-cut figure in Indian history is also the greatest. The foot-hills of the Himalayas, where he was born, are thickly clothed with jungle. Gradually as the paths wind upward the tropical growth gives place to mighty cedars and deodars, and beyond these tower, range upon range, the snowy peaks of Himalaya. Often hidden in clouds, they are on a clear day a stupendous spectacle, and above them all soar Everest and Kanchinjunga.

Such is the grand figure of Sakyamuni. Suddenly out of the jungle and the mists of early Indian history, and towering above the great rishis, or seers, of her first religious visions, this stupendous figure soars serene, clear-cut, and majestic.

This is a simile for him which his followers love to use:

As men gaze at its towering peaks and judge Himalaya,  
So when they see the Buddha, Peak of Righteousness,  
Serene, unmoved by passion's stormy blast  
Tower aloft in wondrous calm and peace,  
Where evil dies, and lust can breathe no more,  
'High as Himalaya the Hero and his Word'  
They cry: 'How great his power to redeem from ill.'<sup>1</sup>

Or they liken him to some lordly elephant, the type of solitude and of chastity; or to the Indian lotus, unsoiled by the mud, unwetted by the water in which it grows:

Lo! As some mighty elephant superb  
Amidst Himalayan forest-trees, he goes;

<sup>1</sup> Milinda Pañha, 346: a work of about A.D. 100.

## SAKYAMUNI THE BUDDHA,

So rapt in contemplation, breathing deep,  
 And calm in body as in mind serene.  
 As some pure lotus bloometh undefiled,  
 So liveth he, the Uncontaminate.<sup>1</sup>

These are fit symbols. The Himalayas, the elephant, and the lotus are the constant inspiration of Indian literature and art. The Himalayas are the abode of the High Gods, the sources of India's mighty rivers, themselves deified, the great natural barrier against her foes, the symbol of the high and holy. The lotus is a common Indian symbol alike for the awakened mind and the pure life.

From earliest times, too, her people have understood the capture and the mastery of elephants; their martial strength as well as the labour of their foresters and builders and the pageantry and sport of their kings depended upon this art.

To Sakyamuni these figures were early applied, and it is evident that they were not enough: very early sects call him Elder Brother, Good Physician, and Conqueror, and soon the claim was made that he had ousted even the great Brahma from his throne, and was 'God over the gods'.

The secret of this growing adoration is to be found in his insight, sincerity, and kindliness. To all alike he had a message of strenuous endeavour and a gospel of salvation. Buddhism was from the first both ethic and religion, for the Founder, having had a great mystical experience, believed that by way of moral living man can arrive at transcendental rapture. Men are of various temperaments and abilities; to each he adapted his teaching and that of his predecessors. To those ready for the heights of mysticism he offered The Eightfold Path—which begins in right ideas, and goes on to ecstatic and rapt contemplation. Brahmins and other religious leaders began to join his yellow-robed company, which has become widespread and influential. To others he offered a way of part-time devotion: to morality of a simple kind he calls the laity:

<sup>1</sup> Theragatha, ccxlvii.



the occasional keeping of holy days and occasional mild asceticism.

What the new teacher had to say was already in germ in the Upanishads. With them he insists that the man of pure life is on the road to salvation from rebirth. With them he holds out the promise of rebirth in a heavenly world to the good householder who cannot detach himself from the duties of his station. With them he offers to all moral ideals suited to their attainments and position. He, too, sees Trishna—Desire—as the great enemy, and detachment as the spirit in which it may be overcome. But he makes more of Ahimsa and allows no animal sacrifices, and he lays great emphasis on Compassion, Karuna, and on Love, Metta. 'All other ways are not worth a fraction of the way of Love', says one early anthology, the Itivuttaka—an analogue of the Sermon on the Mount or of the Analects of Confucius—sayings of the Master collected by disciples. These all made much of Love. And if there are warnings against affection—Pema, in such Buddhist texts as the Dhammapada (an analogue of *The Imitation of Christ*) these may well be monastic notes of the more stoical monks of a later day. Certainly Sakyamuni fulfilled his own ideal of 'Benevolence to all, attachment to none'. What higher ideal is there for a schoolmaster? And from these anthologies we can at least gather the impression of his spirit and the general purport of his teachings. If we cannot reconstruct the Sakyamuni of the sixth century B.C. we can gain a consistent idea of his message. For each caste as for each individual he has wise and revolutionary words.

To his own Kshatriyas he says, 'Be kind: oppress none. All love their lives.'

To priests he says, 'Better is the life of morality than many sacrifices. He is the true Brahmin who leads a pure life.'

To the ascetic he says, 'Better than matted hair and ashes are truth and discipline.'

He condemns austerity, but approves askesis: the body and the spirit alike must be as a well-strung bow or a well-

tuned lyre. And to all alike he offers a sane Middle Path, and preaches it in the vernacular and in homely parables.

To us nurtured in a more compassionate tradition there is at first acquaintance something ruthless about the realism of Sakyamuni as he applies the water of common sense to the fire of emotion. A young mother weeping for her child is bade 'Go gather mustard seed—but gather it at a house which death has not visited': and in the discovery that sorrow is universal she finds comfort. There is something starkly humanist, too, in Sakyamuni's impatience with religious observances. When he sees a young layman over-scrupulous in genuflexions to the four quarters, he adapts the Upanishadic text which says that parents, teachers, wife, and child are to be the objects of devotion.<sup>1</sup> In such insistence on the human values Sakyamuni reminds us of Jesus, and in a certain homely humour and irony, of Socrates. All are practical physicians of the soul—laymen daring to do the work of professionals, heretics who are to be the corner-stones of new temples of humanity. To one persistent and too-speculative inquirer as to origins the Indian teacher says that in a sick world men must not question the doctor. If the patient insists on asking too many questions, 'he will die before the doctor can do his work'. As by Jesus and Socrates such rebukes were given with a smile; and for fifty years this kindly ministry went on—as he passed from jungle to village and from village to court, calling men to choose the True Way, and quizzing them with kindly irony.

Sakyamuni is in many things a physician of sick souls, but he is also a surgeon, using the knife when it is needed with precision and firmness. May we not say he is physician but not metaphysician, moral reformer but not moralist? After seeking out the orthodox he found his own Way, and as I have said elsewhere<sup>2</sup> 'it is not difficult to picture the young teacher whose story has been so often

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 26(e).

<sup>2</sup> I have tried to retell it in a biographical sketch *Gotama Buddha*, and this passage is from *Epochs of Buddhist History*, ch. i, Chicago Univ. Press.

told. Lonely at first, subject to periods of depression at the stupidity and inertia of those about him, repelled as he ate the first meal of scraps thrown into his begging-bowl, but gathering courage and inspiration as disciples began to attach themselves to him, and to help him formulate the rules of a new religious democracy. We may think of them in peaceful retreat upon these hills gazing down upon the fertile plains of the Ganges Valley, or gathered about him on the bare Peak of the Vulture that rose clear above the wooded hills, and pouring out in that serene air a paean of thanksgiving and joy in their new-found liberty of mind and peace of soul:

As swans who soar in tracks of sunlit air,  
As sorcerers in realms of space are free;  
So does the sage win through to mastery  
Of Mara, and the transient world's despair.

In order to give them this liberty, however, the new teacher first convinced them of the universality of law. Before they could be free in the universe they must realize that it was lawful to the core. This was a truth already accepted in theory, but men were ignoring it in practice. Amongst the first of his converts were two Brahmins, Moggallana and Sariputta, and from the story of their conversion we gather how large a part the mind played in the new Way, and how central in it was the doctrine of Causality, which has been well called its keynote.<sup>1</sup> These men had been companions and fellow seekers in the religious life. Like their fellow Hindus they were familiar with such teaching: accepting the axioms that life is evil and that Karma brings rebirth, they were seeking Moksha, freedom from the whole process. Meeting a Buddhist monk and struck by his calm and radiant bearing, Sariputta learned the essentials of the truth in these simple words:

Of all things springing from a cause  
The Buddha hath the causes told:  
Of how they all shall cease to be—  
This, too, our Teacher doth unfold.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> M. Anesaki, *Nichiren*, p. 138.

<sup>2</sup> Mahavagga, i. 23, B.T., pp. 87-91.

It is difficult to believe at first sight that these two learned Brahmins were so easily converted, and that this doctrine became to them and to many a real gospel. Even if they had not heard it from their own religious teachers was it a truth so emancipating? The answer seems to be twofold: first, that it is one thing to know a doctrine, another to be gripped by it, and to meet men who are radiant with it; and second, that this is what Sakyamuni achieved. . . .

Let us picture this courageous teacher with his disciples grouped about him on the Vulture Peak, or some similar height. For twenty-five centuries they have sought the mountain tops, and these are still the fastnesses of the Dhamma.<sup>1</sup> Master and disciples sit calmly meditating, and after the Indian manner they wait for him to speak. At last a smile lights up his face, and he points to where a peasant is carrying his burden of faggots down from the hill-side: 'Listen, O monks.' 'Speak, lord.' 'I will teach you the parable of the burden and its bearer, of the taking of it up, and the laying of it down.'<sup>2</sup> He then proceeds to show that the burden is bodily existence, that the bearer is the individual consciousness, that the taking up of the burden is Tanha, that it is the craving to be and to have which brings man to rebirth, and that the laying down of the burden is the putting aside of such craving. And then that they may the better remember it, he sings them a little gatha or hymn:

This body is of Khandhas made,  
'Tis man this burden bears.  
Oh! with what joy aside 'tis laid,  
'Tis taken up with tears.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dhamma is the Pali form of Dharma, Law, or Norm: Tanha is the Pali form of Trishna, Desire or Thirst: Nibbana of Nirvana; Gotama of Gautama.

<sup>2</sup> Mahavagga, i. 21, B.T., p. 351.

<sup>3</sup> Samyutta Nikaya, B.T., pp. 159-60. This little parable was not unnaturally misunderstood in later days, the Sammitiya School interpreting it to mean that man is something more than the Khandhas which make up his 'burden', see Poussin, *E.R.E.*, vol. xi, Sammitiyas—and note his endorsement of this view as 'a good and truly Buddhist one'.

And all the company, having already experienced something of the joy of laying aside this burden,<sup>1</sup> rejoice with the teacher who has shown them the way. So did Pilgrim rejoice when the load fell from his shoulders. And if it be objected 'hat here was a poor materialistic 'gospel', the Buddhist replies: 'It is not materialistic: for of the five Khandhas, four are not material: Vedana, sensation: Sañña, perception: Vinnana, consciousness: and the Sankharas, a complex group including will.

We may imagine another typical scene in the neighbourhood of Benares. The master and a thousand disciples are seated calm and collected on Gaya Head, a hill-side near the spot where he attained enlightenment, when a fire breaks out in the jungle below; they watch it blaze, and then he begins once more to improve the occasion: 'All, O monks, is aflame: eye, ear, nose—all the organs of sense. All nature is aflame. What is the cause of this universal conflagration? It is Tanha.'<sup>2</sup> Hate, lust, infatuation—these are the flames. Then, in order that he may help them in their task of teaching a world to extinguish the blaze that is destroying it he gives them a new and different chant, a dirge that still resounds mournfully in ten thousand monasteries:

Sabba dukkha,  
Sabba anatta,  
Sabba anicca.

Sorrow is everywhere,  
In man is no abiding entity,  
In things no abiding reality.

The conflagration, in a word, is to be extinguished by the waters of Truth. Face life as it is, sorrowful, transient, and you will no longer crave for it. If the doctrine of Causality is the keynote of the Buddhist metaphysic, the doctrine of Anatta is the unique thing in its psychology. And both doctrines are applied with an ethical purpose.

<sup>1</sup> Though still carrying the burden of bodily existence they had got rid of the intolerable obsession of rebirth and of Tanha.

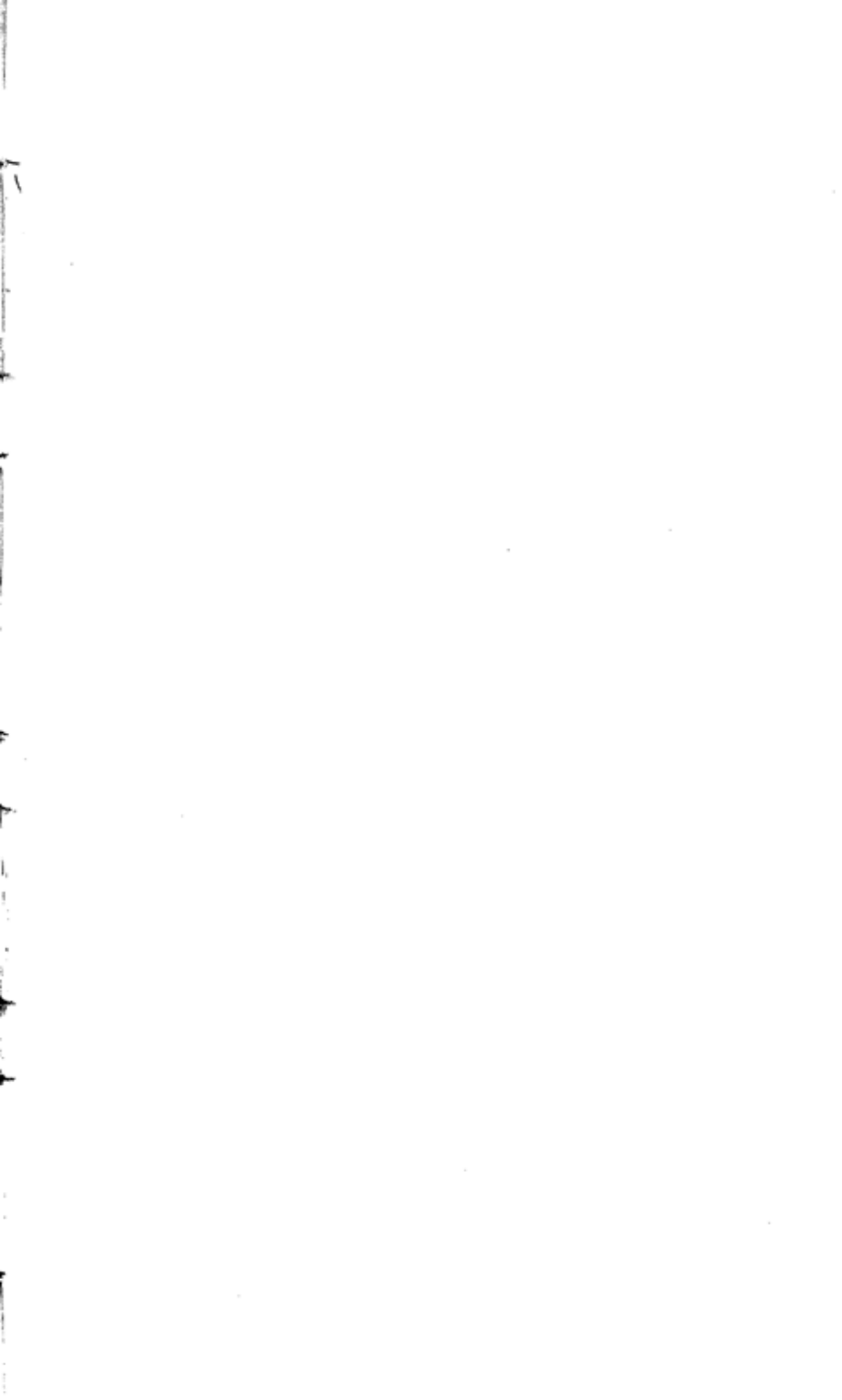
<sup>2</sup> Mahavagga, i. 21, B.T., pp. 351-3.

Like Hume two thousand years later, Gotama, with remorseless logic, analyses the 'self' into its component parts. He seeks to get rid of the 'ego' of animism in order that he may get rid of the 'ego' of egoism. The self is unreal because it is compound. Analyse it, and see that it is a stream of consciousness made up of elements of sensation, of cognition, of volition, and you will realize that there is no 'soul' in the ordinary sense of a separate entity or substance, such as that which only a century ago men of science in the West were trying to weigh and to locate. Nor is there even a 'substratum' in which qualities inhere. Much less is there an Atman such as Hinduism conceived in almost physical terms, a small immutable microcosm identical with the macrocosm or Brahman. To believe that is to sacrifice moral freedom. Yet the self is real enough, because it is a manifestation of Kamma, energy or action, and it is free, in spite of the past, to direct its energies aright in the present.

Out of the seeming pessimism of this philosophy of transiency emerges a sane optimism, as is beginning to be recognized by Western writers. Buddhism insists on Dukkham, sorrow, in order that it may show men the way to Suddham, happiness: 'One thing only do I teach, O monks—sorrow and the uprooting of sorrow.' Over against the world of birth and death, of Samsara, it sets the unchanging calm of Nibbana, beyond joy and sorrow. All religions, as William James has pointed out, are alike in having as their basis (1) an uneasiness, (2) its solution. Gotama has his own solution to offer. He is a physician; if medicine is pessimistic then he is a pessimist . . . Having diagnosed the disease he goes on to prescribe for its cure.

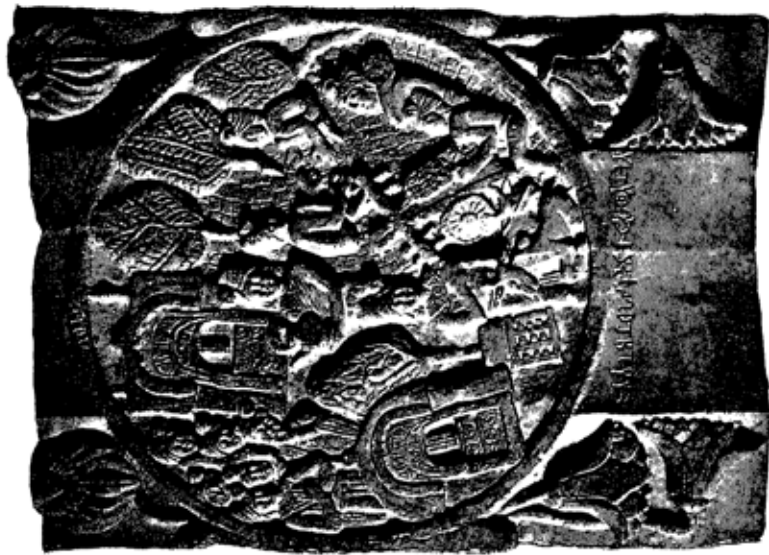
## II

If the Buddha was physician rather than metaphysician he was mystic as well as moral reformer. But as the mystic may rationalize his experience and teach morality, so Sakyamuni has much to say which appeals to reason as





THE MONKEY-KING'S SACRIFICE  
ASOKAN SCULPTURE, BARHUT RAIL



A KING'S OFFERING



well as to faith, and which closely connects ethics and religion.

Freedom—Salvation—is to be found in realization, and the path is by way of morality. Love, sympathy, detachment are cardinal virtues of the Middle Path, and a popular summary is 'to do good, to cease from evil, to cleanse the mind'.

Yet it remains true that it was his grand personality rather than any new teaching that made Buddhism a new movement and sent it on its triumphant mission. It became the vehicle for Indian culture because it was essentially Indian—an epitome of the best things in the older religions; but the impetus came from his contagious example.

It is clear that the people of his day recognized in him the realization of familiar ideals. Like others he emphasizes Karma and Samsara, like others he offers a way of salvation, and inculcates meditation, detachment and gentleness. But in other ways he was the prophet of a new day, and he fitted the claims of religion to the man of action. Like the Gita of a later date he told men to find salvation in their duty—to use their power to help men, and so to find Reality. Their admiration for him, their desire to gain merit, as well as his fame and the sanity of his teachings of the Middle Path attracted rich men and women who became patrons and lay-adherents. In our illustration we see a King who is covering a park with gold pieces to buy it for the Order; and upon it are already two Viharas or monasteries destined to become famous. The great frescoes of Ajanta were the work of painters of a later day working under royal patronage. Some indeed have inscriptions of the donors, as have many of the sculptures of Sanchi, Karli, and Barhut. Some of the great craft-guilds also became donors and patrons. One gateway is the gift of 'The Ivory Workers of Mithila', and we get many a glimpse (in the works of the third and first centuries B.C.) of the organization of these societies, and of the civilization of these early Buddhist ages.

'A great spiritual genius, smiled on by kings and nobles, beloved by the people for his kindliness and sanity, supported by a great experience—the Buddha moves across the stage of Indian history. Sane, realistic, kindly if caustic at times, serene always, he embodies the Indian ideal of the Guru or Teacher, and soon people begin to acclaim him as a Chakkavatti in the realm of Spirit—an emperor with a begging bowl!'<sup>1</sup>

His first sermon, a simple and unimpassioned statement of the Middle Path, is called, 'The Turning of the Wheel'—or 'The Founding of the Empire of the Truth, or Dhamma'—and he is indeed a kingly figure, whose influence was very soon to spread far afield.

By the guidance of providence, as some would say, or by a kind of irony of history, according to others, this great Indian monk, calling men to an other-worldly peace, became the father of great secular civilizations, and of a true internationalism. The meaning of this is surely that the love which he embodied was a wine too strong for the old monastic bottles, and that the contagion of his humanity—so wise, so courteous, so serene, so gracious—has been and is the living core of his religion. His missionaries embodied it, and kings like Asoka showed on an imperial scale its power to mould a nation.

### III

That Buddhism has had a long and complex evolution is true; that at times it has incorporated too easily the crude superstitions and moral practices of the peoples whom it converted is also true. Yet whenever it has been true to itself it has been a mighty power for good; and its message to the Peace Conference at Versailles, calling men to build a new world on the basis of love, is eloquent testimony that the spirit of Sakyamuni is still with us, and still pleads in vain with most of us! The cold calm of Nibbana may not attract us, yet we may all walk along the Buddha's Middle Path of virtue and sanity; above all we shall do well to accept his teaching that all other means

<sup>1</sup> From my *Heritage of Asia*.

are not worth a fraction of the means of loving-kindness and compassion. The secret of his success is, in a word, his love. If he did not know the God of love he at any rate embodied His spirit. And when after a ministry of forty years he died in 483 B.C., he left a group of men and women filled with devotion to his person and faith in his teaching. The inspiring person of the Buddha—this is the original thing in Buddhism. His magnetism was such that men were converted in many cases long before their reasons can have been satisfied, and such was his insight into human hearts that we find him adapting his method with so sure a touch as to win the title 'Physician', and with so much love that even when he used the knife his patients loved him no less devotedly. They found in him one who was intensely interested in them, never impatient, and in whom was no respect of persons. The poor sweeper Sunita, who had seen him moving serene and majestic amongst kings and nobles, adored the courtesy with which he smiled as he greeted him, and to the humblest he gave of his best, sometimes discerning beneath rags and sores a mind ready 'as a clean and spotless robe for the dye', and only waiting for the right word to be numbered among the saints. Men respected the fearless teacher who re-defined so many of their religious and social catchwords, and who set up a new religious democracy in which worth rather than birth was the standard, and in which liberty was sanely tempered and controlled by law.

Here was a new and reasonable way, which had nothing of priestcraft and yet gave access to divine truth, which cut at the roots of religiosity, and yet kept much of the mystery and glamour of religion, which struck a sane balance between austerity and worldliness, between scepticism and credulity, and between self-culture and altruism. Here, above all, was an authentic voice speaking of the things of real experience, however ineffable, and a contagious joy, quiet yet unmistakable, amid the charlatans and sophists of the day, who told men the way to Nirvana, but without conviction or enthusiasm, and who

handed out to starving souls either husks or recipes for making bread. The followers of Sakyamuni might be compared to these in the words used by Tertullian of the early Christian Church: 'Our common people are more virtuous than your philosophers.' They either left all and followed him, accepting his simple challenge, 'Come, Friar,'<sup>1</sup> as a call to lifelong discipline, or if he did not so order it, as laymen served him and his brethren with simple and sincere devotion.

So this master of men lived among them, in the world yet not of it, 'as a fair lotus unsullied by the mud in which it grows'; so he set up a realm of righteousness and love which in his lifetime centred about him, and when he passed away claimed him as its King. The story of its growth is one of the great chapters in human history. Not least of the claims of early Buddhism to originality is its missionary spirit. Contemporary Hindu philosophy seems in comparison an arid intellectualism. The Buddha awoke it to new life; and it is chiefly owing to his personality that Indian culture began its great work of civilizing rude peoples and of imparting to ancient civilizations a new tide of spiritual beauty. Like Francis of Assisi he saw life with new and serene eyes, and Buddhism is to Brahmanism what Franciscanism is to mediæval Christianity—a simplification and a chastening, a deepening and a humanizing. For each embodies in a radiant personality the essence and the true spirit of the old Faith.

#### IV

Buddhism then was from the first not only a Middle Path between extremes: it was also a Two-fold Path. For the monk the Eight-fold Path to Nibbana—escape from Rebirth; for the layman rebirth in a better state through alms and morality. 'The monks are the harvest-field of merit' is an old saw. The laity in supporting them and in following the simple ethic of the Buddha may attain salvation.

<sup>1</sup> Bhikkhu i.e. Mendicant.

The way for the monk and nun is at once more direct and much more difficult—it is a way of mild asceticism, and of difficult practices of mystical or transcendental contemplation.

But as the lay-devotees grew in number and the monks in influence the monastery became a centre of art and learning, and there grew up great abbeys such as that of Ajanta in west India and Anuradhapura in Ceylon, and great university foundations such as Nalanda in east India and Taxila in the north-west. These flourished from about the first century of our era to the seventh, and Buddhism during this time spread its influence to China, Korea, Japan, and the Islands of the Pacific. This is the greatest epoch of Buddhism—a veritable golden age of its secular as well as its religious influence.

The Gupta renaissance in India, no less than that of T'ang in China and the awakening of Japan under Shotoku's regency, is the fruit of the seed sown by Sakya-muni in the sixth century B.C. Its carriers were in all cases monks. Before this great expansion there were two other great eras—that of Asoka (third century B.C.) when Ceylon was civilized by a Buddhist mission and that of Kanishka (first century A.D.) when the barbarians who conquered north-west India became Buddhist, and Buddhism began its long pilgrimage through the hinterland of the Himalayas.

The secular forces which helped it were the gradual unification of India as the kingdom of Magadha advanced to leadership; and a growing interest in the surrounding lands.

Buddhism itself helped both these processes, and became the vehicle for Indian culture to Indonesia, China, Korea, and Japan. In the south—in Ceylon, Burma, and Siam—it became more stoical and less sure of the technique of meditation, yet inspired kings and scholars to great efforts. In the north it became more emotional and gradually more theistic as the founder became a god, the monk a priest, and the memorial mound a temple. This Mahayana or Great Way offers an easy salvation to all—that of

the stoical elders it labels Hinayana or Narrow Way. In the south Nibbana was an ever-receding goal: in the north, Paradise was a present reality. In the south men sought more and more despairingly to imitate the Founder: in the north they rather worshipped him and other Buddhas and Bodhisattvas or heavenly helpers of their aspiration.

## THE SPIRIT OF BUDDHISM

### I. WHAT IS TAUGHT AND WHAT IS WITHHELD

Once the Exalted One was staying at Kosambi, in Simsapa Grove. Then the Exalted One, taking up a handful of simsapa leaves, said to the brethren:

'Now what think ye, brethren? Which are more, these few simsapa leaves that I hold in my hand, or those that are in the simsapa grove above?'

'Few in number, Lord, are those simsapa leaves that are in the hand of the Exalted One: far more in number are those in the simsapa grove above.'

'Just so, brethren, those things that I know by my super-knowledge, but have not revealed, are greater by far in number than those things that I have revealed. And why, brethren, have I not revealed them?

'Because, brethren, they do not conduce to profit, are not concerned with the holy life, they do not tend to repulsion, to cessation, to calm, to the super-knowledge, to the perfect wisdom, to Nibbana. That is why I have not revealed them.

'Then what, brethren, have I revealed? That This is Ill, brethren, has been revealed by me: that This is the arising of Ill: that This is the ceasing of Ill: that This is the approach to the ceasing of Ill. And why have I so revealed it? Because, brethren, it conduces to profit — to Nibbana.

'Wherefore, brethren, do ye exert yourselves to realize "This is Ill, this is the arising of Ill, this is the ceasing of Ill, this is the approach to the ceasing of Ill".'

Samyutta Nikaya, v.

### II. THE NOBLE EIGHT-FOLD PATH TO NIBBANA

- |  |                            |
|--|----------------------------|
| 1. Right Understanding,<br>Sammadiṭṭhi | } I. Pañña, Enlightenment. |
| 2. Right Mindedness,<br>Sammāsankappo  |                            |

- |   |   |                              |
|---|---|------------------------------|
| 3. Right Speech,<br>Sammavaca           | } | II. Sila, Morality.          |
| 4. Right Action,<br>Sammakammanto       |   |                              |
| 5. Right Living,<br>Samma-ajivo         |   |                              |
| 6. Right Effort,<br>Sammavayamo         | } | III. Samadhi, Concentration. |
| 7. Right Attentiveness,<br>Sammāsati    |   |                              |
| 8. Right Concentration,<br>Sammāsamadhi |   |                              |

### III. THE DEATH OF SAKYAMUNI

Then the Lord addressed the venerable Ananda: 'Let us go hence, Ananda, to the further bank of the river Hiraññavati, to the town of Kusinara, and to the sandal-grove of the Mallas.' The venerable Ananda assented; and the Lord with a large company of monks set out and drew near to the sandal-grove. And having drawn near, he addressed the venerable Ananda, saying: 'I am weary, Ananda, and would lie down. Make me, then, a bed, I pray thee, between two sandal-trees with its head to the north.' So the venerable Ananda, assenting, did so; and the Lord lay down in the lion-posture on his right side, and placing foot upon foot, lay there with mind attentive and aware.

Now at this time the two sandal-trees were in full bloom, though it was not the flowering-season; and the blossoms scattered themselves upon the body of the Blessed One in worship. And divine Erythrina blossoms fell from the sky, and strewed themselves upon the Blessed One in worship. And music sounded in the heavens in his praise, and heavenly choirs adored him.

Then the Lord spoke to the venerable Ananda, saying: 'It is not by all this, O Ananda, that the Lord is honoured, revered, and worshipped. But the monk or nun or the lay-disciple who fulfils the duties of religion with propriety and obedience to the precepts—by them is the Lord revered and worshipped with acceptable worship. Train yourselves, O Ananda; observe the precepts, and do the duties of religion.'

Now the venerable Upavana stood before the Lord fanning him. And the Lord spake harshly to him: 'Stand aside, monk! Out of my

way!' And Ananda reflected: 'This venerable Upavana has been the servant of the Lord, waiting at his beck and call these many years. Yet the Lord in his dying moments is harsh with him: why is it so?' So he asked the Lord why he spoke thus to Upavana, and the Lord made answer: 'Almost all the gods of the ten worlds, Ananda, have assembled to see me. For twelve leagues about us there is not a spot as big as the point of a hair that is not thronged with these mighty ones. And they are angry, Ananda, saying: "Far have we journeyed to behold the Lord: for seldom does a Lord, a Holy One, a Buddha Supreme, appear. And now in the last watch of the night will the Lord pass into Nirvana, and this robust monk stands before the Lord and hides him from us." It is thus, Ananda, that gods are angered.'

'What are the gods doing, Lord?' 'Some of them, Ananda, with mind set on earthly things, are tearing their hair and screaming; they fall headlong to the ground and roll in agony, saying: "Too soon, too soon will the Lord, the Beatific One, pass into Nirvana. Too soon will the Eye of the World pass out of sight." But there are some gods who are free from attachment, aware and mindful. These endure patiently, saying, "Fleeting are all things. What is born must die".'

Then the venerable Ananda entered the Vihara, and leaning against the doorpost, he wept, crying: 'Behold, I am but a beginner, not yet enlightened. And my Teacher who was so kind to me is about to pass into Nirvana.' Then the Lord called the monks: 'Where, monks, is Ananda?' And they told him; and he sent one of them saying: 'Go, tell the venerable Ananda that the Teacher calleth him.' And when Ananda drew near, and had greeted the Blessed One, he sat reverently beside him, and the Lord spake, saying: 'Come, come, Ananda. Weep no more. Have I not told you many times that it is in the nature of all things near and dear to us that we must leave them, and tear ourselves away? How can it be, Ananda, that what is by nature passing should not pass? It cannot be. Long, O Ananda, hast thou been very close to me in acts of constant love, cheerful, single-hearted, unsparing in service of body and spirit. Great merit hast thou gotten, Ananda. Be zealous, and thou too shalt be free from evil. . . .' And the venerable Ananda, after he had been praised by the Blessed One, addressed him, saying: 'Sir, it is not fitting that thou, the Blessed One, should'st pass into Nirvana here in this jungle-village of mud and wattle. There are great cities, sir, like Champa, Rajagaha, Savatthi, Saketa, Kosambi,



and Kasi. Let the Lord enter Nirvana in one of these. For there are in all of them many rich Ksatriyas, Brahmins, and Merchants who are loyal followers of the Blessed One, and they will see to the last rites.' 'Say not so, Ananda. . . . This city Kusinara was once the capital of Sudassana, the great Emperor, a righteous King, victor of the four quarters of the earth, ruling in security, owning the Seven Precious Jewels. . . . Neither by day nor night was the capital without the sounds of elephants and horses, of chariots, of drums, of pipes and lutes, of song and cymbals and gongs, and the voice of the people crying, "Eat ye and drink!" Go then, Ananda, to Kusinara, and say to the Mallas: "To-night in the last watch the Blessed One enters Nirvana. Be favourable, lest ye suffer remorse that the Blessed One should pass into Nirvana in your borders, and ye did not seize the chance to be present".'

So the venerable Ananda, taking bowl and robes, went with another monk to Kusinara; and the Mallas were met together in their Moot-hall. And he came to them and told them his tidings.

And they and their children and their wives were overcome with grief. . . . And they drew near to the sandal-tree grove; and Ananda, thinking, 'Let me marshal the Mallas by families to reverence the Lord,' brought them before him before the first watch of the night was ended.

And at that time the wandering friar Subhadda dwelt at Kusinara; and hearing it said, 'To-night Gotama the Solitary will enter Nirvana,' he thought, 'I have heard it said by friars who were old teachers of teachers that seldom does a Lord, a Holy One, a Buddha Supreme appear among men. To-night in the last watch Gotama the Solitary will enter Nirvana. I have a question in my mind, and I believe that he can teach me and ease my doubt.' Then he came to the sandal-tree grove, and asked the venerable Ananda if he might see Gotama the Solitary. 'Enough, brother Subhadda; trouble not the Lord. He is weary,' said Ananda. And when this had happened three times the Blessed One chanced to hear them speaking, and called to the venerable Ananda: 'Come, Ananda, hinder him not, but let Subhadda see me. Whatsoever he shall ask me will be not to trouble me, but to learn. He will soon understand my answers.' So the venerable Ananda said: 'Come, brother Subhadda; the Lord grants you an audience.' So the friar came, and greeted the Blessed One, and sat reverently by him and asked him: 'O Gotama, tell me of those monks and Brahmins who are renowned

leaders and esteemed by the multitude—have they done as they say and found Truth?' 'Enough, Subhadda. Let us not ask this question. I will teach you the True Doctrine. Do you listen attentively,' said the Lord.

Then he spoke these words: 'In whatsoever doctrine and discipline the Noble Eightfold Path is not found, there is not found the true monk of whatever degree. In whatsoever doctrine and discipline the Noble Eightfold Path is found, there too is found the true monk. In my doctrine and discipline is found the Noble Eightfold Path, and here alone the true monk. All other ways have no true monks. But let these my monks live aright, and the world will not lack saints. . . .' Then Subhadda spoke, saying: 'Wonderful, wonderful! It is, O reverend sir, as though that which was overthrown were set up, that which was hidden were revealed; as though the lost traveller found his way, as though a lamp were lighted in a dark place. So has the Blessed One set forth his teaching in divers ways. To him go I for refuge, to his teaching, and to the company of his monks. Allow me to receive ordination, Lord.'

'Whoso, Subhadda, has belonged to another sect, and desires to be ordained according to my doctrine and discipline must spend four months as a probationer: after that zealous monks ordain him, and receive him into the Order. But in this matter of probation we recognize that some are worthier than others.' 'I am ready, sir, to spend four years as a probationer.' 'Then, Ananda, let Subhadda be received into the Order.' Then Subhadda cried, 'Great is thy good fortune, brother Ananda! Fortunate are you above men, all you that have received the sprinkling of discipleship from the Teacher himself.' So he retired from the world, and received ordination as a monk of the Blessed One, and straightway began to live solitary and retired, watchful and full of zeal. And in no long time he came in this life to realize and to possess that Highest Good to which the Holy Life leads. Then he knew that for him there would be no rebirth, that he had lived the Holy Life, had done what must be done, and was no more for this world. And he was the last disciple made by the Blessed One himself. . . .

Then the Lord addressed the venerable Ananda: 'Maybe, Ananda, some of you will think, "The Word of the Teacher is no more: we have no Teacher." Think not so, Ananda. Your Teacher when I am gone is to be the Doctrine and Discipline. . . .' Then the Lord addressed the monks: 'Maybe, O monks, one of you has a doubt or difficulty regarding the Buddha or Doctrine or Order or

Path. Ask now, O monks, that afterwards ye feel no remorse, thinking, "Our Teacher was with us, and we failed to ask him". And this he said a second and a third time, and all remained silent. . . . And the venerable Ananda said to the Blessed One: "Wonderful sir, marvellous indeed it is! In all this company, I verily believe, not one has a doubt or a difficulty regarding the Buddha, the Doctrine, the Order, the Path or the Way of Conduct!"

"With thee, Ananda, it is a matter of faith. But with me it is a matter of knowledge. For of all these five hundred monks the most backward has entered the Path; he will not be reborn, but is destined to Buddhahood."

Then the Blessed One said to the monks: "And now, O monks, I bid you farewell. All that is is fleeting. Be diligent and win salvation." This was the last word of the Blessed One.

(Maha-parinibbana-Sutta, v and vi.)

#### IV. THE SPIRIT OF THE ORDER

O Joy! We live in bliss: amongst men of hate, hating none. Let us indeed dwell among them without hatred.

O Joy! In bliss we dwell; healthy amidst the ailing. Let us indeed dwell amongst them in perfect health.

Yea in very bliss we dwell: free from care amidst the careworn. Let us indeed dwell amongst them without care.

In bliss we dwell possessing nothing: let us dwell feeding upon joy like the shining ones in their splendour.

The victor breeds enmity; the conquered sleeps in sorrow. Regardless of either victory or defeat the calm man dwells in peace.

There is no fire like lust; no luck so bad as hate. There is no sorrow like existence: no bliss greater than Nirvana (rest).

Hunger is the greatest ill: existence is the greatest sorrow. Sure knowledge of this is Nirvana, highest bliss.

Health is the greatest boon; content is the greatest wealth; a loyal friend is the truest kinsman; Nirvana is the Supreme Bliss.

Having tasted the joy of solitude and of serenity, a man is freed from sorrow and from sin, and tastes the nectar of piety.

Good is the vision of the Noble; good is their company. He may be always happy who escapes the sight of fools.

He who consorts with fools knows lasting grief. Grievous is the company of fools, as that of enemies; glad is the company of the wise, as that of kinsfolk.

Therefore do thou consort with the wise, the sage, the learned,  
the noble ones who shun not the yoke of duty: follow in the wake  
of such a one, the wise and prudent, as the moon follows the path of  
the stars.

(From *The Buddha's Way of Virtue*,  
ed. by K. J. Saunders and W. D. C. Wagiswara.)





AN ASOKAN CAPITAL



POROS AND ALEXANDER

### III

## ASOKA AND HIS HOUSE

'Greatest of gifts is the Law of Piety.' ASOKAN INSCRIPTION.

### I

INDIA is now to reap the fruits of the Buddha's sowing, and to be quickened by the touch of Hellenism to new life. We read in Herodotus that 'Cyrus in person brought the upper regions of Asia under the yoke'; and we know that he advanced as far as Balkh, the ancient capital of Bactria—a key to the passes of India as to the great trade-routes of China. Xenophon tells us that 'he conquered both Bactrians and Indians' and that an embassy came to this Great King from India. Megasthenes and the writers who quote him are agreed that none before Alexander the Great successfully invaded India, but it is certain that whether Cyrus succeeded or not, Darius subjugated a large part of the Punjab and all Sind, and Persian influences were both widespread and profound for centuries in India, as its art and architecture remain to prove. Very few 'darics'—the gold coins of Persia—have been found in India, but Greek coins and medals abound—those of Alexander and his satraps, and in them Persia exerts a great and lasting influence on India.

Most interesting is the unique medal struck by Alexander in India to commemorate his victory. It shows us the noble Indian Raja Poros, seated on his elephant and thrusting back at Taxiles, the ambassador of Alexander, who has followed him on horseback with the offer of a satrapy. The scene is vividly described by the Greek historian of Alexander's invasion, and the reverse of the medal shows us the great conqueror himself, holding in one hand a spear and in the other what appears to be a thunderbolt. If so he is posing as Zeus; and we know that he was fond of 'playing the god'. But that he kept his sense of humour is proved by this medal, which

commemorates the courage of the lion-hearted Paurava in defying him, and reveals the magnanimous spirit of the great conqueror who treated a fallen foe 'as a king'. Alexander, a pupil of Aristotle, also sought acquaintance with Brahmins. To one Dandamis he sent an imperious summons; only to be reminded that he was not God, that a sage had no use for anything Alexander could offer, and that a Brahmin had no fear of death: 'Dandamis hath need of nothing from thee; come thou to him if thou hast need of wisdom.' Here the ancient East speaks, conscious of power. It is clear that if India had been united under such a leader as Poros even Alexander could have done little against her. As it was, he might well have pushed the victory to her eastern shores. Under his superb leadership, a united and powerful army faced the divided Indian forces. Their chariots and elephants were opposed by the sturdy spearmen of Macedonia, and the skilled cavalry of Greece, backed by mercenaries, Thracians, and others used to guerrilla warfare, Bactrians and tribesmen of the Hindu Kush, mounted archers and slingers. With them marched the Indians of Taxila, eager to break the power of Poros, and of the kingdoms of the south. What could a divided India do against this seasoned and united force?

The brilliant soldier Sandrakottos or Chandragupta, who finally thrust back the Greek successors of Alexander, himself declared that had Alexander pushed forward into the Ganges Valley, nothing could have stopped him. Of this great adventurer, we know enough to help us understand his amazing success in doing what Alexander failed to do. The time was ripe for an Indian leader to unite the kingdom of Magadha, and to thrust out the invaders. With better fortune Poros might have done these greater deeds. As it is, he achieved undying fame, and Alexander's magnanimity has helped to shed lustre on a brave foe. Poros is an admirable figure; brave, independent, loyal, and kingly. Plutarch tells us in his *Life of Alexander* that his faithful elephant, having protected him through the battle, knelt and drew out the arrows with which he was



pierced, before he fled with him to safety. We hear also of the death in this battle of Bucephalus, Alexander's own great war-horse, after whom he named the next city which he founded.

The Greek writers tell us little else of the Indian king, who seems to have been chosen for his beauty and strength according to an old custom in the Land of the Five Rivers. His name Paurava means ruler of the Purus. They were an old and powerful people, of whom we hear in the dim dawn of Indian history, and they were later merged in the Kauravas, whose war with the Pandavas is the central theme of the Great Epic or Mahabharata. India was indeed for very long the battle-field of warring kings and clans, and as the Greeks tell us, even Poros with his wide realm and his powerful personality had jealous enemies like the King of Taxila on the north-west frontier, and others on his southern and eastern borders.

Poros remained for a time to enjoy the throne restored to him by Alexander, but he was foully done to death by another satrap, Eudemos. His strong hand being removed, the tribes revolted, and gave Chandragupta his chance. With him there comes on to the Indian stage a man of genius, able to weld together its scattered peoples and to fulfil the old Indian dream of a Chakkravarti, or universal emperor.

## II

There are two main theories of kingship in ancient India; one is that the king is of divine origin, created for the protection of the world, and himself called 'Deva', God or Shining One. Manu, the later codifier of Indian law, thus expresses this theory: 'Having taken immortal particles from Indra (god of battles and of thunder) from Vayu (the wind god), from Yama (lord of hell), from Sun and Moon, from Fire and Water, Brahma the creator made therefrom the King to protect the world. Therefore he surpasses all in brightness.' This is a very old idea floating in Indian tradition long before Manu's time.

Allied to it was the belief, long prevalent in India and

Ceylon, that the king was of solar origin—a dogma still taught to every child in Japan. The symbol of the king's power, the Wheel or Cakkra, is the Sun-god's Chariot-wheel; and Alexander was unconsciously realizing an Indian ideal when he played the god, and claimed the empire as Zeus, 'god over gods'.

Lest we should smile at these far-off beliefs we may remind ourselves of his most Catholic Majesty James II, who solemnly told his Parliament at the end of the seventeenth century, 'Kings are justly called gods. . . . They make and unmake their subjects. . . . Have power of life and death, and . . . are accountable to none but God.'

The idea of a 'social contract' never penetrated the thick skulls of the Stuarts, though Cromwell did his best upon them! But it was very early a theory in India. In the Arthasastra we read 'The people suffering from anarchy, when as the proverb says the large fish swallow the small ones, elected Manu to rule over them, and set aside one-sixth of their farm produce and one-tenth of their merchandise as royal dues. In return for this pay Kings assumed the duty of protecting their subjects, and became answerable for their sins.'<sup>1</sup>

The same authority tells us of the still nobler Indian ideal that 'the King should find his religion in promptness of action, that the discharge of his duty is a religious sacrifice, and that readiness to attend to all alike is his consecration'. This amazing book, a strange mixture of high ideals, of Machiavellian subtlety and of childish superstition, goes on to use words which Queen Victoria herself seems to have quoted in assuming responsibility as Empress of India: 'In the happiness of his subjects lies the King's happiness, in their welfare his welfare. Not his pleasure but theirs shall he consider. Ever active shall he be in the discharge of duty, for in activity lies the root of well-being.'

We are not surprised therefore to find in a Buddhist book that the king disclaims power over his subjects,

<sup>1</sup> Kautilya's Arthasastra, I. xiii.

unless they are rebellious and evil; 'I am not their Lord and Master,' he says, and we shall see the great Asoka claiming to be the Father of his people. It is an ideal found before him, but best realized in his example.

Chandragupta did not reach these heights. In the first place he had to seize the power and to consolidate the Empire which his grandson enjoyed, and in the second place he seems to have made full use of the unscrupulous but astute Brahmin who is believed to have been the author of the Arthashastra. This remarkable man, Chanakya, or Kautilya, is credited with the overthrow of the Nanda Dynasty and with being the constant adviser and inspirer of Chandragupta. While this cannot be regarded as history, it is a very early tradition, and appears as a prophecy in the Vishnu Purana, clearly written after the event, but embodying early tradition. If we take another glance at the Arthashastra we shall see that there are contained in it just those ideas of ruthless ambition and clever diplomacy which an adventurer would need in seizing the throne. He is advised to employ spies freely, to keep an especially close eye upon his ministers, and to test their loyalty. He is equally to keep watch upon the young princes, 'for princes, like crabs, are noted for their tendency to devour their begetter'.<sup>1</sup>

There are several ways by which neighbouring States can be won over, or their loyalty undermined.

Whoever, among the neighbouring kings, seems to threaten with an invasion, may be invited for some festival, marriage, capture of elephants, purchase of horses, or of merchandise, or to take possession of some lands ceded to him, and captured; or such an enemy may be kept at bay by an ally till an agreement of not condemnable nature is made with him; or he may be made to incur the displeasure of wild tribes or of his enemies, or whoever among his nearest relatives is kept under guard may be promised a portion of his territory, and set against him.<sup>2</sup>

If the Arthashastra is the ladder by which the ambitious Chandragupta climbed to empire, it is also apparently the

<sup>1</sup> Arthashastra, I. xvii.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., II. ii.

lamp by which Asoka read his first lessons in kingship. It lays down the royal duty to care for orphans, the aged, the afflicted, and the helpless;<sup>1</sup> it emphasizes the fundamental importance of economic progress;<sup>2</sup> and it gives in outline the duties of the officials of the empire, and in detail the heavy duties of the king's day.<sup>3</sup>

Study of this book makes it clear that it was not only the monks of the Yellow Robe to whom Asoka was indebted for guidance, and their chronicles must be read with caution. They are anxious to connect Chandragupta with the clan to which the Buddha himself belonged. They tell us that he was the son of a local raja in one of the countries of the foot-hills of the Himalayas, which abounded in peacocks. This is a characteristic piece of etymology, the word for peacock being *Mora*; and this became the emblem of the Maurya house which Chandragupta founded. Other legends make him the bastard son of Nanda, whom he thrust from the throne of Magadha in 315 B.C., and all are agreed that the Brahmin Chanakya helped him in this unnatural deed. One legend gives as the motive an old and bitter insult which Nanda had unwisely inflicted upon the Brahmin. Another, with more show of reason, makes Chanakya the leader of a Brahmin rebellion against the growing power of the warrior-caste, and the pride of its kings. In any case, it seems clear that Chandragupta had to wait long for success, that he was an exile in the Punjab, and that he won the throne by a bold invasion at the head of an army of adventurers. There may be truth, too, in the story that he met Alexander in person; it is possible that from him or from Poros he took lessons in strategy.

He made of the capital Pataliputra a mighty city, which according to Megasthenes 'stretched in the inhabited parts of it about nine miles on each side, had a breadth of a mile and a half, and was the shape of a parallelogram. It was girt with a moat 600 feet in breadth, into which the sewage of the city flowed. Within this was a massive

<sup>1</sup> *Arthashastra*, II. i.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, I. vii.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, I. vii.

palisade of timber with loop-holes for archery, and with 570 towers and 64 gates.'

Recent excavation has discovered parts of this massive woodwork showing remarkable skill in carpentry, and our



A City Gate. From a relief at Sanchi.

illustration shows a typical fortified city of the Maurya period combining brickwork below with wooden turrets above, from which archers are seen shooting their arrows at the enemy who were mounted upon elephants and chariots. The Emperor we are told was able to put a great army in the field, 600,000 infantry, 300,000 cavalry, and a great company of chariots.

The Greeks were chiefly impressed with his splendid force of 9,000 elephants. These play a great part in contemporary art, and no nation has rivalled the Indians in their mastery or in their portrayal. What could be more life-like and at the same time more decorative than the

great processions of these lordly beasts on the architraves of the Sanchi Gateways, or on the frescoed walls of the Ajanta and Bagh caves? When the Greeks made their half-hearted attempt to recover the provinces ceded to Chandragupta he had little difficulty in buying them off with a bribe of 500 elephants. Legend has it that their alliance was cemented by a marriage between the Emperor and a Greek Princess, following the example of Alexander and the fair Roxana.

By about 305 B.C. Chandragupta was firmly seated upon the throne of a great empire, which reached beyond the Hindu Kush on the north and into Afghanistan on the north-west. He seems to have had viceroys at important centres such as Taxila and Ujjain, where later his grandson Asoka got his training in government. It was a period of great splendour and of wise rule. We read of vast works of irrigation with State control of the water supply, and of the revenues derived from it. There was much road-building, one great military highway stretching from the north-west frontier to the capital, the breadth of India.

The population, says the Greek Megasthenes, consisted of seven classes; at the head were the philosophers, the Brahmins, and other religious groups whose duty it was to officiate at public sacrifices, to read the auguries, and so to guide the king in matters of politics and agriculture. Next to them came the great mass of the people, the cultivators and main tax-payers of the empire. Only in the fifth class does Megasthenes place the warriors, most numerous after the cultivators, and an immense drain upon the resources of the empire. The other classes mentioned are smaller—hunters, traders, boatmen, spies, and lastly the king's councillors. From them are chosen the various officials of the empire, civil, military, and naval.

It is difficult to see upon what the Greek bases this division of Indian society; it corresponds very loosely with the castes as we know them, or as they appear in early Indian literature.

In the midst of his people dwelt the king in a palace of

great splendour and apparently of Persian design. Dr. D. B. Spooner in excavating Pataliputra found, some sixteen feet below the surface, a wooden floor covered with a deposit of eight or nine feet of alluvial soil, and over this a layer of ashes; ashes also filled the holes where once stone pillars stood in rows. He concludes that a great fire, followed by a prolonged flood, destroyed this great structure; and it is interesting to find a very early Buddhist book putting into the mouth of the Buddha himself a prophecy that 'three dangers will threaten Pataliputra; fire, flood, and dissension among friends'. Is this the observation of a shrewd mind, noting its position upon the banks of the river and its wooden structures, or is it a comment after the event added to the older writing by a later scribe?

For the rest we do not know much of the artistic achievement of the early Mauryan era. The coins are crude, and such sculpture as there is is naïve, illustrating Jatakas<sup>1</sup> and other folk-lore; as in the Barhut rail preserved at Calcutta. But we can imagine Indian craftsmen—skilled jewellers and carpenters—beginning at this time to feel the influence of the sculptors and builders of Greece and Persia, and within a short century we find Indians working in stone with great skill.

### III

With the enlightened Asoka (274-232 B.C.) dawns a Golden Age of Indian art, which from now on develops rapidly. Let us come down two centuries and visit the great Stupa at Sanchi, one of the most delightful spots in central India, where skilful archaeology has reconstructed great works of Buddhist art. They crown a low hill with wide views over the shimmering Indian plain, and are a picture-gallery in stone. The great central mound with its four gateways is especially worthy of close study, and here we get our first glimpse in art of the stories of the Buddha and of Asoka. On the eastern gateway, as the

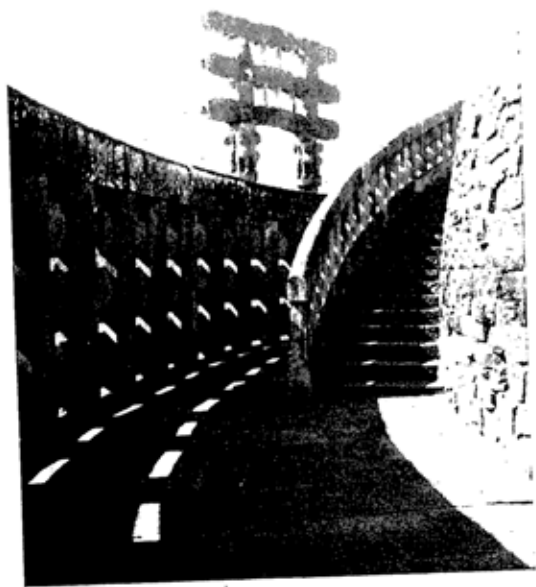
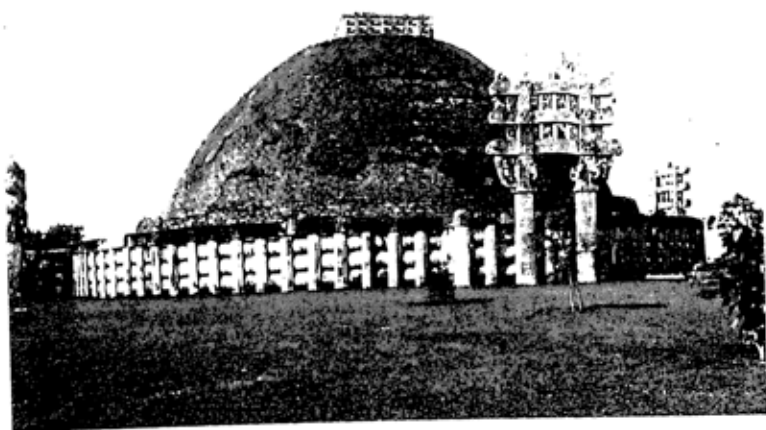
<sup>1</sup> Birth-stories of the Buddha in former incarnations.

rising sun lights up the rich texture of its sculptures, may be seen a great procession of men and elephants to a tree around which is a low building, and on the side lintels are pairs of splendid peacocks and winged lions. These symbols give us the key to the meaning of the procession. The great Asoka, whose crest is the peacock, is coming to pay honour to the Bo-tree under which the 'Lion of the Sakyas', the Buddha, obtained enlightenment. We see the king getting down from his kneeling elephant, and pouring a libation before the tree. Turning to the books we discover the old story of the jealousy of one of his queens whose 'evil eye' had bewitched the tree, until it began to wither. Asoka hears of this and comes with bowls of scented water to revive it.

Above this scene are representations of Asokan Pillars, and upon other gateways are depicted his pilgrimage to the Deer Park of the Buddha's first sermon. We see the Emperor with two of his queens coming to the park, which is indicated by the Wheel of the Law and by deer; and below this is a second panel which represents Asoka in his Chariot, with his courtiers about him. The Emperor has left us his own account of these pilgrimages, which took the place in the India of his day of the hunt and the games in which other kings had delighted.

The gateways at Sanchi cannot be said to give us a portrait of Asoka; but not very far away in Bhopal State is a group of caves once occupied by Buddhist monks, and on the wall of one of these is a magnificent fresco which may well represent the Emperor at the critical moment of his conversion to Buddhism. A young and princely figure is seen seated on the royal elephant, amidst a great procession. As the great beasts swing forward and eager crowds receive the victor returning from a war of conquest, his eye lights on a group of yellow-robed mendicants seated by the roadside. He looks up startled, and the lotus droops in his hand. A great Indian artist, Nanda Lal Bose, the first in our time to copy this stupendous work of art, thinks that it is Asoka, stabbed awake by the





SANCHI: MAIN STUPA AND PROCESSION PATH



sufferings of the Kalingas; and we may imagine that it was some word of these monks, perhaps the old dirge which sounds mournfully in their monasteries to-day: 'Sabba Dukkha, Sabba Anicca', 'All is sorrowful, all things pass away,' or some call to Ahimsa, the old Indian virtue of harmlessness, which crystallized out the Emperor's leanings towards Buddhism. He came of a religious stock, and the Jains, the great rivals of the Buddhists at this time, who also made much of harmlessness, claim that his grandfather ended his days as a monk of their Order. If this is true, Asoka may well have gained an impression in early infancy which was to change his whole life.

#### IV

A sincere convert, Asoka rapidly became a zealous exponent of the Buddhist faith, and sent his missionaries into many lands to forge an international bond of goodwill. The edict that we know as the thirteenth is one of some forty which have been discovered in India during the past century. It tells of his conquest of the Kalingas, of his conversion by the sight of their sufferings, of his missions to Greek and other neighbouring kings, whose names enable us to date his reign; it speaks of his eagerness to win the outlying tribes to his way of life, and gives us some data for estimating the extent of his dominion. It ends by expressing a pious hope that his sons and descendants shall refrain from further conquests in the material sphere, and shall consider that alone as a victory which belongs to the sphere of morality.

It is clear that Asoka aimed, as he says, at being the father of all his people, even of the wild tribes of the forest, and he instructs his ministers that they are to regard themselves as 'nurses of the people'. We may imagine the surprise of men trained in the school of Chanakya, and their chagrin on being exhorted to give up the hunt and other pastimes for pious pilgrimages. It is clear that they did not always obey the austere voice of the monarch; nor

did all his neighbours, to whom he sent missionaries, turn Buddhist.

The mission to Ceylon, however, headed by his son or nephew, Mahinda, in the eighteenth year of his reign, was crowned with success. The story is fully told in the *Great Chronicle of the Island*,<sup>1</sup> where one may visit the rock-hewn study of the princely monk and gaze over the wide plain once fertile and populous, now almost deserted, as the great irrigation works which this mission inaugurated have fallen into decay. Eight miles away tower the great Stupas of the sacred city of Anuradhapura, which came to rival the monuments of Asoka himself.

Of Asoka's other missionaries, remains have been found at Sanchi. Here a relic-box of sandstone was discovered, and the inscription tells us that it contained the relics of 'all the teachers beginning with Kassapagota'. Within were four caskets and the names of ten great teachers. The first of these were missionaries to the wild tribes of the Hemavakas or Himalayas. In Rajputana there has been found an edict of Asoka addressed especially to the Buddhist monks who were his representatives in this important outpost. It begins with a statement of his faith in the Buddha, his Teaching, and his Order of Monks, wishes them health and happiness, and goes on to commend all the Teachings of the Buddha; 'all that has been said by the Lord has been well said'.

But it recommends certain passages of scripture as essential both for monks and laity. Though these passages are variously identified by scholars, there seems no doubt that they represent a selection from the great mass of the Buddhist books, and include certain rules of discipline and of meditation, and certain passages of ethical precepts such as the sermon the Buddha delivered to his son Rahula on speaking the truth, and that to the young layman Sigalo, instructing him to find in the duties of daily life the true worship of the gods.

It is clear that the Emperor aimed at uniting his people

<sup>1</sup> Mahawamsa, ed. by W. Geiger.

in the bonds of a religion which was not too difficult for them, and that he realized the great importance of a united and well-disciplined Order of Monks, attending to the essentials. In calling their attention to these things he by no means claims to be temporal head of the Church, but rather to enforce the discipline which they had themselves worked out. Such was the Buddha's own method, and the Vinaya is a collection of such practical rules, made as occasion demanded.

Stimulated and inspired by his religious faith, Asoka set himself to fulfil the Indian ideal of kingship. He caused roads to be made, wells to be dug, and trees to be planted along these roads 'to give shade to men and beasts'. He organized the distribution of charity, and established hospitals for beasts as well as men. He more and more discouraged the taking of life and inculcated respect for the animal-world. It may be noted that the Arthashastra recommends that certain animals should be exempt from slaughter; and Asoka's list is a strange one, from parrots to queen-ants. It seems that the royal peacock, the totem of his family, continued for a time to supply the Emperor's table, although in one of his later edicts he expresses a resolve to eat it no more.

It is not least these little details which make Asoka's edicts so interesting. And in the great things—tolerance for other sects, emphasis upon truth, upon respect, upon gentleness and liberality—the Emperor is revealed as a man of large and spacious mind, with a capacity for hard work and an earnest desire to be the servant of his people. He claims that he is accessible at all hours and to all classes, even in the apartments of his women, and he is eager to see the same spirit in his viceroys and ministers.

As to his domestic life, we have many conflicting accounts. His father Bindusara is credited with a hundred other sons, quite a possible achievement to an oriental monarch. His mother is said to have been the beautiful daughter of a Brahmin family, but another legend makes her a member of the Maurya clan. The Buddhist chronicles

maintain that Asoka seized the throne upon his father's death, killing all rival claimants to it, and the Chinese pilgrims tell us of the prison or 'Hell' into which he threw his rivals, and tortured them to death. All this is possibly based upon fact, but very highly coloured—to make the wonder of his conversion more striking, and to shed more lustre upon the Buddhist religion.

In his married life he was not entirely happy, being cursed with a queen so jealous that she could not even tolerate his interest in the Bo-tree of the Buddha's enlightenment, and that she caused Asoka's son to be blinded. He was the child of a rival, and was named Kunala because of the beauty of his eyes, which resembled those of the Kunala bird. Other sons served as viceroys in important provinces, and a daughter, Sanghamitta (Friend of the Order), went with her brother Mahinda to Ceylon. A fresco at Ajanta shows us this noble pair, who were ordained six years after their father's coronation, setting out with a slip of the Bo-tree for Ceylon. They had then been twelve years in the Order, and were well qualified to become teachers, and to introduce not only the religion but the civilization of Mauryan India to the peoples of the island.

The older Island Chronicle, the Dipawamsa, and the later Great Chronicle, Mahawamsa, a much more artistic work, agree in making the great Asoka a friend of the Sinhalese King Tissa. He called himself Devanampiya, 'Friend of the Gods', in imitation of Asoka, and welcomed the Buddhist mission.

'We are followers of the Dhamma, Lord, in compassion to thee have we come,' said Mahinda, and proceeded to preach to the king and his hunting-party the parable of the spoor of the elephant.

The Way of the Dhamma leads to freedom from rebirth—it is the Way of the Path-finder, and his path is as easy to trace as the footprints of the elephant.

As in Japan nearly a thousand years later, the seed fell on fruitful soil, and Ceylon soon became a civilized nation

—awakened at the right moment by the touch of a master-hand. The names of Mahinda and of his sister Sanghamitta are revered as are no other names in the island.

## V

Of the life of the masses during this period we know little. But we cannot imagine that their lot was an easy one even under the fatherly rule of Asoka. That they worked in their fields undisturbed by foreign invasion or civil warfare was itself a great boon. But that they were free from their perennial struggle against famine, flood, and pestilence is not likely; and they had their taxes to pay to the Emperor, and their gifts to make to priests and monks.

In the case of Lumbini, the Buddha's birthplace, religious taxes were exempted, and the usual tax to the Emperor of one-fourth of the produce was reduced to one-eighth. Even this is a heavy burden for people who seldom rise above starvation, and even the organized charity of the Emperor and his queens cannot have done much to relieve their distress. This being so, one wonders how much the reiterated statement of the edicts—'that the Dhamma is the greatest of gifts' meant to the people. That in India and Ceylon they soon began to groan under the enormous burden involved in the building of great religious edifices is clear. Some of these mounds cover seven or eight acres of ground, and the numerous Pillars of Asoka, monoliths fifty feet high, brilliantly polished, were transplanted to points all over the empire. These were great engineering feats, but the labour involved was colossal. General Cunningham, who did so much for the archaeology of India, estimated that the average weight of these pillars is fifty tons, and when the Sultan Firoz Shah Tughlak had one of them moved the comparatively short distance of 120 miles, it involved the use of enormous mattresses of cotton, and of a specially-built carriage with twenty-one pairs of wheels. At each wheel toiled 200 men; an army of no less than 8,400 was thus employed, and this gives us some faint picture of the labour involved in the quarrying,

polishing, sculpture, and transportation of these amazing monoliths

The story of the deciphering of their inscriptions by Western scholars which was begun more than a hundred years ago is no less noteworthy; and to Prinsep in particular is due the great credit of finding the key to the script, of identifying the Piyadasi of the Edicts with the Emperor Asoka, and of revealing this great personality to the world. By a curious freak of destiny it is the last pillar to be discovered which is actually the earliest, and the only one in which the Emperor calls himself by his own name. This is a crowning proof of the accuracy of the work done, and Asoka is now as well known and life-like a figure as Marcus Aurelius or Constantine, with whom he is so often compared—or as St. Paul, who like him made an imperial religion of a small and struggling sect. His devotion to the Dhamma is the most significant thing in Asoka—for its sake he does all his beneficent works.

In the art of this age it is evident that enormous strides had been made since Alexander's invasion. Their progress can be best appreciated by comparing the massive pre-Mauryan portrait statue of Kunika Ajatasatru (who died 618 B.C.) in the Mathura Museum, with the bull-capital of the Asoka column in the Indian Museum at Calcutta.<sup>1</sup>

Of the former and its peers Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy says, 'These human figures, over life-size, resting their immense weight firmly on the earth, are immediate and affirmative expressions of physical energy. . . . Neither philosophic introspection nor passionate devotion have yet affected art: there is no trace of romanticism or refinement.'<sup>2</sup> Yet these statues show the beginnings of realism, and if they are uncouth they are amazingly strong. Within four centuries the court-artists of the Asokan age begin to combine strength with grace, and realism with charm. Their animal-forms are technically perfect, and as decoration they are unrivalled. It is reasonable to see in the bell-

<sup>1</sup> See illustration facing p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> *Indian Art*. See illustrations in this fine work.



or lotus-shaped capitals of the pillars, in their high polish, and in their use as standards for royal edicts, the influence of Persian and of Hellenistic art.

Little more than two generations had passed since Alexander the Great had planted in Bactria a powerful colony of Greeks, who, occupying as they did a tract of country on the very threshold of the Maurya dominions, where the great trade-routes from India, Iran, and Central Asia converged, and closely in touch as they were with the great centres of civilization in Western Asia, must have played a dominant part in the transmission of Hellenistic arts and culture into India.

What does this mean, except that these branches of the Aryan stock—Greek, Iranian, and Indian—are now meeting after long separation, and that Alexander's dream of uniting East and West is coming true?

It is very fitting that it was to do honour to India's greatest son that these gifted sister-races lent their powers; of this the very symbols used by the Asokan artists are proof: if the bell-capital and the lotus are of Persian provenance, the humped bull is Indian, and so probably are the lions which stand back to back in the grand stylized capital at Sarnath, where the 'Lion of the Sakyas' first preached. Indian too are the Wheel of the Law, and the Geese of this great work of art, symbols of religious wisdom. And if the form of Asoka's inscriptions is borrowed from that of Persian emperors their spirit is Indian. Its teaching of Ahimsa, of the glories of peace and of the blessings of piety, is in a very different key from that of its prototypes. The symbolism too of Asokan art breathes the message of the compassionate Buddha, and tells of the great moments of his life.

These animal-forms, the Bull, the Elephant, the Horse, and the Lion, have seldom been equalled. Symbolizing the Birth, the Renunciation and the first Sermon of the Buddha, they were carved by master-workmen who were close students of nature; and critics are agreed that in their dignity as well as their realism they are masterpieces, 'unsurpassed, I venture to think, by anything of their kind

in the ancient world', says Sir John Marshall, who is responsible for the brilliant restoration of Sanchi, and who has shown that while Indian art may have learned much from Persia and from Greece it was yet filled with a genius of its own, and remained true to form. To stand before these great columns, to wonder at their high polish and their noble capitals, above all to read the august messages of the Emperor carved upon them is to be filled with respect for the India of the Mauryan Age, and above all for the great personality of Asoka. He is a unique figure, the ideal Indian king, and only to be understood as he fulfils this ideal of his people, and pours into it the spirit of Sakyamuni.

In this spirit he showed tolerance to all religious sects, respect for all religious leaders, and a kindly attitude to all—important kings his neighbours no less than villagers and vassal princes; 'small and great alike must be honoured,' and 'by all great happiness may be attained here and hereafter'. He seeks peace and goodwill among men—and bases it upon the hope of heaven.

It is not Nirvana to which he summons these lay-followers of the Buddha: that is for the specialist. His concern is with a religion for the masses, and in him the Upasika, or lay-adherent, finds noble expression. Some of his words are as imperishable as the rocks and pillars upon which they are inscribed.

'What is the Dhamma? It is to do little harm but much good, to exercise kindliness, liberality, truthfulness and purity.'

'All sects I honour with offerings. But the sect of one's own choice is most important.'

'External discipline avails little: the meditation of the heart avails much.'

'In all places and at all times am I approachable by the people: let them realize that the King is their father, feeling for them as for himself: and that they are to him as his own children.'

It is the august voice of a royal yet fatherly autocrat; and it still sounds in the ears of India and charms her heart.

## VI

The six remaining Mauryan rulers were weak and ineffectual. Antiochus III of Syria, after conquering Parthians, Bactrians, and Persians, invaded the north of India in 208 B.C. and for nearly two centuries Greek rulers held the frontier passes. In 184 Pushyamitra overthrew the last of the Mauryas, and set up the Sunga House, making himself champion of Brahminism, and, according to Buddhist records, burning monasteries and looting shrines.

In 155 Menander, a Greek king of Bactria, led his armies as far as Pushyamitra's capital, Pataliputra, only to be repulsed; and in 75 the Sungas were succeeded by the Kanvas, while the Greek kingdoms were ravaged by Yuetchi, or Scythians.

In both Menander and the barbarian Kanishka Buddhism found stout allies and even converts, and from now on for some centuries it enters into much more friendly relations with Hinduism, and much more intimate understanding is the result.

If this is the age which produces the Bhagavad-gita it is also the age of the Saddharmapundarika, its Buddhist analogue, and of the Milinda Pañha, sometimes attributed to the great Nagarjuna—greatest of Buddhist schoolmen. It is the greatest of Buddhist prose works. In other words the century before the Christian era and the century after it are great in intellectual achievements: though India is harassed by wars within and invasions from without the seed of the Buddha and of Asoka is bearing a rich harvest.

In mid-India arises the great Andhra House, and at Sanchi, Amaravati, and Anuradhapura in Ceylon are remains of their great classical art: while in the north-west the more direct influence of Hellenism is seen, Corinthian columns taking the place of those of Persepolitan design, and classical togas beginning to clothe the images of the Buddha—who is found in company with Heracles and the Lion, and with Pallas Athene—while

Fauns and Bacchantes, Eros, and Pan begin to take on Indian forms, and the unbearded and haloed Bodhisattva is a Greek god with Indian tiara and necklaces.

This Hellenistic influence is to penetrate as far south as Ceylon, as far east as Japan, and with it goes much else of Greek provenance—medicine and music and perhaps canons of dramatic art. Greece is giving to Asia not only a new ikon, but also something of her science and art; and India is being prepared for her great task of civilization. In other words two great branches of the Aryan world are now being grafted the one on the other.

Mongol and Scythian, too, are being brought into touch with older and more advanced cultures and putting new sap into the maturing tree of Aryanism. The fine fruits of this long process are to be seen in the developed arts of the next era, in the chivalry of Rajput kingdoms, in the secular as well as in the religious achievements of Andhras and of Guptas, while in the Dravidian south an independent and quite different civilization is maturing in preparation for the high task of sharing with the Aryan north the cultural conquest of Ceylon, Java, and the Peninsula of Indo-China.

Meantime, while these processes are developing, missions from India are penetrating as far east as Loyang—capital of the Han in China; Kashmir, Kashgar, and the Hinterland are being won to the popular forms of the Mahayana, with its paradises and saviours, its rich rituals, and sonorous chanting, its notes of universality and compassion; and Ceylon is becoming a fastness of the more stoical and austere Hinayana, with its note of effort and renunciation, its promise of an ever-receding Nirvana, its preoccupation with merit and with meditation, its other-worldly dirges and its sad insistence on the transiency of life.

If this suited the tropical south something more picturesque and alluring was needed by hardy mountaineers and uplanders just emerging from barbarism, men of Turkic or Mongol stock, Yuetchi, Sakas, Indo-Parthians,

Wei-Tartars. All in turn were to leave their impress on Buddhism and its art.

## THE SPIRIT OF THE MAURYAS

### I. ALEXANDER AND POROS

When Poros, who had nobly discharged his duties throughout the battle, performing the part not only of a general, but also that of a gallant soldier, saw the slaughter of his cavalry and some of his elephants lying dead, and others wandering about sad and sullen without their drivers, while the greater part of his infantry had been killed, he did not, after the manner of Darius, the great king, abandon the field and show his men the first example of flight, but, on the contrary, fought on as long as he saw any Indians maintaining the contest in a united body; but he wheeled around on being wounded in the right shoulder, where only he was unprotected by armour in the battle. All the rest of his person was rendered shot-proof by his coat of mail which was remarkable for its strength and the closeness with which it fitted his person, as could afterwards be observed by those who saw him. When he found himself wounded, he turned his elephant around and began to retire. Alexander, perceiving that he was a great man, and valiant in fight, was anxious to save his life, and for that purpose sent to him first of all Taxiles the Indian. Taxiles, who was on horseback, approached as near the elephant which carried Poros as seemed safe and entreated him, since it was no longer possible for him to flee, to stop his elephant and listen to the message he brought from Alexander. But Poros, on finding that the speaker was his old enemy Taxiles, turned around and prepared to smite him with his javelin; and he would probably have killed him had not Taxiles instantly put his horse to the gallop and got beyond the reach of Poros. But not even for this act did Alexander feel any resentment against Poros, but sent to him messenger after messenger, and last of all Meroes, an Indian, as he had learned that Poros and this Meroes were old friends. As soon as Poros heard the message which Meroes brought just at a time when he was overpowered by thirst, he made his elephant halt and dismounted. Then, when he had taken a draught of water, and felt revived, he requested Meroes to conduct him without delay to Alexander.

He was then conducted to Alexander, who, on learning that Meroes was approaching with him, rode forward in front of his line with a few of the companions to meet him. Then, reining in his

horse, he beheld with admiration the handsome person and majestic stature of Poros, which somewhat exceeded five cubits. He saw, too, with wonder, that he did not seem to be broken and abased in spirit, but that he advanced to meet him as a brave man would meet another brave man after gallantly contending with another king in defence of his kingdom. Then Alexander, who was the first to speak, requested Poros to say how he wished to be treated. The report goes that Poros said in reply: 'Treat me, O Alexander! as befits a king,' and that Alexander, being pleased with his answer, replied, 'For mine own sake, O Poros! thou shalt be so treated, but do thou, in thine own behalf, ask for whatever boon thou pleasest,' to which Poros replied that in what he had asked everything was included. Alexander was more delighted than ever with this rejoinder, and not only appointed Poros to govern his own Indians, but added to his original territory another of still greater extent. Alexander thus treated this brave man as befitted a king, and he consequently found him in all respects faithful and devoted to his interests. Such, then, was the result of the battle in which Alexander fought against Poros and the Indians of the other side of the Hydaspes in the month of Mounychion of the year when Hegemon was archon in Athens.

(After McCrindle.)

## II. A STORY ILLUSTRATED IN ASOKAN SCULPTURE

### *The Ape's Sacrifice*

(Jataka, 497)

Once on a time, . . . the Bodhisat was born as an ape. He grew up strong and sturdy, and lived with his tribe of eighty thousand on the foot-hills of Himalaya. Now by the banks of Ganges stood a mango-tree with dense leaves and sweet fruits of heavenly taste and smell, large as goblets. From one branch they fell to earth, from one into the river, and from two into the cup of the trunk itself. . . . Now despite the vigilance of the Bodhisat a fruit fell into the river, and was carried down to where the King of Benares was bathing. It stuck in a net upstream, and as he was going home that evening fishermen found it and brought it to him. None knowing what it was he called his foresters who told him that it was a mango. So making them taste it first he ate a piece himself, and gave some to his women and ministers.

The taste of it filled his whole being with a desire to eat more. Learning from the foresters where the tree stood he pushed upstream

upon rafts, and . . . came in due course to the tree. At its foot he had his bed made and encamped with his retinue, setting guards and making a fire. Then, while all slept, came the Bodhisat with his tribe of apes at midnight. And eighty thousand swung from branch to branch eating the fruit. The King awoke, and seeing them, called his archers to surround the apes and shoot them: 'To-morrow', said he, 'we'll eat mangoes and the flesh of apes.' 'Aye, aye, Sire!' said the archers and stood about the tree with arrows aimed. The apes, chattering with fear, cried to the Bodhisat, 'Sire! the archers! What are we to do?' 'Fear not, I will give you life,' he said, and with words of good cheer he climbed an upright branch, and passing along another which leaned towards the Ganges leaped from it, a hundred bow-lengths, to a bush upon its banks. Marking the distance, he cut a bamboo shoot; but in reckoning the length forgot a part of it wound about his loins. Then he leaped, like a cloud driven by the wind, but failed to reach the trunk. Grasping a branch firmly he called to the troop: 'Come, and good luck prosper you. Pass along my back to the bamboo-shoot.' So all escaped, saluting the Bodhisat. But Devadatta thinking, 'Here is a chance to be rid of my rival', climbed high up, and leaped on the Bodhisat's back, breaking his heart with piercing pain. Then off he went, and Bodhisat was alone.

The King of Benares saw it all, and lay thinking, 'This noble beast, not counting his life dear, has saved his tribe.' And when day came he thought to himself: 'It is not right to kill this King of Apes. Let me bring him down and care for him.' So he had the Bodhisat brought gently down and clad him in a yellow robe and washed him in Ganges water, and gave him sweet drink, and anointed him with fine oil. And so, laying him on a bed of oiled skins, spoke thus to him:

A bridge thou madest for thy tribe to escape;  
What are they then to thee, most noble Ape?

Then the Bodhisat instructed the King in verses:

Victorious Monarch, I, the monkeys' King,  
Protected them from fear and suffering.

No fear of death have I, nor feel the pain  
Giving my life, my people's life to gain . . .

A parable for thee, O King, to learn is here  
The welfare of thy realm—be that thy chiefest care.

So the Bodhisat instructed the King.

## III. EDICTS OF ASOKA

(H. V. Smith)

(a) *From Minor Rock Edicts*

## Edict I

*The Fruit of Exertion:*

Let small and great exert themselves.

## Edict II

*Summary of the Law of Piety:*

Father and mother must be hearkened to; similarly, respect for living creatures must be firmly established; truth must be spoken. These are the virtues of the Law of Piety which must be practised. Similarly, the teacher must be revered by the pupil and towards relations fitting courtesy must be shown.

This is the ancient nature (of piety)—this leads to length of days, and according to this men must act.

*The Bhabra Edict:*

Whatsoever, Reverend Sirs, has been said by the Venerable Buddha, has been well said.

*The Kalinga Edicts:*I. *The Borderers' Edict:*

The King is to us even as a father; he loves us even as he loves himself; we are to the King even as his children.

II. *The Provincials' Edict:*

All men are my children, and just as I desire for my children that they enjoy every kind of prosperity and happiness in this world and the next, so also I desire the same for all men.

With certain natural dispositions, success is impossible, to wit, envy, lack of perseverance, harshness, impatience, want of application, laziness, indolence. You must desire that such dispositions be not yours. The root of the whole matter lies in perseverance and patience in applying this principle. The indolent man cannot rouse himself to move, but one must needs move, advance, go on.



*(b) From The Fourteen Rock Edicts*

## Edict I

*The Sacredness of Life:*

Here (in the capital) no animal may be slaughtered for sacrifice, nor may the holiday-feast be held, because His Sacred and Gracious Majesty the King sees much offence in the holiday-feast.

## Edict III

*The Quinquennial Circuit:*

The Law of Piety—A meritorious thing is the hearkening to father and mother; a meritorious thing is liberality to friends, acquaintances, relatives, Brahmins, and ascetics; a meritorious thing is abstention from the slaughter of living creatures; a meritorious thing is small expense and small accumulation.

## Edict V

*Censors of the Law of Piety:*

A good deed is a difficult thing. He who is the author of a good deed does a difficult thing.

## Edict XI

*True Almsgiving:*

There is no such almsgiving as is the almsgiving of the Law of Piety—friendship in piety, liberality in piety, kinship in piety.

Herein does it (true almsgiving) consist—in proper treatment of slaves and servants, hearkening to father and mother, giving to friends, comrades, relations, ascetics, and Brahmins, and sparing of living creatures. Therefore, a father, son, brother, master, friend, comrade, nay even a neighbour, ought to say, 'This is meritorious, this ought to be done.'

## Edict XII

*Toleration:*

His Sacred and Gracious Majesty the King does reverence to men of all sects, whether ascetics or householders, by gifts and various forms of reverence. Concord . . . is meritorious, to wit, hearkening and hearkening willingly to the Law of Piety as accepted by other people.

## IV THE PRE-GUPTAN ERA

(c. 150 B.C.—A.D. 300)

'When unrighteousness prevails I am born among men.' GITA.

### I

THE age which followed the Mauryas is in many respects obscure and chaotic. We know it from coins of Indo-Greek satraps and Scythian invaders, from ruined cities such as the frontier-capital Taxila, from legends such as the Lives of Saint Thomas the Christian missionary and martyr, and of Asvaghosa the poet-philosopher of northern Buddhism. But though the history is obscure, with the Sunga Dynasty of Magadha (184–72 B.C.) ruling a diminishing empire, retreating from the great Andhra advance in the south, pushed by successive waves of 'barbarians' from the north-west—yet certain great figures stand out, and so many literary masterpieces survive that this era may well be called one of the great flowering periods of the Indian spirit.

The Greek Menander, for example, immortalized in the later Buddhist work the *Milinda Pañha*, or 'Questions of Menander', is revealed as a just and wise ruler: inquiring with a truly Greek spirit into the teachings of Buddhism, and a worthy counterfoil to the Sage Nagasena—a typical Buddhist Elder, detached, calm, and logical. Menander's date is about 150 B.C., and he ruled most of central India. Another Greek, Heliodorus, set up a pillar two centuries later to Vasudeva, or Vishnu; and we may infer that many Greeks made themselves at home in India, and that some became Hindus.

A valuable old astronomical work in Sanskrit tells us that the 'Yavanas'—i.e. Ionians—pushed as far west as Pataliputra, but retired because of strife among themselves in their own kingdom: that they were eventually conquered

by a Saka king, whose people in turn yielded to another invader. We may see in this a reference to the internecine feuds between the various Greek kingdoms. We know that just after Asoka conquered Kalinga the Bactrian kingdom of Diodotus and the Parthian kingdom of Arsaces arose; and that various Greek dynasties wrested the power from one another. Thus the house of Eucratides, to which Menander belonged, seized the throne from that of Diodotus, and was ousted in turn from Gandhara by the Sakas. They, in due course, were defeated by the Hindu king Vikramaditya<sup>1</sup> in 58 B.C., whose era follows that of the Sungas. These glimpses of history we get from coins and inscriptions, which tell us too that the Yavanas held out in the Kabul Valley till the onward rush of the Kushanas under Kadphises I swept them away. Their coins and an impress on Indian art remain as their only monument.

But it is a noble one: many a statue survives, from Gandhara in the north-west to Ceylon in the far south, which seems to represent an Indian Apollo—but which is in fact a Graeco-Indian Buddha. The great Guru has become the greatest of the gods; and Greece has supplied the type. Now, too, Hinduism is putting out a great effort to set up a god as attractive, and finding in Krishna Vasudeva, warrior and shepherd, a truer expression of her national ideals. An early warrior, he is in the centuries just before and just after the birth of Christ becoming first a demigod, and then an avatar or incarnation of the Supreme.

In the interplay of these forces India achieves a great civilization, in spite of invading hordes of Bactrians, Parthians or Pahlavas, and Scythians or Sakas. Perhaps it is in the effort to win and Indianize them, as she later won the Moguls, that her religions awake and put forth great missionary works, retelling the story of the Buddha in the sublime epic of Asvaghosa, the *Buddhacarita*, and of Krishna in her greatest poem, the *Bhagavad-gita*. These two great rival gods now become universal 'Lords of

<sup>1</sup> This is really a title 'Sun of Power': there were several rulers so called. See<sup>2</sup> Ch. v for Vikramaditya under whom the 'Nine Gems' flourished.

the World', saviours with a message of hope and encouragement all the more alluring as the political horizon grows dark and threatening.

To an India troubled with much fighting, and puzzled by the failure of the Vedic gods, the Gita of the Hindus and the Lotus of the northern Buddhists were veritable gospels. We may imagine them as works of great thinkers living at such cosmopolitan centres as Taxila and Indra-prastha—capitals of the Buddhist and Brahmin world, where devotees of both cults met, and men of many races. This era then from the second century B.C. to the beginning of the fourth century A.D. is for India, as for China, a formative and even a brilliant age, in spite of chaos and apparent failure. And it is as necessary to study it in India as it is necessary to study the age of the Han in China: without this era the great achievements of Guptan India and of T'ang China were alike impossible and unintelligible. The inspiration of the Buddha plays a great part in both: it is in fact the quickening touch which revives both civilizations, and begins the great task of blending them.

## II

When then the last of the feeble descendants of Asoka yielded to the Sunga usurper, Pataliputra remained the capital of the empire of Magadha, and Ujjain the seat of its western viceroy—a city which maintained its place of power and high culture for a thousand years. In old Indian dramas we find both cities lauded. Pataliputra is 'The City'; here are to be seen:

Givers of largesse, arts in high esteem,  
Women both fair and courteous, wealthy lords  
Neither effeminate nor niggardly, and cultured men  
Of every class and caste, each honouring each with gladness—  
The very gods might well take joy in such a home!

Of Ujjain in the west another dramatist exclaims: 'Ah! the wondrous beauty of Ujjain, queen of Avanti, rich in

varied merchandise, painted ornament of India, earth's fair cheek'.

Here holy Vedic chants, trumpeting elephants;  
Here chariots throng and horses, bow-strings hum,  
And 'midst the turmoil rise calm voices of the wise.  
Hither is merchandise from the four oceans brought,  
And song and music, dice and junketing:  
Gossip of rakes, and all the arts are here;  
Houses of pleasure, cages full of birds  
A-tinkle with jewellery on arm and lovely waist.

A chain of such cities from Pataliputra to Kasi and Mathura and Ujjain supported the religious—Brahmins within the city, monks and friars close at hand. And the Buddhist writers give us much the same impression of the cities of the time as we find in the secular dramatists and in Brahmin books. Here is a detailed account from the *Questions of Menander*:

'A city fine and regular, measured out into suitable quarters, with trenches and ramparts thrown up around it, with strong gateways, watch-towers, and battlements, with wide squares and open places and junctions and cross-ways, with cleanly and even roads, with regular lines of open shops, well-provided with parks, and gardens, and lakes, and lotus-ponds, and wells, adorned with many kinds of temples to the gods.'

We read too of

'nobles and Brahmins, merchants and workers; soldiers mounted on elephants, on horseback, and in chariots; infantry, bowmen and swordsmen; standard-bearers, officers, and camp-followers; high-born warriors whose delight is in war, fighting champions, men mighty as elephants, heroes, men who fight in buckskin, devoted fighting-men born of slaves in great houses or of the privates in the royal army; troops of professional wrestlers; cooks and curry-makers, barbers and bathing attendants, smiths and florists, workers in gold and silver and lead and tin and copper and brass and iron, and jewellers; messengers; potters, salt-gatherers, tanners, carriage builders, carvers in ivory, rope makers, comb makers, cotton-thread spinners, basket-makers, bow manufacturers, bow-string makers, arrow fletchers, painters, dye manufacturers, dyers, weavers, tailors,

assayers of gold, cloth-merchants, dealers in perfumes, grass cutters, hewers of wood, hired servants, people who live by gathering flowers and fruits and roots in the woods, hawkers of boiled rice, sellers of cakes, fishmongers, butchers, dealers in strong drinks, play actors, dancers, acrobats, conjurors, professional bards, wrestlers, corpse burners, casters out of rotten flowers, savages, wild men of the woods, prostitutes, swingers and jumpers, and the slave girls of bullies—people of many countries.<sup>1</sup>

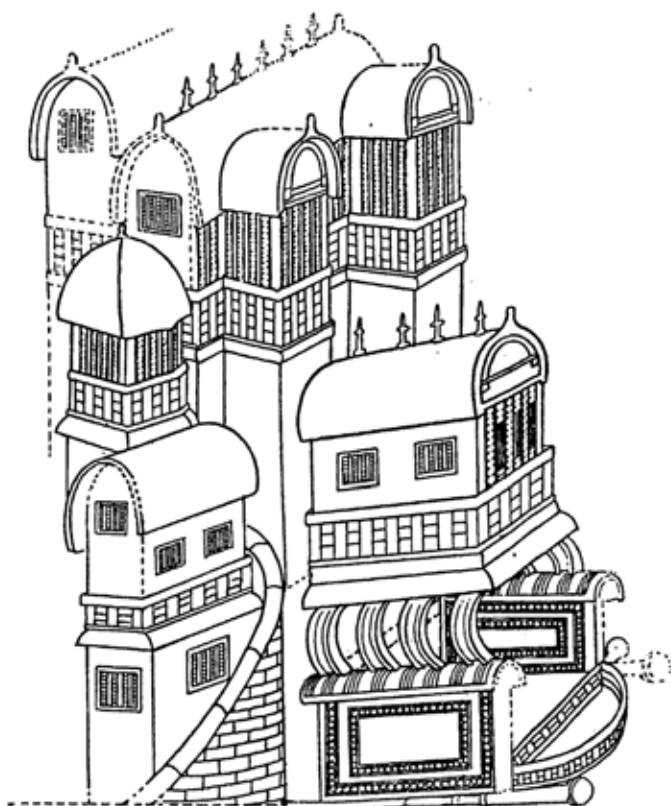
It is a picture of a complex civilization, and we know from other Buddhist writings and from monuments of the first century A.D. that these walled cities were built four-square, with a gatehouse at the centre of each wall; that a moat surrounded them, with a bridge crossing it and leading under the torana or arch of the gateway, into a hall and thence into a customs house. Passing this the traveller was free to go on his way into the city by one of four main roads. As the great cities of the Dravidians in the south surround the temples, and follow their ground-plan, so these Buddhist cities seem to follow the general plan of the stupa with its toranas at each point of the compass, and its pilgrim-ways leading to the central shrine. The city in fact is a microcosm, representing the earth and its four quarters, and so is the stupa.

That such a city as Ujjain, at the meeting of three great trade-routes, had a continuous life from the time of Chandragupta Maurya (fourth century B.C.) to that of the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Chang (seventh century A.D.), indicates that the wars of invasion which continued intermittently from Alexander to the Huns who broke up the Guptan empire, left important parts of the country undisturbed. We know indeed that these invaders pressed one another too hard to make tenure of even the northern and central parts of India very secure. The Bactrians, for example, were harassed by the Parthians and both by the Greeks, and all in turn succumbed to the virile Sakas and Yuetchi—Scythians and Huns whose migrations play so great a part in the history of Asia, and indeed of the world.

<sup>1</sup> From T. W. Rhys Davids, *Questions of King Milinda*, S.B.E., vols. xxxv-vi.

## III

One of these conquerors stands out even more clearly than the Greek Menander. Soon after St. Thomas came to the court of the Pahlava Gondopharnes at Taxila, arose



Model of a gatehouse and buildings against the city-wall, from Amaravati

Kanishka, a Scythian general, to establish in the north-west a second Holy Buddhist Empire: his stupa or mound near Peshawar has been discovered—traced by M. Foucher from the diary of Fa Hian; and in it a silver reliquary with a portrait of the king in long Scythian boots and trousers,

and images reputed to be those of the Buddha, whose statuette surmounts it, and whose disciples are symbolized in the hamsa or swans—birds of wisdom in India,<sup>1</sup> which form a fine decorative frieze.

That Kanishka summoned a Buddhist council to settle issues between the rival schools we know: that he had the Buddhist commentaries engraved on copper plates, and that Asvaghosa was the great ornament of his court are well-attested legends. In him northern India had a wise and tolerant ruler, whose coins suggest his interest not only in Buddhism, but in Zoroastrianism and Hinduism. And in Taxila are remains of a Persian sun-temple, an Aramaic inscription, many Buddhist shrines and such unique and eloquent remains as the double-headed eagle of the Huns, and the birch-bark medical treatises of the Buddhists. Coins of Gondopharnes and of his brother Guda also exist, and the legend of St. Thomas wins growing acceptance—if not in its picturesque and symbolic detail, yet in its general statement of a Christian mission to India in the apostolic age. It is possible that Asvaghosa got some hints from an early Christian liturgy which he developed into a Buddhist service of praise, homily, and reading. And Buddhist stupas begin to give place to pillared chapels as the Buddha-cult becomes a worship, the relic-shrine an altar, and the monk a priest.

At Karli and Nasik, both in western India, are fine first-century cave-temples where this process is seen in full swing. Their main purpose is corporate worship, their fine pillared halls surrounding the monastic cells of the monks, and the stupa—once the main element in a Buddhist shrine—is now an altar. At Ajanta we see how sculpture and painting were used for edification: the Buddha-legend supplying splendid material for the teaching of renunciation and the higher joys of the solitary life. Here is an art at once sensuous and detached. The young

<sup>1</sup> Paramahansa, 'Greatest of Swans', is a title for the great religious Guru, or Teacher: he can sift truth from falsehood as the swan can separate milk from water!



Kshatriya is surrounded by luxury; he goes forth and awakes to the facts of suffering, old age, disease, and death; and realizes the calmness and serenity of the monk. All this is told in dramatic dialogue by Asvaghosa. The prince asks with bated breath at the sight of old age:

Who, who is this that cometh, tottering?  
 White are his beard and hair, his eyes deep-sunken,  
 Bent on his staff, his shrunken limbs a-tremble!  
 Is't Nature's work or accident, my Channa?  
 Old Age, Sir Prince, it is that breaketh him,  
 That thief of beauty, pilfering our manhood:  
 Begetter of sorrow, lustihood's vanquisher,  
 Foe of the mind and ravisher of memory.  
 He too once hung upon his mother's bosom,  
 He too once crawled, and slowly learned to walk.  
 Slowly he came to youthful strength and beauty,  
 Till eld came slowly creeping, creeping o'er him.

The women's attempts to enchant the young prince are another favourite theme for poet and artist. Asvaghosa's version is as follows:

And Udayi, the chaplain's son, addressed the women and said, 'Come, all you fair and lovely ones, devise some lure, for transient is the power of beauty, yet holds the world in chains by guile and subtle arts. Let not the King fail of an heir to the throne. Weak women are set on high, and mighty is their sway over men. What may their arts not do, inflaming men?'

Then all of them, as a horse touched by the whip, put forth new powers of allurements, and went to the prince, and strove in the exercise of their arts. Their light draperies revealing their fair forms, they joined in music and in smiling converse, lifting an eyebrow, flashing white teeth and sidelong glances. So, with dainty, mincing gait they came, as a bride shyly approaching her lord.

But the Prince sat unmoved, still and resolute, even as the great Elephant stands calm amidst the restless herd.

This is from the Chinese version of the *Buddhacarita*. The Sanskrit poem is much more explicit in its description of the wiles of the women. It sets forth the various types of courtesan with a discernment hardly to be expected in

a Buddhist monk. Yet it is fine poetry, and they form a splendid foil to the prince, who mocks their advances, unmoved. So the great tale unfolds: his victory over Mara the Tempter and his armies, his enlightenment after heroic search, his gathering of the first disciples, his power over men and women of all classes. We read, too, of the power of the Buddha's 'soul-force' over the mad elephant, illustrated in a lovely little medallion of this time, and belonging to south India.

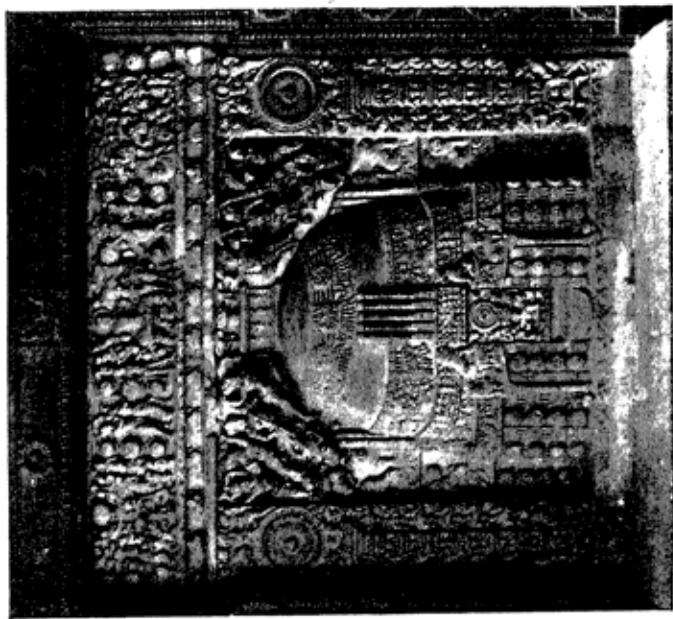
On the King's highway Devadatta let loose a rogue elephant, inflamed with drink: through the streets and lanes of the city he raged, wounding and killing, till bodies lay across the roads, and brains and blood were spattered far and wide. All fled in terror to their homes, or with shrieks and cries of panic fled far from the city and hid in caves and holes. . . . Then came the Blessed One with five hundred monks towards the city. Men leaning from windows and doors urged them to come no further. But he with perfect calm, his heart tranquil and serene, reflected only on the sorrow caused by hate, and yearned in his heart of compassion to assuage it. . . . His monks all fled, save only Ananda, who stood unshaken, bound by the ties of duty. Then the drunken elephant looking upon the Buddha came at once to himself, and bending low worshipped at his feet. As a mountain he fell to earth; and as the moon lights up a cloud so the Blessed One placed upon his head a lotus-hand. The Elephant himself can do no hurt to the Mighty Dragon.

At Sanchi there is a fine early fragment showing the elephant as he takes the dust from the Buddha's feet. Equally beautiful and more detailed is the Amaravati medallion illustrated here. It is easy to see why the devout Hiuen Chang called this great poet 'one of the four suns which light the world'. And of his pregnant stanzas I Ching wrote in the next century: 'He clothes manifold ideas in few words, which so charm the heart that it never wearies of them.' He tells us too that these poems are widely read in the India of his day 'and in the Southern Islands'. They evidently inspired the art of Amaravati in India and of Borobodur in Java, and even the brief passages quoted above will make it clear that the Buddhism of this

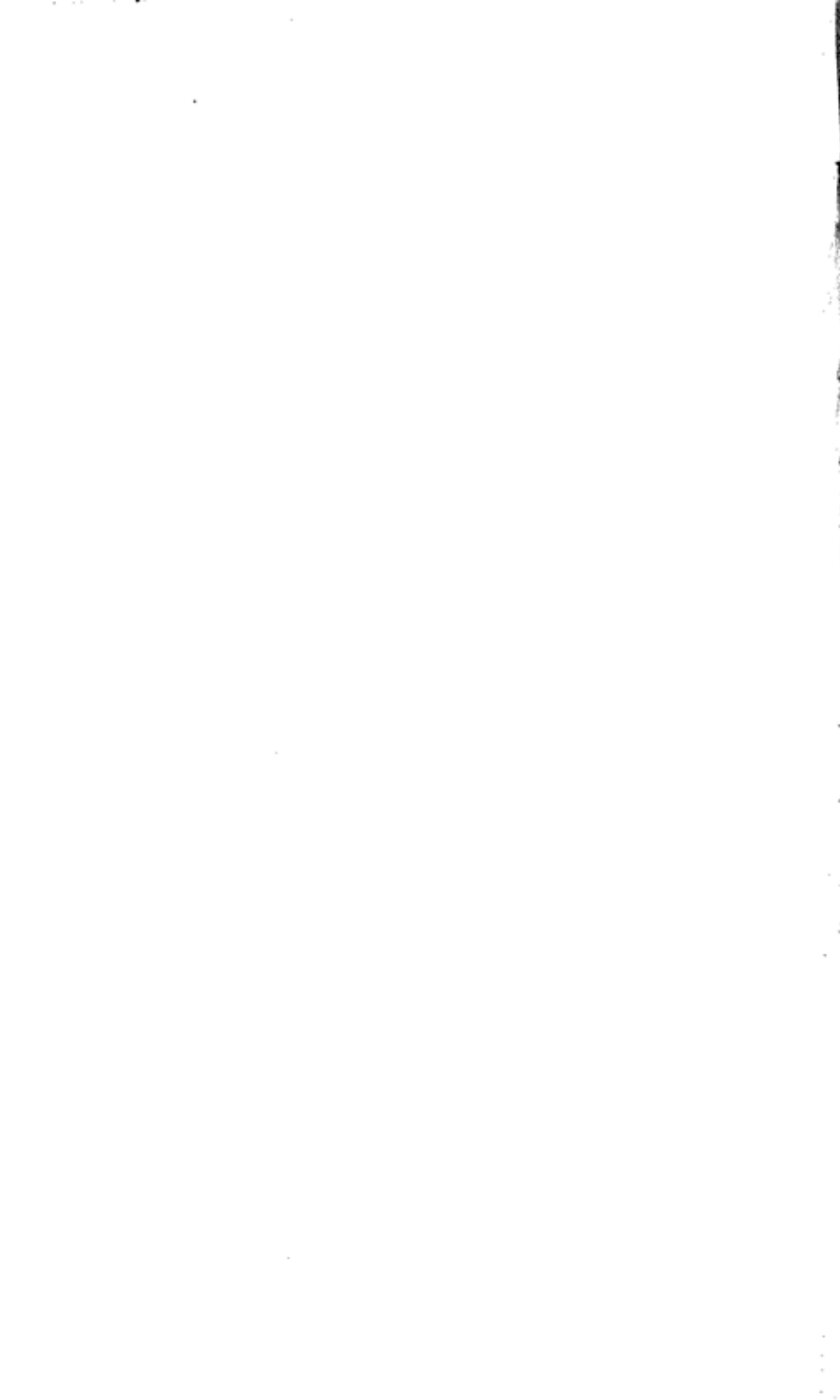


THE TAMING OF THE ELEPHANT

EARLY SOUTH INDIAN ART



A STUPA FROM AMARAVATI



age was popular and colourful enough to inspire great art and to commend itself to the masses.

## IV

The Milinda Pañha shows us that it prescribed an orderly and clean-cut scholasticism to the more serious. Described by its translator, Dr. T. W. Rhys Davids,<sup>1</sup> as the best work of a controversial kind that had been written at that time in any country, and as 'the masterpiece of Indian prose', it is in fact nothing less than an early historical romance in the form of dialogues between the Greek king and the Buddhist sage, Nagasena. It is fascinating as an early chapter in the meeting of East and West.

The form of the dramatic dialogue was already well known in India, and religious plays were as much a part of her civilization as the miracle-plays of Christianity were of the Middle Ages in Europe. The Milinda Pañha is an early example of the use by Buddhists of this technique, as the Gita is of its use by Hindus. In each case we see the lay-mind at work, seeking satisfaction in matters of religion and theology. Or it may be that both great works were written by religious leaders for the instruction of the laity; for both religions were making a bid for the adherence of the masses, and especially of the kings and warriors, who play a leading role at this time.

The great pacifist and internationalist Asoka had proved how useful Buddhism could be in building a nation, but under his feeble successors his empire had fallen to pieces, and the Gita raises as one of its central themes the age-old problem of pacifism, and answers it by strongly reaffirming the Hindu theory of caste: a man must perform his caste duties, for he is born in that station in life which he has earned by his own actions: kings and warriors exist to rule and to fight. It is their dharma, or métier: for their Karma or deeds have caused them to be Kshatriyas.

<sup>1</sup> *Sacred Books of the East*, vols. xxxv-vi.

The Milinda Pañha applies this same doctrine of Karma to the solution of the still more universal problem of human inequality. Why, asks the King, are some men born to happiness and prosperity and others to sorrow and poverty? And the Sage replies that just as plants vary according to the seed sown, so, by a law of nature no less fundamental, men reap the harvest of their acts.

The book concerns itself also with redefining the terms Brahmin and Kshatriya; the Buddha is both, a Brahmin in his spiritual freedom, 'cultivating within himself the highest and best states of mind, and enjoying the supreme bliss of ecstatic meditation,' and also a king, 'exalted above all ordinary men, making his friends rejoice and his opponents mourn.' Priest and Ruler meet in a Kingly Teacher, and old terms are redefined.

In the same bold spirit the book deals with eighty-two problems set by the king. Beginning with the cardinal teaching that the 'soul' or person is a collection of states of consciousness, as the king's chariot is built up of its component parts, it goes on to show that rebirth means the transmission of energy, as one lamp is lit from another, and leads up to the high and difficult doctrine of the Goal Nibbana. This it describes as a state rather than a place. 'Is there any spot upon which a man may stand and . . . realize Nibbana?' asks the King: 'Truly, Sire, there is such a spot,' replies the Sage. 'Where then, Nagasena, is that spot to be found?' 'Virtue, Sire, is that spot . . . wheresoever he be, the man who orders his life aright will realize Nibbana.' With this splendid climax the main part of the book ends. Another section brings home to the lay mind, in a brilliant series of similes, the excellences of the Buddhist life. The following is typical:

Just as the mongoose only attacks a snake when he has protected himself with an antidote, so, Sire, should the earnest and active monk as he goes out into the world of anger and hate where quarrels and enmities rage, keep his mind ever protected with the antidote of love. For it was said by the Commander of the Faith, Sariputta the Elder,





GUPTAN BUDDHA IN  
TEACHING POSE (Dharmachakra)  
SARNATH



ANDHRA BUDDHA IN MEDITATION (Samadhi)  
ANURADHAPURA



For one's own kin should love be felt,  
For strangers too: let all the world  
Be circled with a heart of love:  
This is the way of Buddhas all.

Besides these attractive summaries of the Buddhist religion in its monastic form, the book gives us many a glimpse of the secular civilization of the time, with its highly developed military machine, its well-planned cities, its courtiers and artisans, and the natural beauties which delight the heart in the pages of the best Buddhist and Hindu literature. We get glimpses of India's veneration for Himalaya 'towering aloft in heights serene and calm', and of her interest in the elephant, which is the motive for so much of the art of the period. 'As the elephant revels in the water, plunging and sporting in cool clear ponds where many-coloured lotuses abound, so should the earnest monk plunge into the waters of self-mastery, pure and clear as truth, and full of the flowers of freedom.'

It is a book to read and re-read, alike for its content and for its style. And though it contains many accretions and some passages which are less direct and of less worth than those quoted, it nevertheless remains the most artistic of Buddhist scriptures, and Nagasena is as attractive as Kim's Lama.

Like Megasthenes of an earlier day, the Greeks of Menander's time no doubt found much to admire and respect in India. The Guptan statue here illustrated, which shows us the Buddha as Teacher, betrays Greek influence on Buddhist art, and there was no doubt much give-and-take between the two peoples.

That Buddhism long continued a serious rival to the popular gods of Hinduism is clear, and at this time it is seen imitating the Krishna-cult, and becoming a religion of passionate devotion to an incarnate Lord, who offers salvation to all, and claims to be the Eternal dwelling in time. But for Nagasena as for his first followers, he is still the great Elder Brother and Physician, supernatural but not supernatural, the discoverer of the eternal Dhamma or

Truth. He is the Architect and Founder of a 'City of Righteousness' whose work among men continues in the activities of his Order of the Yellow Robe. 'Just, O King, as hungry men seek for food, and sick men for medicine, as in need they seek a friend and in danger a place of refuge, as they look to a teacher for instruction and for promotion to the King, so do the followers of Buddha seek after virtue by keeping the vows of renunciation.'

Those who dwell in the City of Righteousness are said to be 'free of lust and malice and infatuation, to endure hardness, eating but once a day, to be content to sleep anywhere; calm and tranquil, delighting in meditation and the transcendent powers which meditation brings; they become Commanders of the Faith: rebirth is at an end, and they are no more for this world.' This is the Buddhist ideal of Sainthood in its Arhat manifestation which now dominates Ceylon, Siam, and Burma, and influences all the Far East. It may be compared with the Hindu ideal of the Yogi, and with the Bodhisattva ideal of later Buddhism, which we shall study in the Lotus Scripture, and which is summed up in the words of a great Buddhist teacher: 'Servant of all, a very sweeper for humility, friend of those who need a friend, food of the hungry, medicine of the sick.' Here Buddhism and Christianity meet in a common ideal. For Buddhism develops as it adapts itself to the needs of men. Aristocratic and monastic it has always tended to be; yet it has never wholly forgotten the common man and his needs.

## V

The greatest secular works of this time are the Panchatantra, or 'The Five Ruses,' and the Epics, now edited in their final form. The greatest religious scripture is the Bhagavad-gita, and if this era had produced nothing else than these it would still be unique. It is characteristic that this great poem, written in 'ecstatic verse', occurs in the midst of the Mahabharata, the Great Epic, and that its setting is the famed battle-field of Kurukshetra. In such

surroundings the stern lessons of duty, of detachment, of religion in action, come home with special force. Kurukshetra is the citadel of the Holy Land of India, and the key to its mastery; here we find the rival armies of the Pandavas and the Kauravas engaged in civil war. Splendid pictures are given us of heroes whom we have met in the early parts of the Mahabharata, in all the pageantry of war. And as the old king sounds the signal for battle we hear the blare of trumpets and of horns, the rolling of drums, and the crash of gongs and cymbals. Here is Arjuna with the god Krishna beside him, seated in a chariot of gold, drawn by white horses and with the great banner of Hanuman, the monkey-god, unfurled. He asks the divine charioteer to drive him into the 'No Man's Land' between the armies, that he may gaze upon the enemy before battle is joined. He sees a great multitude of his own kin in both armies, and his heart melts within him:

When Krishna, I behold my kin  
To battle's fury led

I feel my mouth go dry; I feel  
My fainting members fail;  
My hair stand up in horror, and  
My trembling body quail.

The bow Gandiva drops from out  
My hand; my skin is burning;  
I can no longer keep my feet;  
My maddened brain is turning;

The evil omens threaten me;  
Krishna, it is not right  
To look for any blessing, if  
I kill my kin in fight.

I do not wish for victory,  
A kingdom or its joys:  
The kingdom, its delights, and life  
Would then be foolish toys.

## THE PRE-GUPTAN ERA

A kingdom, its delights, its joys  
 I only need for those  
 Who venturing their lives and wealth  
 Stand yonder as our foes:

Our teachers, grandsires, sires, the sires  
 And brothers of our wives,  
 Our uncles, grandsons, sons, the kin  
 Dear as our very lives.

Although they kill me, Krishna, I  
 Have no desire to slay;  
 The earth would not reward me, nor  
 The universe repay.<sup>1</sup>

It is a magnificent protest. Here the innate pacifism of the Indian thinker is deepened and made poignant by the fact of kinship with the enemy; it is the call of the blood; and in answering, Krishna has to marshal arguments from all sides. Patriotism, and the justice of the cause, the shame of cowardice, the splendour of courage: these familiar arguments which sound continually in the pacifist's ear are buttressed with the Indian doctrines of caste, duty to the One Life pulsing in all things, making death a mere incident, the dead and killing an illusion! The last is admirably (and unconvincingly) set forth:

Whence, Arjun, in your hour of trial  
 Comes this ignoble shame,  
 Unfit for heaven, repugnant to  
 An honourable name?

Yield not to impotence, for you  
 An unbecoming pose!  
 Shun paltry feeble-heartedness!  
 Arise! Distress your foes!

Since naught unreal can come to birth,  
 No real thing cease to be,  
 The limits of the twain are plain  
 To them who truly see.

<sup>1</sup> The passages from the Gita are quoted from the translation by Arthur W. Ryder, *The Bhagavad-Gita* (Chicago Univ. Press).

Eternal, then, is that by which  
Creation's web was spun;  
Destruction of eternal life  
Is possible to none.

These bodies pass; but he within,  
With life immortal dight,  
Is neither limited nor lost;  
Therefore, brave hero, fight!

If the red slayer think he slays,  
The slain think he be slain,  
They err: the slayer vainly kills;  
The victim dies in vain.

This passage is taken from the Katha Upanishad: it is fine poetry and sound philosophy—misapplied. We cannot wonder that the great heart of Sakyamuni and his acute reason rebelled against it, and taught that man is responsible for his own act, and that there is no Atman, or absolute, to relieve him of responsibility.

Having stated the problem and noticed some of the answers of Krishna, it may be well to turn back and draw the ground plan of this amazing scripture. It is made up of three main books, each containing six chapters. The first deals for the most part with the way of Karma or Action. 'Do your caste-duties,' says Krishna, 'play the man as a warrior, and you will win salvation.' Hereconciles this teaching with the other doctrine of inaction or meditation, by showing that action may be performed in the calm meditative spirit of the Yogi, that the warrior may fight in the spirit of the judge, detached and serene 'as the tortoise drawing his limbs within his shell'.

It is Mr. Gandhi's faith in the spirit of his people and in this teaching which has led him to believe that they could burn other men's property and keep calm in doing it. Shivaji, the heroic leader of the Mahrattas against the Moguls in the seventeenth century, justified many an act of savage cruelty and treachery by claiming that it was done in this spirit; and in our own day Indian students

have gone out to hurl bombs at defenceless people, with the Gita as their inspiration.

There is no more characteristic statement of the caste-system, its strength and its weakness, than is found here. Indian nationalism replies in the Gita to the pacifism and the anti-caste tendencies of Buddhism, that caste is a divine system, and that the warrior has no choice but to fight. Cleave as he does to this book, Mahatma Gandhi can justify at once his pacifism (for it teaches the doctrine of ahimsa or harmlessness) and also his action in recruiting soldiers for the army, for it very strongly emphasizes the duties of caste.

The second main part of the Gita deals largely with the way of Bhakti: this is the way of loving devotion—an easier path to salvation:

If any moved by utter love,  
Is minded me to bring  
A leaf, a flower, fruit, water, I  
Receive love's offering.

It goes on to state that the Bhagavan is as his worshipper should be, loving and equable to all:

I look on life with level eye;  
I have no foe nor friend;  
Yet they are mine, and I in them  
Who love me to the end.

Yes, even the most complete of rogues  
In whom no passions fight  
With love of me, is deemed a saint,  
Because his heart is right.

Soon virtue enters into him;  
Enduring peace draws nigh;  
Oh, never doubt, brave Arjuna,  
My faithful do not die.

Side by side with this doctrine of a personal God over against his personal devotee this book contains also the greatest statement in all literature of the indwelling power or Atman: it is a philosophical as well as a devotional work:

To all the world of life I am  
Creation; I am death.

Apart from me, brave Arjun, there  
Exists no single thing;  
The universe is strung on me  
Like pearls upon a string.

I am the taste in water; sound  
In ether; none the less  
Am I the mystic word that gives  
All scriptures power to bless;  
I am the light in moon and sun;  
In man the manliness;

I am the fragrance in the earth;  
I am the heat in fire;  
The life in life; the energy  
In men of stern desire;

I am the everlasting seed  
All forms of life to save;  
I am the wisdom of the wise;  
The courage of the brave;

I am the strength of those too strong  
For lust or passion's toll;  
I am the pure, permitted love  
Toward every living soul.

Here then are combined in the central teachings of this great book the two doctrines of immanence and transcendence, both of which are needed if religion is to be at once philosophical and practical.

'There cannot be worship', says Rabindranath Tagore, 'unless we admit duality, and there cannot be devotion unless we fix our gaze on One.' Like the Gita he swings between the Vaishnava emphasis upon Bhakti, and the Upanishadic doctrine of the One Reality.

## VI

But to these the Gita seeks also to reconcile the Sankhya teaching of the two eternal realities, Nature, Prakriti, and Souls, Purusha, and here is a reconciliation far less happy:

there cannot be at once only one real, and two realities.  
But the attempt is nobly made.

Know thou that Nature and the Spirit both  
Have no beginning! Know that qualities  
And changes of them are by Nature wrought;  
That Nature puts to work the acting frame,  
But Spirit doth inform it, and so cause  
Feeling of pain or pleasure.<sup>1</sup>

Krishna then begins to teach that Purusha, or Spirit, is linked to Prakriti, or Nature, in order that it may awake to its own reality, and withdraw from this entangling alliance: and the system is removed from the danger of materialism by being linked with the Yoga doctrine, or the practice of the spiritual life. Man is to realize the One Spirit supreme over nature and flesh, uncontaminated, ethereal, omnipresent:

Soul, changeless, passive and supreme,  
Discarnate, uncreated,  
May dwell within the body, yet  
Be uncontaminated.

As ether penetrates the whole  
Yet subtly shrinks from stain,  
So soul is stainless in its wide  
Corporeal domain.

The sun is single, yet to him  
All darkneses must yield:  
And so, brave prince, one knower can  
Illuminate his field.

Distinguishing the knower and  
The field with wisdom's eye,  
And life's release from matter, man  
Attains the goal most high.

The last book, in which these Sankhya passages occur, deals primarily with the way of Jñāna, or intuitive realization, and to the Indian these three great ways seem satisfactorily combined in this amazing book.

<sup>1</sup> *The Song Celestial*, Edwin Arnold.



Here, too, is set forth the great ethical ideal of Indian sainthood. The worshipper is to be like his God,

'hateless towards all, void of the sense of I and mine, bearing indifferently pleasure and pain, undismayed in the presence of the world and causing it no dismay, empty of joy and sorrow, of fear and dismay, pure, impartial . . . indifferent alike to foe and friend, enduring honour and dishonour, heat and cold, shame and joy without attachment.'

Such is the Jivan-mukta—the liberated soul, the saint of India:

The man who hates no living thing,  
Kind, patient, and humane,  
Unselfish, unpretentious, calm  
In pleasure as in pain.

Content, controlled and disciplined,  
From wavering fancies free,  
Whose brain and intellect and love  
Are mine, is dear to me.

Abhorring none, by none abhorred,  
Whom fear and fever flee  
With triumph and intolerance,  
He too is dear to me.

He who, uncalculating, deft,  
Scorning ambition's fee,  
Impartial, pure, and unperturbed,  
Loves me, is dear to me.

This is the key to the understanding of the images of many of the gods of Hinduism and Buddhism, sitting aloft, immovable, serene, untouched by human infirmity.

That Indian sculpture has affected the thought of the Gita is also clear, for there is in the centre of the book a transformation-scene in which the kindly warrior-god gives place to the terrible form of Vishnu with devouring tusks and many arms, and all the weapons and symbols of Indian iconography. The object of this manifestation is to reveal that the enemy are like moths being burned in

## THE PRE-GUPTAN ERA

a flame, that it is the god himself who dooms them to destruction, that Arjuna is to see in the battle a part of the eternal process:

Death am I, and my present task  
Destruction. View in me  
The active slayer of these men;  
For though you fail and flee,  
These captains of the hostile hosts  
Shall die, shall cease to be.

They are already slain by me;  
Be thou the instrument.

Then banish pain and slay the slain!  
To fight and conquest go!

## VII

The Gita, then, is a work of post-Mauryan India. But the tale of the achievements of the age is still incomplete. The Buddhist analogue of the Gita—called into being perhaps by this challenge of Krishna—is the 'Lotus of the Good Law', *Saddharma-pundarika*,<sup>1</sup> as influential in the Buddhist world, and therefore more widespread in its influence; for Hinduism never became so notable a missionary religion as Buddhism. In this book India makes its most characteristic contribution to the Far East, and provides both China and Japan with new inspiration, and with new concepts of God and man. It is on every Buddhist altar in Japan, as much the foundation of her civilization as the Gita is of India's.

We have seen that the Gita relates Krishna to the Eternal Atman of the Upanishads: that it is in fact a layman's Upanishad. The *Saddharma-pundarika* is a work of similar import. It reveals Sakyamuni as Eternal Being, Lord and Father of the world, who has existed and worked from eternity, and whose influence will endure for ever. In a

<sup>1</sup> S.B.E., vol. xxi.

prelude of vast spaces and periods of time we are introduced to this eternal Sakyamuni on the heavenly Vulture Peak. He is seated surrounded by living creatures of all ranks, and there is an air of expectation; he is about to break his long silence. Then a vast ray of light pours from his brow and reveals the utmost confines of space. Maitreya, the coming Buddha, addresses Manjusri, the president of the assembly, and asks what is the meaning of this revelation. He is told that the Blessed One is about 'to pour forth the good rain of the law, to beat its great drum, to raise its great banner, to kindle its great torch, to blow a blast upon its great trumpet'. The divine Buddha, in fact, is about to utter a new Gospel, and to send a refreshing rain upon the expectant multitudes.

At last he speaks, but it is only to express the difficulty and profundity of the doctrine. Yielding, however, to his hearers' importunity, he consents to reveal it, at which 5,000 proud monks and nuns salute him and depart. Congratulating the rest upon having thus been winnowed of the chaff, he proceeds to reveal the central object of his mission on earth; it has one object only—to show all creatures the true Buddha-knowledge, and to open their eyes. Though there is but one road to Nirvana, yet in his skilful tact (*upaya*) he has opened three gates, one for Sravakas, or candidates for Arhatship; one for Pratyeka Buddhas, who are inclined to lonely meditation and solitary achievement; one for Buddhas who are sociable and altruistic. There is but one vehicle, the Buddha-vehicle, and even boys who in their play dedicate their little sand-heaps to the Victorious One, even they reach enlightenment; yea, even such as absent-mindedly have made one single act of homage at a shrine. Great is the skill of the teacher; 'Buddhas ye shall all become. Rejoice and be no longer doubtful or uncertain. I am the Father of you all.'

Such is the new gospel, and several parables in the next three sections bring home the teaching that men in different ways accept what is given to them; as plants take what they need from the impartial rain; as the oculist gradually

accustoms the eye to the light; as a father rescues his children from a burning house by devices suited to their understanding—so does this Teacher of gods and men, this spiritual Father of all, adapt his lessons with skilful pædaggogy. Let them all teach the Sutra, which alone reveals the essence of the faith, 'entering the abode of the Blessed One which is his strong Love, donning his robe which is Forbearance, and sitting in his seat which is the doctrine of Sunyata, or Transcendent Reality'. So shall all become Buddhas, winning their way to Nirvana, as their leader by great and heroic perseverance throughout the ages has won through to it. To each by name he gives a word of cheer, and while all are rejoicing in the good news, there comes an apocalyptic vision of a stupa containing the faint and emaciated body of a former Buddha; a seven-fold light shines from it, and a voice comes forth praising the work of the Lord, and expounding the new Gospel. All present bow in worship, and from the utmost confines of the universe, again lit up by a ray from the Buddha's brow, come the heavenly hosts; the old Buddha graciously invites the new one to share his throne, and confesses his own desire to hear the gospel. Whereupon Sakyamuni reveals that the time for his departure is at hand, and calls for volunteers to proclaim it to all the universe.

Manjusri now modestly declares that he has already preached it with such effect that the eight-year-old daughter of the Naga king has reached enlightenment, and even the false Devadatta has become a Buddha. Many are ready to preach this good news to babes and sinners, and are taught the qualifications of steadfastness and patient meekness under many trials, of caution in sex and other relationships, of a practical grasp of mystical truth leading to detachment, of a quiet and equable mind, and of a life of kindness and benevolence.

There follows a pause of many million years, and Buddhas from many worlds appear—great multitudes whom no man can number. Who are they? They are disciples whom the Buddha has aroused to perfect enlighten-

ment, his spiritual sons, of whom he is eternal Lord and Father, Self-existent, Supreme Spirit, Creator, Ruler, and Destroyer of the Universe. The events of his historical life are skilful adaptations, part of his gracious strategy to win men. As a wise physician may feign death in order to move his disobedient children to take the medicine nothing else will induce them to touch, so by an emptying of himself the eternal Buddha became man for the sake of the erring family of men. And as a father departs to a far country so the great physician has left the world that his erring and ailing children may use the medicines he has prescribed.

Like the Gita the Lotus has a prologue and three main sections: the first revealing the One Way, the second the One eternal Lord, the third the Living Church. In its emphasis on salvation for all, and on devotion to the Lord, it is clearly a Buddhist answer to the claims of the Gita. It is noteworthy that both hold out the hope of salvation to women, who have seldom been given their rightful place in Indian religion.

At Mathura, where the Chinese pilgrim found so many Buddhist monuments, their ruins may be seen to-day side by side with the temples of Hinduism. For this is the Holy Land of Krishna, and many a Buddha or Bodhisattva or Scythian devotee may be found on Hindu altars converted by the application of paint and garlands into a Hindu god! Here too may be found some of the strongest examples of Buddhist sculpture, which tell of an art quickened by contact with the Greeks, yet remaining truly Indian. It is an art much grander than the Eurasian art of Gandhara: we may accept the statement of an expert who finds in it 'on the one hand a direct continuation of the old Indian art of Barhut and Sanchi and on the other the classical influence derived from Gandhara'.

How splendid was Mathura at its zenith—when Fa Hian saw it, with glistening domes and noble stone rails, where silent Buddhas of gracious mien and classic pose received the homage of yellow-robed monks, and knights

in arms, and women in the famed fabrics of Benares, and the masses in their white pilgrim-robcs.

Nor must we fail to notice the great art arising during this time at Amaravati, in south India—a sophisticated, graceful, and sensuous sculpture; and at Anuradhapura in Ceylon, with the strong and severe lines and the massive forms of colossal Buddhas in contemplation—inspired perhaps by the Yogi ideal of the Gita, 'still as a flame burning clear in a windless place'. These artists caught the very spirit of Indian religion at its best, whether Hindu or Buddhist. Some of the oldest frescoes of Ajanta seem to belong to this age. They represent a dark and slim people with the same physique and costume which are found at Amaravati.

The so-called Hindu Renaissance of the Gupta Era is more truly an awakening of an India which has drunk deep at both springs. The Buddhist images of Sarnath are as typical of this awakening as the poems of Kalidasa. A new intellectualism was in the air, reflected in architecture and sculpture as much as in literature and science—a logical beauty which reminds us in many ways of Greece at its zenith, as in its spirit of adventure and of the zest of life it reminds us of Elizabethan England. Of such times poets like Shakespeare and Euripides and Kalidasa are as typical as sculptors like Praxiteles or the unnamed masters of Sarnath, or the pioneers of a new science like Francis Bacon and Aryabhatta and Archimedes.

And if the purpose of the great sculptor and painter is to reveal the Hidden Beauty, this is the aim also of the physicist and mathematician, and of the true poet. A great religious impulse may have much to do with these secular achievements, and nowhere is this clearer than in the India of the fourth and fifth centuries of our era. Hindu philosophy had aided Hindu religion in its passionate search for the One behind the Many: Buddhism had emphasized the unchanging amid change, the calm amidst turmoil, of a Buddha meditating amidst the assaults of Mara, or the lamentations of men and gods as he enters Nirvana.

Unified by the forces of the spirit within, by the popularizing of Hinduism in the great epics, by her pilgrimages and strolling minstrels, India is unified also by pressure of external foes, and ready for a great leader to unite her in a new empire and a new synthesis. Krishna's promise came with peculiar force to the men of this age. The Indian historian sees its fulfilment in great religious awakenings at dark times in Indian political life. And these in turn prepare the way for political emancipation.

When Righteousness  
Declines, O Bharata! When Wickedness  
Is strong, I rise, from age to age, and take  
Visible shape, and move a man with men,  
Succouring the good, thrusting the evil back,  
And setting Virtue on her seat again.<sup>1</sup>

## THE WISDOM OF PRE-GUPTAN INDIA

### (1) *A Son*

Food for man's life and clothes for his protection,  
Gold for adornment, marriage for enrichment,  
A wife for distraction, a daughter for affliction,  
A Son alone is as the Sun in his perfection.

(The Sage Narada to King Harischandra.)

### (2) *When Silence is Golden*

(Needlebeak, an interfering Bird, is admonished by a Monkey.)

If you are wise and court success,  
On busier men yourself don't press,  
Nor speak to gamblers who have lost  
Or hunters who have missed the scent—  
Or you will soon be sorrow-tossed!

(The Bird refuses this advice and the Monkeys wring its neck—their leader continuing):

Wood that is stiff cannot be bent  
Nor is hard stone by razor dressed,

<sup>1</sup> From Sir Edwin Arnold's *Song Celestial*.

## THE PRE-GUPTAN ERA

So seek not, friends, a fool to teach,  
Silence is wiser than the wisest speech.

(Panchatantra—written in prose with verse summaries for the instruction of princes about the first century A.D.).

'The Five Ruses' are largely Machiavellian counsels given by a Brahmin to three ignorant princes in the guise of animal stories which were translated into Persian and Arabic and thus reached Europe. Originally folk-tales, some of them appear also in Buddhist guise.

(3) *A Good Friend*

Who is not made a nobler man  
By friendship with a noble friend?  
The dew-drop on the lotus leaf  
May e'en the pearl itself transcend.

Ibid.

(4) *A Bad Son*

To what good purpose can a cow  
That brings no calf nor milk be bent?  
Or why beget a son who proves  
A dunce and disobedient?

## THE EPIC TEACHINGS

(after Monier Williams)

(1) *Ramayana*

Truth, justice, and nobility of rank  
Are centred in the King; he is mother,  
Father, and benefactor of his subjects.  
(ed. Bombay) II. lxvii. 35.

Whate'er the work a man performs,  
The most effective aid to its completion—  
The most prolific source of true success—  
Is energy without despondency.  
(ed. Bombay) v. xii. 11.

He who has wealth has strength of intellect;  
He who has wealth has depth of erudition;  
He who has wealth has nobleness of birth;  
He who has wealth has relatives and friends;



He who has wealth is thought a very hero;  
 He who has wealth is rich in every virtue.  
 (ed. Bombay) vi. lxxxiii. 35, 36.

(2) *Mahabharata*

Thou thinkest: I am single and alone—  
 Perceiving not the great eternal Sage  
 Who dwells within thy breast. Whatever wrong  
 Is done by thee, he sees and notes it all.

i. 3015.

A wife is half the man, his truest friend  
 Source of his virtue, pleasure, wealth—the root  
 Whence springs the line of his posterity.

i. 3028.

Conquer a man who never gives by gifts;  
 Subdue untruthful men by truthfulness;  
 Vanquish an angry man by gentleness;  
 And overcome the evil man by goodness.

iii. 13253.

Triple restraint of thought and word and deed,  
 Strict vow of silence, coil of matted hair,  
 Close shaven head, garments of skin or bark,  
 Keeping of fasts, ablutions, maintenance  
 Of sacrificial fires, a hermit's life,  
 Emaciation—these are all in vain,  
 Unless the inward soul be free from stain.

iii. 13445.

To injure none by thought or word or deed,  
 To give to others, and be kind to all—  
 This is the constant duty of the good.  
 High-minded men delight in doing good,  
 Without a thought of their own interest;  
 When they confer a benefit on others,  
 They reckon not on favours in return.

iii. 16782, 16796.

Sufficient wealth, unbroken health, a friend,  
 A wife of gentle speech, a docile son,  
 And learning that subserves some useful end—  
 These are a living man's six greatest blessings.

v. 1057.

## THE PRE-GUPTAN ERA

How can a man love knowledge yet repose?  
 Would'st thou be learned, then abandon ease.  
 Either give up thy knowledge or thy rest.

v. 1537.

No sacred lore can save the hypocrite,  
 Though he employ it craftily, from hell;  
 When his end comes, his pious texts take wing,  
 Like fledglings eager to forsake their nest.

v. 1623.

A king must first subdue himself, and then  
 Vanquish his enemies. How can a prince  
 Who cannot rule himself, enthrall his foes?  
 To curb the senses, is to conquer self.

xii. 2599.

Enjoy thou the prosperity of others,  
 Although thyself unprosperous; noble men  
 Take pleasure in their neighbour's happiness.

xii. 3880.

This is the sum of all true righteousness—  
 Treat others, as thou would'st thyself be treated.  
 Do nothing to thy neighbour, which hereafter  
 Thou would'st not have thy neighbour do to thee.  
 In causing pleasure, or in giving pain,  
 In doing good, or injury to others,  
 In granting, or refusing a request,  
 A man obtains a proper rule of action  
 By looking on his neighbour as himself.

xiii. 5571.

Heaven's gate is very narrow and minute,  
 It cannot be perceived by foolish men,  
 Blinded by vain illusions of the world.  
 E'en the clear-sighted who discern the way,  
 And seek to enter, find the portal barred  
 And hard to be unlocked. Its massive bolts  
 Are pride and passion, avarice and lust.

xiv. 2784.

## CHRONOLOGY

(From E. J. Rapson's *Ancient India*)

## B.C.

- 250 Establishment of the kingdom of Bactria by Diodotus, and of the kingdom of Parthia by Arsaces.
- 230 Euthydemus, King of Bactria, supplants the house of Diodotus.
- 220 Establishment of the Andhra power (Catavahana dynasty).
- 209 Invasion of Bactria and the Kabul Valley by Antiochus III the Great, King of Syria (223-187 B.C.).
- 200-100 Graeco-Indian kings of the house of Euthydemus ruling in NW. India.
- 184-172 The Sunga dynasty of Magadha and Malava.
- 175-125 Graeco-Indian kings of the house of Eucratides ruling in NW. India.
- 171-138 Mithradates I, King of Parthia.
- 135 The Saka invasion of Bactria.
- 58 Initial year of the Vikrama era.
- 50 A Pahlava dynasty (the family of Vonones) ruling in NW. India.
- 25 Conquest of the Kabul Valley by the Kushana chief Kujula Kadphises.

## A.D.

- 21-50 Gondopharnes, Pahlava King of NW. India.
- 78 Kanishka, Kushana King.

# V

## THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE GUPTAS

(*Fourth to Sixth Centuries A.D.*)

'The householder is as holy as the Brahmin.' MANU.

### I

ON one of the pillars of Asoka, which sets forth the victories of the compassionate spirit, a later hand has inscribed a very different tale. It is in Sanskrit, whereas that of Asoka is in one of the dialects, and it commemorates the deeds of a great conqueror. 'Skilled in a hundred battles, relying only on the strength of his right arm . . . he captured and liberated the kings of Kosala and many others . . . and with violence exterminated many in the North, reducing to serfdom the kings of the Forest Lands and to vassalage forest states both East and West.' 'By him the whole tribe of kings on earth', we read in another inscription, 'were overthrown and bereft of their sovereignty.' But we learn also that he 're-established many royal families' and we get a pleasing picture of his skill as a poet, 'whose various works were fitted to give a livelihood to the learned and to set free the powers of poets', that he put to shame the musician Narada by his skill as a master of choirs, and of musical accomplishments; and by his sharp and cultured mind overcame Kasyapa, the teacher of Indra.

Who is this great conqueror, so accomplished as a man of letters and a musician? The inscription is written in poetry and prose by Harisena, the court poet of Samudragupta, and was made at the order of his successor, Chandragupta. These two great men inaugurated a veritable Golden Age of Hindu culture, some six centuries after the Asokan Era, and in them we see Hinduism re-establishing itself as the national religion. This national awakening, like the Elizabethan Age in England and the T'ang Age in China, saw an outburst of genius in many fields, and its achievements in mathematics, in

astronomy, in dramatic and other poetry, in painting and in sculpture, are now becoming known to the western world, some fifteen centuries after China and the Far East began to take cognizance of them, and some twelve centuries since much of their achievement passed into the culture of the Arab world.

The first Gupta king ruled only a small kingdom, with its capital at the old Mauryan city Pataliputra. Marrying a princess of the neighbouring clan of Lichchavis he ruled as Chandragupta I and became the father of the great Samudragupta, who succeeded him in A.D. 330 and built upon the foundations he had laid. An admirable coin commemorates the union of his parents, and on the reverse is the goddess Lakshmi, seated upon a couchant lion. Samudragupta here proudly commemorates his mother's lineage, and on almost all his coins pays homage also to this goddess of good fortune who so signally favoured him. With extraordinary success in arms he united an India greater than that of any since Asoka, and we find him celebrating the asvamedha, or horse-sacrifice, and commemorating it upon another coin. In doing so he definitely challenged India to accept his imperial authority, and proclaimed himself an orthodox Hindu; for Buddhism had protested against this practice, and it had fallen into disuse for five centuries.

Of the happy condition of India during his reign there are many proofs. It is significant that one of the highest tributes to the Guptas comes from the Chinese pilgrim Fa Hian, who, while he had eyes only for the activities of the Buddhist Order, nevertheless noted at the beginning of the fifth century that the people as a whole were prosperous, 'paying no head-tax and unharassed by officials. Only the farmers of royal lands pay an assessment, and they are free to go as they wish. The kings rule without corporal punishment, but criminals are fined. Even in cases of repeated offences the penalty is only the loss of the right hand. . . . Throughout the land the people abstain from taking life or drinking wine, and only the Chandalas (outcasts), eat garlic or onions.' Evidently Buddhism had

left its stamp upon manners and morals. This is a very different India from that of the *Arthashastra*, even if all allowance be made for the fact that Fa Hian was prepared to see the best, and that his 'travel-diary' is propaganda to awaken the monks of his own land to the beauty and benefits of Buddhism.

His visit actually came during the reign of Chandragupta II, who took the title of Vikramaditya, or Sun of Power, and India thrived under him. In one of the loveliest poems of Kalidasa, 'The Cloud Messenger', scene follows scene in vivid portrayal of a peaceful and happy land, stretching from the Himalayas to the Vindhya. The subject of endless legends, 'Vikramaditya is to the Hindus what Charlemagne is to the French, what Alfred is to the English, what Asoka is to the Buddhists, and what Haroun al Raschid is to the Muhammadans'. Romances have been written in all the main languages of India about him, and villagers assemble to this day under many a giant tree to listen to his exploits.

Moving the capital from Pataliputra in the east to Ujjain in the middle-west, he made it a great centre of art and learning. The 'Nine Gems' of his court seem to have included the poet-laureate Kalidasa and the court-astronomer Varahamihira, famous like his predecessor Aryabhatta as a mathematician.

A good system of arithmetic and algebra has come to us through Arab scholars from Gupta India. The decimal system of notation for example may be traced to this source, one of the great achievements of humanity.

In literature we have not only several dramas and lyrics of Kalidasa, but other works of more universal and modern character like the 'Little Clay Cart', and the historic play *Mudra Rakshasa*, which tells the story of Chandragupta Maurya and his usurpation of the throne. It shows us the crafty Brahmin Kautilya as his chief helper, and in this and similar works we have a true picture of ancient India with its elaborate court, its Brahmins and ascetics, its courtiers and buffoons, its hermits and wandering philosophers.

In *Shakuntala*, first introduced to Europe by Sir William Jones at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and now universally known and acclaimed as a work of genius, we have, for example, a classic picture of the Indian ascetic:

See where stands the hermit, horridly austere,  
Whom clinging vines are choking, tough and sere:  
Half buried in an anthill that has grown  
About him standing post-like and alone;

Sun-stared with dim eyes that know no rest,  
The dead skin of a serpent on his breast,  
So long he stood unmoved, insensate there,  
That birds built nests within his mat of hair.<sup>1</sup>

Here clearly Indian asceticism has reverted to a type much less worthy than that of the Bodhisattva, the Servant of Man, which Buddhism had striven with splendid sanity to establish. It is noteworthy that Fa Hian accepts as historic such legends of the suffering Bodhisattva as his giving his own flesh to redeem the dove caught by a hungry hawk. He may well have seen this picture in the Caves of Ajanta, where the dove is seen weighed in a golden balance against the flesh of the saint, and eager as Herodotus for marvels, have interpreted it as history.

The relations of the secular and the religious are well illustrated in the drama of India. Some scholars see a dramatic quality in the dialogue hymns of the Rig-Veda: and these were probably recited antiphonally. In the Upanishads this is a marked feature, and such poems as the Katha Upanishad are still so recited. Under the lovely Sal Trees of Dr. Tagore's Asram I have listened spell-bound to this antiphonal chanting of the dialogue between King Death and the boy Naciketas, who wrests from him the secret of immortality.

These are the beginnings of miracle-plays or 'mysteries' which develop into the popular religious dramas of Krishna or of the Buddha, and into the still more popular dramas of the Guptan age.

<sup>1</sup> *Shakuntala*, A. W. Ryder.

'It is difficult', says Berriedale Keith, 'not to see in the Kansavadha, the death of Kansa at the hands of Krishna, the refined version of an older vegetation ritual.'<sup>1</sup> And he finds here a very interesting parallel in the theory that the Greek drama has its roots in a mimic conflict between summer and winter. Early fertility rituals would seem to be almost everywhere the germs from which dramatic art developed. An element of race and class conflict gave an added zest as the Aryan Krishna, a Kshatriya, defeats the black Sudra Kansa.

The festival of the Birth of Krishna is popular and spectacular, and the Buddhists had their rival attraction in the Legends of Sakyamuni. Opposed at first to all 'spectacles and shows' on account of their loose morality, the Buddhists produced such dramatists as Asvaghosa, and the earliest surviving Indian dramas are from his pen; such apocalyptic works as the 'Lotus of the True Law' are developed mystery-plays in dialogue form, and the Ajanta frescoes show that the Buddhists of the Gupta Era were not backward in their appreciation of dance and song.

'The evidence is conclusive on the close connexion of religion and the drama, and it strongly suggests that it is from religion that the decisive impulse to dramatic creation was given.'<sup>1</sup>

Let us now return to Ujjain and see it through the eyes of the great French Orientalist Sylvain Lévi, whose *History of the Indian Theatre* makes it clear that the heroic comedy or nataka is the Indian type of dramatic work, which draws its subject from well-known legends and chooses some important hero, born of a line of kings or gods, and expresses chiefly sentiments of the heroic and the erotic, moving always to a happy climax. 'The genius of Kalidasa', he says, 'is recognized in the regular development of the plot, in the just proportions of the cast, in the happy choice of the incidents, in the majesty and charm of the stage effects. . . . The Indian Theatre presents the spectacle, perhaps unique, of a theory accepted without

<sup>1</sup> A. B. Keith, *Sanskrit Drama*, pp. 27, 44-5.



protest and applied with servile respect for fifteen centuries.'

In this great art, religion has still a central place, and the Indian dharma or way of life is here as always inextricably interwoven with faith in the Unseen. 'I went', says another French writer, 'thinking only to be present at the staging of a mystery-play: I came away with the feeling that I had seen the celebration of a religious rite.'

An admirable exercise in the reconstructive imagination of the historian is M. Lévi's description of the 'first night' of Shakuntala.

The Spring Festival is at hand. Ujjain, city of rich merchants, intellectual capital of India, glorious and prospering under a wise and victorious king, is preparing to keep the feast with a pomp worthy of its wealth and culture. The season and other circumstances are propitious to the drama; the palace of Vikramaditya is hospitable to letters. But where is a work to be found exquisite enough to satisfy the critical faculty of the King, of his Nine Gems, and of all the court? . . . Kalidasa has just finished a heroic comedy, and it has been hailed by his friends as a masterpiece. . . . The honour of presenting a play by Kalidasa before the most illustrious Sovereign of India brings out keen competition among the troupe of actors who have gone up to Ujjain for the feast. But the poet has his own comedians, whom he has trained and perfected in his "Malavika and Agnimitra". When the company is chosen, the director goes to the palace and examines the hall. Cord in hand he takes the measurements, fixes the pitch and dimensions of the stage, and leaves his assistant to direct the arrangements. . . . The actors, who have been well-trained in appreciation, recognize the masterly qualities of the play, the cleverness of the intrigue, the correct balance of the sentiments, the freshness of the imagination. The orchestra rehearses the melodies, the dance tunes, and the instrumental music.

The Festival of Spring has come. Poet and players, anxious and nervous, arise very early in the morning to hasten the last preparations. As the sun rises, Vikramaditya enters, followed by his court, and seats himself upon the throne: his women stand on his left, and on the right are vassal kings who have come to pay him homage, princes, officers, men of letters and sages, grouped about Varahamihira the historian, and Amarasinaka the lexicographer. The hall glows with lights: precious stones sparkle, set in the gold of the

pillars and in the diadems of the kings. Banners of many colours hang from the columns. The roll of a drum announces the opening of the show. A chorus chants welcome and pays homage to gods, brahmins and kings. The director recites the opening blessing, turns toward the wings and summons an actress; talks with her a moment and calls for a song to charm the audience. The two lovely figures stationed before the curtain draw its folds apart, and Dushyanta, bow and arrows in hand, is seen mounted in his chariot. . . . He and his charioteer approach the hermitage and the king. At the sound of girls' voices curiosity thrills the spectators, for Shakuntala, daughter of an apsara and creation of Kalidasa, is the incarnation of all charms. Will the actress be able to realize the ideal and to satisfy the connoisseur? She appears, clad in a simple tunic of bark which at once hides and reveals her form. The lines of her face, her large eyes, languorous and dark, her ample bosom and her delicate arms, leave the imagination to complete her charms. Her attitude, her gestures, ravish the heart and eyes, and when she speaks her voice is a song. The court of Vikramaditya trembles with a serene and deep emotion: a new masterpiece has just put on immortality.

It is indeed a noble poem, loosely knit as drama, but with unforgettable scenes of love and courtship, and like all the work of Kalidasa it abounds in rich imagery, and in fine appreciation of nature. Our illustrative passages may be taken as typical. They are in themselves a corrective of Fa Hian's description of magic begging-bowls and of the austere life of Buddhist scholars, and remind us that India, like the rest of the world, rejoices in the loves of men and women and in the secular as well as the religious.

## II

Monasteries were only some of many centres of its teeming life. These Fa Hian found flourishing greatly in northern India. He saw the great Stupa of Kanishka near Peshawar, rediscovered for us by another brilliant Frenchman, who found it by following on the map the footsteps of Fa Hian. When he crossed the Indus he found many more monasteries: at Mathura, which has since become a veritable Holy Land of Hinduism, he saw some twenty

Buddhist monasteries: 'The Faith is here becoming very popular, and all the kings in Northern India to the west of the desert are sworn believers. When they make offerings to the monks they take off their caps of state, and together with their courtiers wait upon the monks at table. The meal ended, they spread rugs upon the ground and sit facing the Abbot, not daring to take higher seats in the presence of the monks.'

He tells us that there were four great centres of pilgrimage still visited by the faithful, though he mentions a different four in two parts of his little book, and he paints for us a vivid scene of Buddhist religious processions, which 'are held on the eighth day of the second month, with cars adorned with gold, silver, and brass, and rich with silk banners and canopies conveying images of Buddha and Bodhisattvas from street to street, with music and singing and much offering of flowers and incense'. He says that the 'Brahmins invite the Buddhists', and this evidently means that Hinduism and Buddhism exist side by side and tolerate one another. Of free hospitals and medicine we hear, too, and there is evidently a good deal of a typical Buddhist civilization remaining. It is a mistake to think that it was ever separated from the rest of Indian life, or that a 'Buddhist India' ever existed. Some regions became predominantly Buddhist, that is all; and the country of Bihar which he visited keeps in its name the record of its many Viharas, or monasteries.

Here our pilgrim visits the Vulture's Peak, and is moved to tears by the thought that the great Buddha himself once lived upon it, and that he, Fa Hian born too late, can only gaze upon scenes of his human life. He visited Bodhgaya: here evidently as to-day, Hinduism had re-established itself; but in the Deer Park at Benares he found monks, and turning back from there to central India he resumed his search for books of Buddhist discipline. Students of Buddhism and of the fifth century in India will find the travels of Fa-Hian one of the most interesting of books. He was gone from his home for fifteen years (A.D. 399—

414) and had walked from central China across the terrible deserts of Gobi and the almost impassable heights of the Himalayas, and across the long northern plains of India to the mouth of the Hooghly. An heroic and incredible journey.

If this great traveller is too ready to accept wonders, and is interested more in relics than in persons, we yet owe him an immense debt of gratitude, and by comparing what he has to say with the accounts of his successor Hiuen Chang, we can obtain a picture of the decline of Buddhism in India, and yet realize that in its great universities such as Nalanda and Taxila, and in abbeys like Ajanta, it lived on, and that there continued to be Buddhist groups side by side with the more powerfully organized Brahmins. Amaravisha, one of the 'nine gems' of Ujjain, built the great Stupa of Bodhgaya at this time and we know that during the reign of Samudragupta, Meghavarna of Ceylon built a large monastery for pilgrims to the Bo-tree, and that Hiuen Chang found this still thriving, and occupied by a thousand monks, in the seventh century. But the best evidence of the power of the Buddhist Order is preserved for us in the great monastic foundation of Ajanta, in western India. Here Buddhist monks settled in a secluded valley, and here through several centuries they hollowed out caves, some thirty in number, and made cells for themselves, and places of worship for the people. Into these cells they retreated during the rainy season for meditation and study, and to these chaityas or worship-halls gathered the faithful. Many rich patrons, accepting their teaching that the monks are the 'harvest-field of merit', lavished gifts upon them; and some of India's greatest artists were brought here by kings and rich merchants, and decorated the walls of some of the great caves.

### III

Ajanta is a cradle of Asiatic art. Japanese visitors have often exclaimed on the kinship between its great frescoes

and those of Horiuji. Japanese artists have made some of the best copies of them, almost entirely destroyed, alas, in the great earthquake; but those which survive seem to have caught the very spirit of Ajanta.

Scholars have now the materials for working out the long journey of this art eastwards to the grottoes of Tun Huang and Miran in Chinese Turkistan, and on to Horiuji, and southwards to Sigiri Rock in Ceylon. I have often climbed to that wonderful gallery, and gazed in amazement at its procession of princesses and handmaidens still glowing with splendid colour, and alive with the spirit of the Indian renaissance.

That this art is Indian, and that the Indian exponents of Buddhism were its 'carriers' is clear; but it is also clear that it developed in each new environment. Horiuji shows some of these developments; it is a museum of Asiatic culture where the influence of T'ang China and Turkistan can be seen moulding the spirit of Guptan India.

That this is a living spirit Indian artists of to-day have shown. Not only have they repeatedly copied its masterpieces, they have also learned from them much of their technique, have drunk deep of their joy in the beauty of Indian womanhood and of the great beasts of the jungle. For Buddhism was an awakening of the Indian spirit and while it was in part world-denying, it was also so filled with joy that it could not but rejoice in the beauty of the world. Even the fair forms of women, a 'snare of Mara' for the monk, were to the artist a part of the splendour of his native land. These lovely forms but thinly veiled are perhaps the first impression which the visitor receives. And the next is that of great herds of elephants and groups of inimitable monkeys which suggest that these monks knew alike the life of the city and of the country-side. More and more as these great works of art are made accessible and as the tide of Indian nationalism mounts, will the lover of Mother India turn to this lovely valley; and the visit will become an imperishable memory.

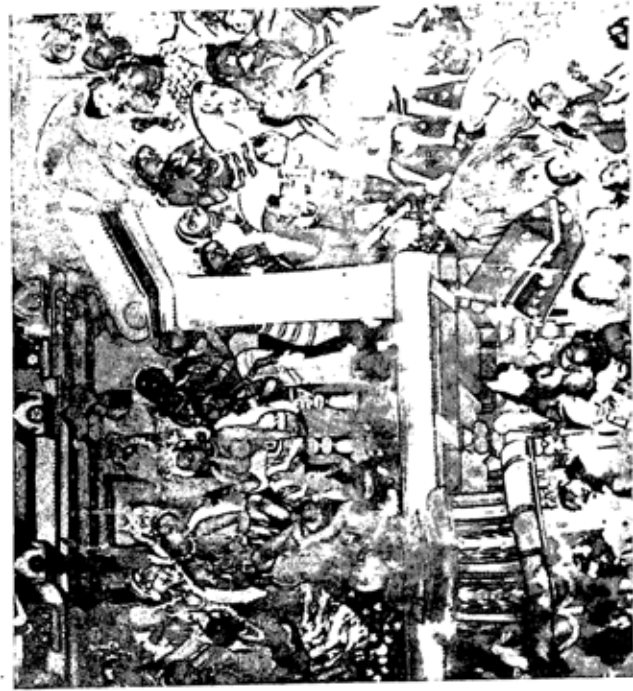
Here, some 300 miles from Bombay, in a great semi-circular valley a little stream 'murmurs its perpetual plain-song'—a fitting place to meditate. Here some 2,000 years ago a little group of monks made their first home. The frescoes of Caves IX and X seem to belong to about the first century A.D., and here for perhaps a thousand years their communal life went on, until Ajanta was a mighty abbey, and the simple caves had developed into great pillared cathedrals or chaityas and rows of monastic cells or viharas. Their walls glow after all these centuries of use and of neglect, and of amateur copyists, with the rich tones and the rhythmic processions of an art already highly developed by the Guptan age. Here one may reconstruct the splendour of these early monastic haunts of Buddhism, and may still drink deep of their peace.

A delightful pilgrimage it is to visit the Buddha's birthplace, to pass on to Patna, the old capital of the Mauryas, to the venerable Bo-tree and the Deer Park, and so to become attuned and prepared to understand the great things of Ajanta, and of Sanchi on its lovely hill-top, a few hours' journey away. This was a pilgrimage of great Buddhist rulers and we find as early, at any rate, as Asoka, that the symbols of these great scenes in the life of the Buddha were the chosen *motifs* of the earliest art. How well they suited the genius of India. The elephant, always her best beloved of animals, came to symbolize the dream of the Buddha's mother, the great humped bull stood for the month of May when Taurus is in the ascendant, and the lion was the symbol of the Buddha's first preaching. These were stamped on tokens for the faithful, and they reappear on the primitive sculptures of Barhut and the highly wrought pillars of the Asokan age.

At Ajanta the symbolism remains, but it has largely given place to realistic pictures of these events, and of the Temptation and Death of the Buddha.

The artists believed, too, that for many aeons he had been born in other forms, and these supplied them with many a delightful theme. Here were grand opportunities





THE PRINCE IN PALACE AND CITY



PADMAPANI

AJANTA FRESCOS



for painting herds of elephants or apes sporting in the jungle; and a spice of quaint humour was added to their art as these familiar forms were endowed with human reason and emotion. Fa Hian, who visited India and Ceylon in the fifth century, the age of the great Guptas, of Kalidasa and Kumarajiva, tells how popular pageants dramatized these admirable folk-tales, and his contemporary, the commentator Buddhaghosa, sums up their Buddhist interpretation: 'More than the ocean is the blood he poured out, more than the stars are the eyes he sacrificed.'

From this wealth of material—there are 550 Jatakas and several versions of the Legend of Sakyamuni—the artists chose some incidents which recur again and again like a solemn fugue, because they best serve to show his great compassion, or because they form an effective contrast between his early life as a prince, and his life of sacrifice as the wandering recluse who became the Buddha.

Let us accompany the Curator of the caves, Mr. Syed Ahmad, himself an able artist. In the early morning he will guide us to these frescoes, which he has studied so lovingly and knows in such intimate detail. First we visit Cave XVI. Here is a fine series of scenes from the Buddha-legend as set forth in the *Lalita Vistara*, from the Birth of Sakyamuni to his Enlightenment. In our illustration the technique of the artist is clearly revealed. On a carefully prepared surface of plaster he outlined his subject with a thin flowing line of red, and then filled in the outline with glowing colour. It is amazing how with one stroke of the brush he would trace the contours of some lovely female form, or express in the turn of a hand or in the arch of an eyebrow some subtle emotion. Almost all the incidents of the legendary life of the Buddha are depicted at Ajanta, and the artist had clearly entered deeply into that wonderful story.

Here too are certain scenes from the Jatakas which occur again and again in Indian art. The artist rejoiced in such stories as that of Chaddanta, the noble elephant, yielding up his tusks to the vengeful queen, who had him

treacherously shot, but could not ruffle his equanimity nor soil his magnanimous spirit. Was he not to be reborn as the Buddha? Such is the didactic purpose of the fresco; but who can doubt that the artist revelled also in these great herds of elephants, a veritable pageant of the jungle? If these are 'memory pictures' as Dr. Coomaraswamy maintains,<sup>1</sup> they are also the work of very keen observers of Nature, exact and vigorous.

That is a combination which is of the essence of Oriental, as of all great art. The artist is to know the 'skeleton', say the canons of Chinese art, in order that he may 'express the spirit which informs the rhythm of Nature'. And early Indian canons also insist that behind the physical world of form, which must be observed, lies a more real meaning, which must be interpreted.

The poet works in no other way. He refuses with Wordsworth 'to make an inventory of Nature'; but goes forth 'in meditative mood', observes carefully, and at a later day embodies his memory-pictures, presenting us with the soul of what he has seen.

The Buddhist birth-stories, which deal so largely with animals and plants, with the jungle as well as with the village, gave full scope to the artist for interpretation as well as for observation. They and the pictures which illustrate them are proof that the Indian loved nature, even while he used it for didactic purposes.

A favourite with the artists of India is the story of the Bodhisattva when he was King of the Apes. The King of Benares, hearing of a mango-tree whose fruits had floated to his city, sought it out, and found the monkeys in possession. Manlike he began to shoot, until their King, forming a bridge, let his tribe escape over his own body to safety. The villain of the Buddha legend, afterwards to be reborn as the traitor Devadatta, leaps on his back and breaks it, and the Ape King, with his dying breath, teaches the King of Men the great Buddhist principle of ahimsa, so vividly realized in the life and teachings of India's greatest living

<sup>1</sup> *Introduction to Indian Art*, pp. 20-2.

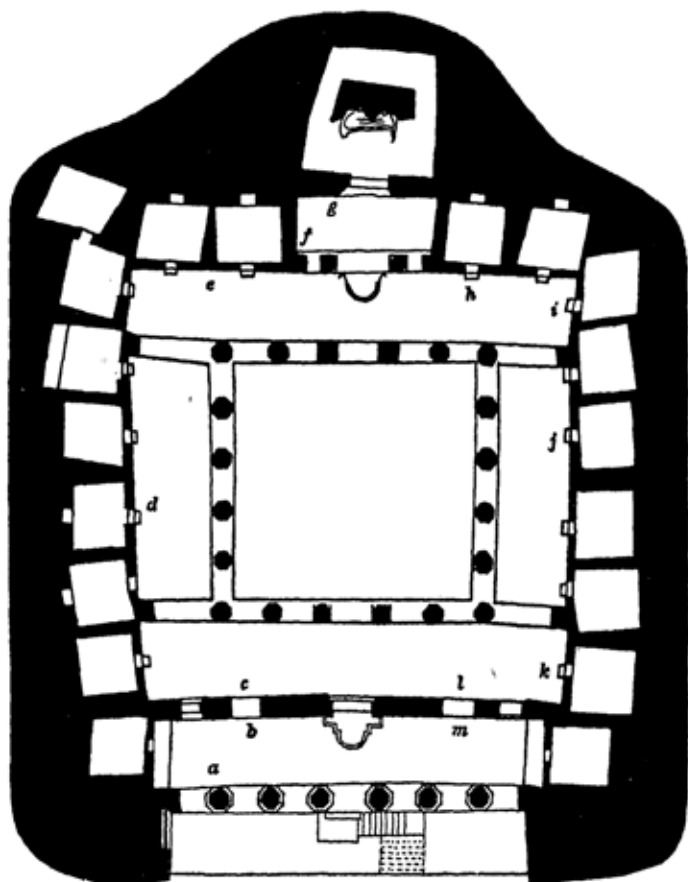
son. 'It is more kingly', he urges, 'to save life than to destroy it.' As Mr. Gandhi would say, 'If there is blood shed, let it be our blood'.

These lessons, together with that of liberality in giving, are made, if possible, more vivid by pictures like that of the Prince of the Sibis, who here and at Borobodur, is seen cutting off his own flesh as a ransom for the dove caught by a hungry hawk. Here is a counterpart of the Merchant of Venice, which is very Buddhist; and in the same cave we will find, as at Sanchi, the story of Vessantara, who refuses no sacrifice, even that of wife and child, in his search for salvation. By such stories the minds of multitudes have been prepared for the inner meaning of the Buddha legend as it is told in such texts as the Introduction to the Jatakas, the Lalita Vistara, and the Buddha-charita; for these form the living core of Buddhism even to-day, and a visit to its ancient shrines is of more than archaeological interest. Here the student will discover those things which make Buddhism a religion, as well as those missionary impulses which sent it out on its triumphant course through Asia.

As the setting sun casts its long level light into the recesses of Caves I and II, other scenes from the Buddha legend are lit up. Here in Cave I is the Temptation by Mara and his demon armies, a vortex of horror about the calm central figure.

In Cave II are stories of the Infancy and Jatakas; but even more striking are the great figures of the Bodhisattva with the lotus, Padmapani, and another, which help us to realize how noble a pantheon later Buddhism developed, and which critics have not hesitated to compare with the work of Michael Angelo.

The frescoes of Ajanta have for Asia and the history of Asian art the same outstanding significance that the frescoes of Assisi, Siena, and Florence have for Europe and the history of European art. The whole course of art in Eastern Asia is bound up with the history of Buddhism in its successive phases; and the student of that art finds himself continually referring back to Ajanta as the one great



PLAN OF CAVE XVII, AJANTA

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| (a) Wheel of Samsara                          | (g) Offering of handful of dust                                      |
| (b) Gandharvas                                | (h) Sarabha Jataka; Matriposhaka Jataka; Matsya Jataka; Syama Jataka |
| (c) Shaddanta Jataka; Mahakapi Jataka         | (i) Mahisha Jataka   |
| (d) Visantara Jataka                          | (j) Simhala Avadana  |
| (e) Sutasoma Jataka                           | (k) Sibi Jataka B  |
| (f) Interrogation of Sariputra and the Sermon | (l) Mriga Jataka; Bear Jataka  |
| (m) Subjugation of the furious elephant       |  |

(From a plan made by the Archaeological Department of H.H. the Nizam)

surviving monument of the painting created by Buddhist faith and fervour in the land which gave birth to that religion.

So writes Mr. Laurence Binyon. And these great figures in Cave II are perhaps the crowning achievement of the Ajantan artists. They stand there as twin guardians of the shrine where the eternal Sakyamuni sits on his Diamond-throne, and remind us that behind the elaborate developments of Buddhism is the historic Founder. Hard indeed it is to return to the Diamond-throne and to recapture the Sakyamuni of history. Is he Rationalist, or Divinity conscious that he had come to dethrone the gods of his people? Is he Philosopher or Yogi, Reformer or Conservator? Is he 'the honoured Elder Brother' of the austere monks or 'the God above the gods' of the masses? Is the view taken of him by the theologians of the Mahayana as the Absolute dwelling in time a possible view?

These views are all to-day maintained by reputable scholars of East and West, and here we can only mention them so far as they affect the work of the Indian artist. He has, for the most part, seen in Sakyamuni the great Yogi, seated in rapt contemplation of his own inner consciousness. The glorious pageant of his princely life is only of interest because it culminates in the mystic trance beneath the Bo-tree. The lovely forms of the Bodhisattvas are but sentinels of the antechapel, and they point the worshipper to the inner shrine where he sits in Samadhi, or rapt contemplation. Yet the masses will go a-worshipping; and these other figures attracted to themselves the reverence which should have gone wholly to the master; and he himself, partly in competition with these fair forms and with the popular gods of Hinduism, came to be regarded as a living deity. Such is the meaning of the famous Lotus Scripture, the Saddharma-pundarika, whose influence on east Asian art has been profound. It is, as we saw above, an apocalypse revealing the eternal Buddha and the universality of his gospel.

Of the technique of these Ajanta paintings others better qualified have written. How they were done, how much

they owe to foreign influence—these are questions which I neither dare nor desire to discuss. What is to me significant is that they are essentially works of Indian art, and that in their spiritual realism, their love of nature and of fair human forms, they prove that Indians who were also Buddhists belong to the great tradition which we have been apt to claim for the West. Buddhism was, in fact, a revolt against the other-worldly mysticism of the Upanishads—a claim that man's life, transient though it is, is real. As it developed it went on to claim that all are by nature Buddhas: they are real, not dreams. This is the essence of the Lotus Scripture, 'All are my children . . . all may attain to Buddhahood'.

This emphasis on the reality and value of human life is one note of the Buddha's thought; but with it there went also the old Indian emphasis on the greater Reality over against this fleeting world, the One behind the Many. Man was only of value because in him the Eternal might be realized. And these two ideas of constant change over against eternal rest are the key-notes of oriental art. It seeks to sound both clearly, and to harmonize them. And so the pageant of Ajanta is best understood if we see in it this contrast—the eternal calm of the Enlightened as he sits beneath the Bo-tree serene amidst the whirlpool of the senses—the daughters of Mara dancing to allure him, or demon armies attacking him, or the life of the careless world about him. This contrast is exquisitely brought out in a little Amaravati medallion.<sup>1</sup> Here we see on the one hand the elephant maddened by alcohol and the crowd which he is dispersing, and the women laughing at the lattices. Then the whirlpool ceases as the calm figure of the Buddha appears, and the elephant kneels in submission at his feet, and the crowd is hushed in awe. This, from south India, is very Ajantan, and the fresco of the Dying Princess is a noble example of the realistic idealism of these early artists—alluring in its beauty and pathos. It shows that the artists were not merely interested in

<sup>1</sup> See p. 82.

human life as a foil to the life of the Buddha. That life itself was human, and all life might be brought to the same calm balance and perfection. I cannot agree with Sir John Marshall's dictum that 'the beauty of man and man's intellect awaken no response in the Indian mind, bounded as it was by the immortal rather than the mortal, the infinite rather than the finite'.<sup>1</sup> Sir John, to whom all lovers of India's art owe an incalculable debt, goes on to contrast Indian thought with the ethical and rational thought of Greece. Yet Sakyamuni was an Indian, in some ways the most Indian of Indians; and as he was a lover of the ethical and the rational, and as he pointed to the Middle Path between the life of the senses and the life of austerity, so Indians turned inevitably to the ideal of a body which, like the mind, could become the servant of the higher life. It is possible to trace in these frescoes three schools or periods of art: some are pre-Guptan and depict a darker slighter race; many are Guptan, and some are Chalukyan—belonging to the seventh century—sensuous and strong as the sculptures of Elephanta and Ellora.

Such is the setting of the monastic life of the Guptan Buddhists. The ritual they used was no doubt a form of Asvaghosa's 'three-part service' of chanting, reading, and preaching, and we may picture the life of the Buddhist monks going on undisturbed by the revival of Hinduism so near at hand as Ujjain, where once Asoka ruled as Viceroy, and which the Guptas made a centre of culture typically Hindu, and greater than anything of its kind and time elsewhere.

Buddhists indeed claim that Vikramaditya took a personal interest in their religion, and appointed the great scholar Vasubandhu of Peshawar as tutor to his son. Certainly the age produced leaders of Buddhist thought, but it is clear that the Guptas were devout worshippers of Vishnu; and the teachings of such books as the Gita suited their imperial aspirations far better than the insistence of Buddhism that he is the true warrior who wars on none,

<sup>1</sup> *Cambridge History of India*, vol. i, p. 649.

and in spreading the dharma of the gentle Buddha wins the greatest glory.

The India of this age needed such warriors as Samudragupta and Vikramaditya. Not only had the great Scythian Kanishka conquered the Indian peoples of the north-west, but Yuetchi and other wild tribes were at hand; and while this pressure for a time helped in uniting India, the Guptas were later overwhelmed by an irresistible flood. Their civilization went down, and the Dark Ages closed in upon India. But there were periods of enlightenment, such as the reign of Harsha of Thaneswar in the early seventh century, when art and literature thrived; and in the southern kingdoms there is so much intellectual vigour that a separate treatment of them is needed.

#### IV

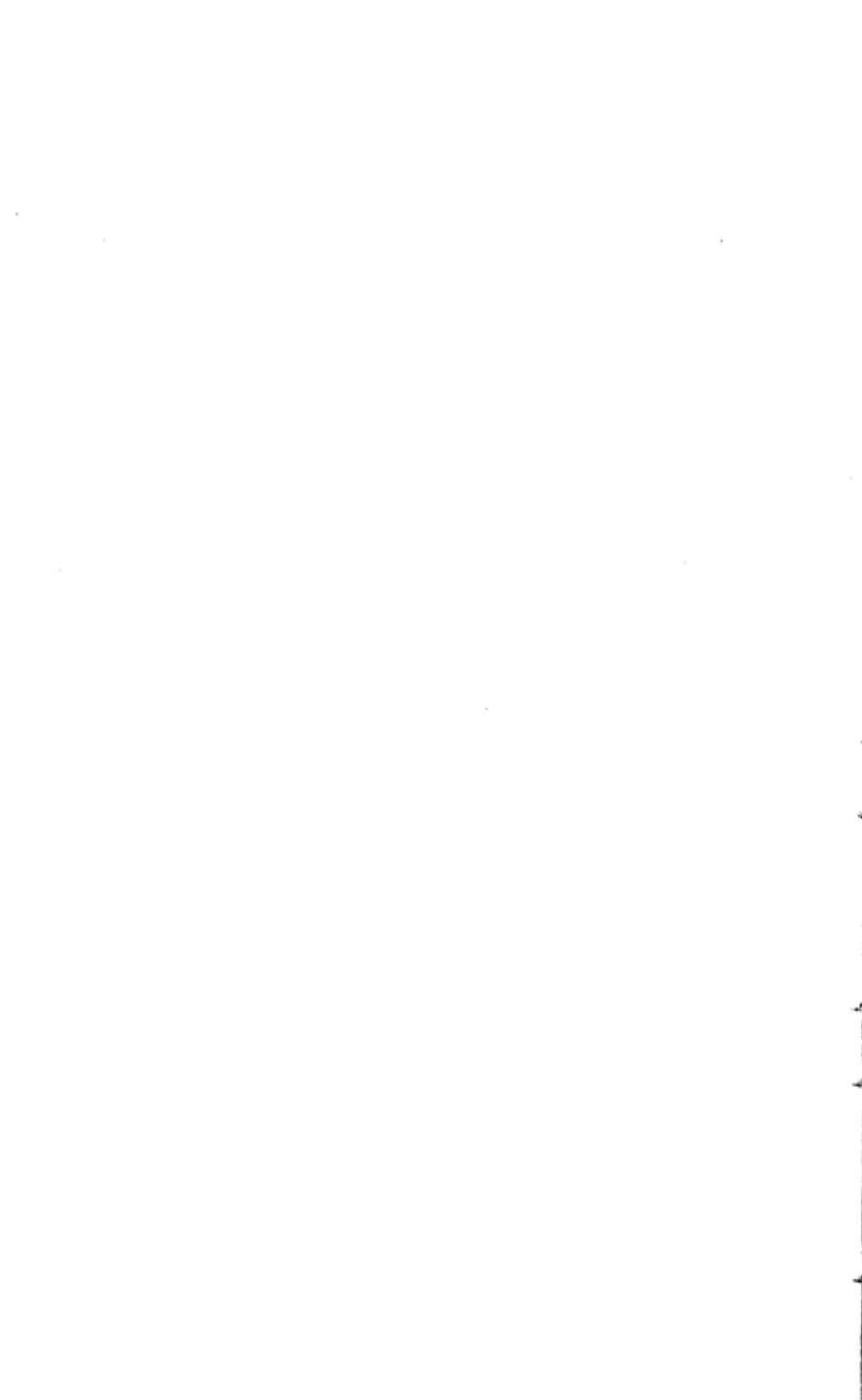
Meantime from the high vantage-ground of Guptan supremacy let us look back, and trace the development of Indian art and religion from the Golden Age of Asoka to the Golden Age of the Guptas. Massive statues of pre-Mauryan India have been succeeded under Greek inspiration by the perfect animal-forms of the Asokan columns, than which there is nothing finer anywhere. As I have said elsewhere<sup>1</sup> these are followed by the decorative panels of great stupas illustrating Jatakas, and expressing the popular beliefs of the people. It is a folk-art as contrasted with the imperial works of Asoka's court artists. Then come the masterpieces of the Andhra age, such as the great gateways at Sanchi and the solitary Buddha at Anuradhapura. Men who have worked in wood or ivory are showing mastery of intricate design, of perspective and of the technique of stone-carving. With the deification of Sakyamuni and of Krishna a new impetus is given to Art as to Literature. We see the Ikona of Buddha develop from the Eurasian and provincial figures of the vast majority of the Gandhara works to the strong and intellectual types of

<sup>1</sup> *The Heritage of Asia*, p. 42.



THE DYING PRINCESS





Mathura and Ceylon: the Buddha is represented as the calm ascetic Yogi and teacher, and these works of the third century A.D. are unsurpassed as pure sculpture. More delicate and decorative are the contemporary Amaravati sculptures, but less other-worldly and impressive. They may be compared with the earliest frescoes of Ajanta, and with their contemporaries of the Gandhara school. The images of the Gupta age are sophisticated and idealized. They are not perhaps as strong or as vigorous as those of Mathura, but they are highly wrought classical masterpieces. Greek inspiration has brought out the true genius of Indian sculpture.

In painting too India has leapt forward; from the earliest Ajanta frescoes, belonging perhaps to the second century A.D. (themselves no doubt the successors of lost works), to the masterpieces of Caves XVI and XVII, is a great advance. And this series is a very precious record. We see the artists growing in architectonic power, in mastery of technique and in understanding of the dramatic contrast between the lovely yet transient world of the senses and the lovelier unchanging calm of Nirvana. They were guided consciously or subconsciously by the Canons of Indian painting which insist on knowledge of form, on balance of composition, on the impression of charm, and on the artistic use of colour.

To study the best of the Ajanta compositions is to understand these Canons at a glance. These painters are at once secular and religious—they see the fair forms of women and their lures, but they use them as parts of a process leading on to a heavenly calm. They are masters too of realistic portrayal of nature: the elephant, the monkey, the peacock and all the rich and varied life of the jungle to which the Buddha had gone for his parables and similes, and which Buddhist teachers found ready to their hand in the folk-lore of old. Of the portrayal of secular life by the Ajanta artists we may say with an early poet, 'it is that of great courts and palaces charming the mind by their noble routine'.

Such are the splendid contemporary works at Sigiri in Ceylon: ladies of the harem going to worship.

The religious life of this age is in a word no longer separate from that of the world: it is socialized and humanized, and 'is manifested in an art that reveals life not in opposition to spirituality, but as an intricate ritual fitted to the consummation of every perfect experience. . . . A culmination and a perfection have been attained in which the inner and outer life are indivisible.'

The Bodhisattva is now preferred to the Arhat, or in a word the ideal of sainthood is socialized. 'Mix not with the herd,' says the Dhammapada or *Way of Truth* of the older Buddhism, 'wander lonely as the elephant.' 'Let me be medicine to the sick, the friend of all, a very sweeper', says the *Path of Light*, a fifth-century work. And in Brahmanism the same change can be seen as it passes from the austerity of the earlier Upanishads to the lay ethic of the Gita. 'Desert not your own duty: in no other can salvation be found', says Krishna to Arjuna. The Dharma of the Buddhist Middle Path has profoundly affected India; and the by-products of its monasticism are great civilizations. The Dharma of Hinduism has become a veritable 'web of Indian life', which is henceforward a unity, with every act and every detail of life controlled by religious sanction. The Laws of Manu say 'Pure is the hand of the craftsman at work on his craft'; and 'the householder is as holy as the Brahmin'. Each caste is also a trade-guild, supplying the expert knowledge, the code of ethics, and the social life of the artisan; and regulating the relations of the workers with those of other trades.

Of the preparations for the marriage of a Hindu princess of this era we have the following contemporary account; depicting the craft-guilds at work it is of great interest:

From every county were assembled companies of skilled craftsmen. . . . Carpenters were given white flowers, unguents, and cloth to make the marriage altar. . . . The outer terraces of the palace resounded with goldsmiths beating out their gold. . . . Here a group of skilled artisans painted auspicious scenes, and a multitude of sculptors made fishes, turtles, crocodiles, and fruits: Even Kings

girded themselves in decorative work, doing the behest of their Sovereign Lord.

The king, says Manu, must examine and uphold the laws of the guilds; and the merchant and craftsman hold a very important place in society. The king must regulate prices once in five days, and all weights and measures must be duly marked. 'Let the King re-examine them twice a year.' This was to protect merchant and buyer alike, and to establish confidence. Manifold were the duties of Indian kingship, but they were made possible by a theory, the Varnashramadharma, or 'sanction of caste-duties', which still holds Indian society together, and which Indian patriots seek to reform but not to change. This unity of Indian life it is which underlies the achievements of the Guptan era. Each worker is to find salvation in doing his appointed task, and the Emperor is hailed by the artist as a fellow-craftsman.

The code of Manu belongs in its present form to the first five centuries of our era. Originally representing the customs of the Brahmins it has become binding on Hindu society, for it sets forth not only rules for religious observances, but also for the administration of justice, and regulates domestic life in all its details. A Hindu is, in fact, one who observes this dharma.

Perhaps the best source-book for the ethical life of India is the Great Epics. Here, too, the hand of Brahmin editors can be clearly traced, and their influence through these immense poems has been incalculable. The *Mahabharata*, which is more than twenty times the length of the *Aeneid*, is known everywhere in India. It deals with an ancient civil war between Pandus and Kurus. The *Ramayana*, which is much shorter, deals with the advance of the Aryans into southern India. If the earlier epic tells us of the Lunar race of the middle country, the latter deals with the Solar people of the west, and sets before us Sita, the loyal wife, and Rama her husband, the ideal warrior of India. Their adventures and their alliance with bear- and monkey-people of the south are favourite themes

of art and song. Whether these are actual tribes of men or not they are represented as animals, not the grotesque ape of our western humour, but man's prototype and friend. To help Rama they build bridges and go on embassies, showing a loyalty and intelligence which often put their human brothers to shame. Hanuman their leader is the beau idéal of the devoted henchman.

During the Guptan era Indian science also made great advances. We know that Indian astronomy was already far advanced when the Greeks arrived, and that India learned from the invader a new system. But it was Indian astronomy which passed on to Europe in Arab translations in the Middle Ages.

As to medicine, both Hindus and Buddhists made considerable advance, the former practising dissection of animals, and demonstrating operations upon wax figures. It is clear that Indian medicine helped on the marvellous advances made by the Greeks, and the foundations of Arab medicine can be traced to the ninth-century translations from Sanskrit works. If doctors in India to-day are largely Muslim this is because of the Muhammadan conquest which destroyed the Buddhist schools, and also because of a growing system of tabus against handling diseased or dead bodies.

In music the Hindus have exerted an immense influence on the West, perhaps through Greece, and also on Asia, where the Indian quarter tones and subtle harmonies can be found everywhere, as they may be found in Spain and other countries whither the Arabs carried them. As in everything else in India, there is here an intimate relation between nature and art. The ragas or modes of Indian music correspond to the six seasons of the year and each has raginis or variations appropriate to the hour and day and season. As Rajput painting deals with the legends of the gods and with the dharma of India's daily life, so Indian music is intimately concerned with religious expression of both kinds. And as the Indian artist painted for a small coterie of connoisseurs, so the Indian musician with his stringed instruments,

flutes, and drums was content with chamber concerts for the elect, or with the small groups which gathered about village wells and in the shade of banyans. To such audiences court musicians on the one hand and wandering minstrels on the other have sung from time immemorial of the loves of Krishna, or of the heroic deeds of Rama.

The caste system helped to maintain the skill of the guilds, handing on traditional crafts and training apprentices. It is still possible, in spite of the industrial age with its mass production, aniline dyes, and ruthless competition, to watch the looms of Benares and the shawl makers of Kashmir at work on crafts which have survived the vicissitudes of 2,000 years. The caste system has indeed been a conservative force for good as well as for evil, and in the mediaeval Hindu city with its streets of the silver- and goldsmiths, of the brocade makers and the sari sellers, there survives an epitome of the Middle Ages which reveals excellent city planning, and an ordered social life. At the centre is the great temple, and about it lies the city in concentric squares.

The great achievement, then, of the Guptan era is the unification of Indian culture, and the vitality of the age is so great that it passes on from India to south-eastern Asia and the Far East. 'Almost all that belongs to the common spiritual consciousness of Asia, the ambient in which its diversities are reconcilable, is of Indian origin in the Guptan period.'<sup>1</sup>

## THE SPIRIT OF THE GUPTAS

### I. A SCENE FROM KALIDASA'S *SHAKUNTALA*

The *Malavika and Agnimitra* is the earliest of Kalidasa's plays: it begins with a respectful reference to earlier works of Bhasa, Saumilla, and Kaviputra, already classical. In other words, just as the fourth- and fifth-century art of Ajanta and Sarnath is an advanced classical art, so the works of Kalidasa follow an already developed and classical art of the drama. Like his great predecessor Asvaghosa, Kalidasa is known to us chiefly by his poetry and a few legends.

<sup>1</sup> A. K. Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, p. 91.

Like him too he is attached to the Court of an enlightened and tolerant sovereign. The poems show respect for Buddhist, Saivite, and Vaishnavite alike: and in this no doubt reflect the spirit of the age. Like Asvaghosa too he travelled widely in India, knew its beauties by personal observation—'The Kokila mad with love,' 'the asoka trees shedding blooms like tears'—and delighted to depict the charms of nature and of art.

The following passages are typical:

*Shakuntala*<sup>1</sup>

Act VI, Scene ii, pp. 71-5

MAID. Your Majesty, here is the picture of our lady. (*She produces the tablet.*)

KING (*gazing at it*). It is a beautiful picture. See!

A graceful arch of brows above great eyes;  
Lips bathed in darting, smiling light that flies  
Reflected from white teeth; a mouth as red  
As red karkandhu-fruit; love's brightness shed  
O'er all her face in bursts of liquid charm—  
The picture speaks with living beauty warm.

CLOWN (*looking at it*). The sketch is full of sweet meaning. My eyes seem to stumble over its uneven surface. What more can I say? I expect to see it come to life, and I feel like speaking to it.

MISHRAKESHI. The king is a clever painter. I seem to see the dear girl before me.

KING. My friend,

What in the picture is not fair,  
Is badly done;  
Yet something of her beauty there,  
I feel, is won.

MISHRAKESHI. This is natural, when love is increased by remorse.

KING (*sighing*).

I treated her with scorn and loathing ever;  
Now o'er her pictured charms my heart will burst:  
A traveller I, who scorned the mighty river,  
And seeks in the mirage to quench his thirst.

<sup>1</sup> Kalidasa, *Translations of Shakuntala and Other Works*, by Arthur W. Ryder. Everyman's Library (J. M. Dent and Co.).



CLOWN. There are three figures in the picture, and they are all beautiful. Which one is the lady Shakuntala?

MISHRAKESHI. The poor fellow never saw her beauty. His eyes are useless, for she never came before them.

KING. Which one do you think?

CLOWN (*observing closely*). I think it is this one, leaning against the creeper which she has just sprinkled. Her face is hot and the flowers are dropping from her hair; for the ribbon is loosened. Her arms droop like weary branches; she has loosened her girdle, and she seems a little fatigued. This, I think, is the lady Shakuntala, the others are her friends.

KING. You are good at guessing. Besides, here are proofs of my love.

See where discolorations faint  
Of loving handling tell;  
And here the swelling of the paint  
Shows where my sad tears fell.

Chaturika, I have not finished the background. Go, get the brushes.

MAID. Please hold the picture, Madhavya, while I am gone.

KING. I will hold it. (*He does so. Exit maid.*)

CLOWN. What are you going to add?

MISHRAKESHI. Surely, every spot that the dear girl loved.

KING. Listen, my friend.

The stream of Malini, and on its sands  
The swan-pairs resting; holy foot-hill lands  
Of great Himalaya's sacred ranges, where  
The yaks are seen; and under trees that bear  
Bark hermit-dresses on their branches high,  
A doe that on the buck's horn rubs her eye.

CLOWN (*aside*). To hear him talk, I should think he was going to fill up the picture with heavy-bearded hermits.

KING. And another ornament that Shakuntala loved I have forgotten to paint.

CLOWN. What?

MISHRAKESHI. Something natural for a girl living in the forest.

KING. The siris-blossom, fastened o'er her ear,

Whose stamens brush her cheek;

The lotus-chain like autumn moonlight soft  
Upon her bosom meek.

CLOWN. But why does she cover her face with fingers lovely as the pink water-lily? She seems frightened. (*He looks more closely.*)

I see. Here is a bold, bad bee. He steals honey, and so he flies to her lotus-face.

KING. Drive him away.

CLOWN. It is your affair to punish evil-doers.

KING. True. O welcome guest of the flowering vine, why do you waste your time in buzzing here?

Your faithful, loving queen,  
Perched on a flower, athirst,  
Is waiting for you still,  
Nor tastes the honey first.

MISHRAKESHI. A gentlemanly way to drive him off!

CLOWN. This kind are obstinate, even when you warn them.

KING (*angrily*). Will you not obey my command? Then listen:

'Tis sweet as virgin blossoms on a tree,  
The lip I kissed in love-feasts tenderly;  
Sting that dear lip, O bee, with cruel power,  
And you shall be imprisoned in a flower.

CLOWN. Well, he doesn't seem afraid of your dreadful punishment.

(*Laughing—to himself.*) The man is crazy, and I am just as bad, from associating with him.

KING. Will he not go, even though I warn him?

MISHRAKESHI. Love works a curious change even in a brave man.

CLOWN. It is only a picture, man.

KING. A picture?

MISHRAKESHI. I too understand it now. But to him, thoughts are real experiences.

KING. You have done an ill-natured thing.

When I was happy in the sight,  
And when my heart was warm,  
You brought sad memories back, and made  
My love a painted form. (*He sheds a tear.*)

MISHRAKESHI. Fate plays strangely with him.

KING. My friend, how can I endure a grief that has no respite?

I cannot sleep at night  
And meet her dreaming;  
I cannot see the sketch  
While tears are streaming.

MISHRAKESHI. My friend, you have indeed atoned—and in her

friend's presence—for the pain you caused by rejecting dear Shakuntala.

*Enter the maid CHATURIKA*

MAID. Your Majesty, I was coming back with the box of paint-brushes—

KING. Well?

MAID. I met Queen Vasumati with the maid Pingalika. And the queen snatched the box from me, saying: 'I will take it to the king myself.'

CLOWN. How did you escape?

MAID. The queen's dress caught on a vine. And while her maid was setting her free, I excused myself in a hurry.

A VOICE BEHIND THE SCENES. Follow me, your Majesty.

CLOWN (*listening*). Man, the she-tiger of the palace is making a spring on her prey. She means to make one mouthful of the maid.

KING. My friend, the queen has come because she feels touched in her honour. You had better take care of this picture.

CLOWN. 'And yourself,' you might add. (*He takes the picture and rises.*) If you get out of the trap alive, call for me at the Cloud Balcony. And I will hide the thing there so that nothing but a pigeon could find it. (*Exit running.*)

## II. THE CLOUD-MESSENGER

### *The City of Ujjain*

Stanzas xxvii-xxxix

Swerve from thy northern path; for westward rise  
The palace balconies thou mayst not slight  
In fair Ujjain; and if bewitching eyes  
That flutter at thy gleams, should not delight  
Thine amorous bosom, useless were thy gift of sight.

The neighbouring mountain-stream that gliding grants  
A glimpse of charms in whirling eddies pursed,  
While noisy swans accompany her dance  
Like a tinkling zone, will slake thy loving thirst—  
A woman always tells her love in gestures first.

Thou only, happy lover! canst repair  
The desolation that thine absence made:  
Her shrinking current seems the careless hair  
That brides deserted wear in single braid,  
And dead leaves falling give her face a paler shade.

Oh, fine Ujjain! Gem to Avanti given,  
Where village ancients tell their tales of mirth  
And old romance! Oh, radiant bit of heaven,  
Home of a blest celestial band whose worth  
Sufficed, though fallen from heaven, to bring down heaven on earth!

Where the river-breeze at dawn, with fragrant gain  
From friendly lotus-blossoms, lengthens out

The clear, sweet passion-warbling of the crane,  
To cure the women's languishing, and flout  
With a lover's coaxing all their hesitating doubt.

Enriched with odours through the windows drifting  
From perfumed hair, and greeted as a friend

By peacock pets their wings in dances lifting,  
On flower-sweet balconies thy labour end,  
Where prints of dear pink feet an added glory lend.

Black as the neck of Shiva, very God,  
Dear therefore to his hosts, thou mayest go  
To his dread shrine, round which the gardens nod  
When breezes rich with lotus-pollen blow  
And ointments that the gaily bathing maidens know.

Reaching that temple at another time,  
Wait till the sun is lost to human eyes;  
For if thou mayest play the part sublime  
Of Shiva's drum at evening sacrifice,  
Then hast thou in thy thunders grave a priceless prize.

The women there, whose girdles long have tinkled  
In answer to the dance, whose hands yet seize  
And wave their fans with lustrous gems besprinkled,  
Will feel thine early drops that soothe and please,  
And recompense thee from black eyes like clustering bees.

Clothing thyself in twilight's rose-red glory,  
Embrace the dancing Shiva's tree-like arm;  
He will prefer thee to his mantle gory  
And spare his grateful goddess-bride's alarm,  
Whose eager gaze will manifest no fear of harm.

Where women steal to rendezvous by night  
Through darkness that a needle might divide,  
Show them the road with lightning-flashes bright

As golden streaks upon the touchstone's side—  
But rain and thunder not, lest they be terrified.

On some rich balcony where sleep the doves,  
Through the dark night with thy beloved stay,  
The lightning weary with the sport she loves;  
But with the sunrise journey on thy way—  
For they that labour for a friend do not delay.

The gallant dries his mistress' tears that stream  
When he returns at dawn to her embrace—

Prevent thou not the sun's bright-fingered beam  
That wipes the tear-dew from the lotus' face;  
His anger else were great, and great were thy disgrace.

Tr. A. W. RYDER.

## VI THE POST-GUPTAN AGE AND THE SOUTHERN KINGDOMS

'Are not the sons of a Pulai woman and a Brahmin also Brahmins?'

### I

AFTER the decline and fall of the great Guptas arose an Eastern Gupta dynasty in Magadha, which lasted till 720. Meantime in Harsha (606-47) northern India produced another great ruler who waged war against the Chalukyas under Pulakesin II, and built great shrines to the Sun, to Buddha, and to Siva. Of his court and of his patronage of scholars and poets we read in the travel-diary of the great Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Chang, whom he welcomed as a champion of the Mahayana and as a messenger from T'ang China.

Buddhism thrived under his patronage at such great centres as Nalanda—also visited and described by Hiuen Chang when at its zenith in the seventh century—a university whose remains are now being unearthed, and whose long history of a thousand years demands a monograph. Its gay towers and observatories, its red pillars and tiled roofs have influenced Far Eastern architecture, and its scholars from Nagarjuna in the second century A.D. to Silabhadra, teacher of Hiuen Chang, in the seventh, and to Padmasambhava, apostle of Tibet, in the eighth, are great international figures. Harsha himself is credited with dramas and other poems, and with a treatise on grammar, and Bana's *Harshacarita* is an historical romance which gives much accurate information and 'tedious and affected rhetoric' in praise of the last of the Chakravartis. With him the unity of the Indian Empire perishes, to be revived by the Moguls nearly a thousand years later; and Hinduism as we know it emerges—with its Bhakti or passionate polytheism—its Saktis or female energies—emanations and consorts of the gods, and its tantras and mantras—erotico-mystical texts and spells.

This strange development affects Buddhism too, and in its tantric form it survives in Nepal and Tibet, fused with the older spirit-worship. Harsha's successor, the weak Arjuna, was conquered by Tibetan soldiers of Srontsangampo and taken captive to China, which under its new great dynasty of T'ang was claiming all neighbours as vassals and all gifts as tribute.

## II

We must now turn to the south and look at a different India with its own remarkable culture and its own long story of warring kingdoms.

When groups of Aryans first came into the Dakshina Patha—south of the Narbada River—about the time of the Buddha, they colonized Vidarbha in the centre and Kalinga on the east coast, and had an important port at Bharukaccha on the west. They soon developed their own social code—that of Apasthamba—and intermarried with Telugus under Andhra rulers in the east and Rastrakutas on the west. South of these were other Dravidian dynasties—Kerala (modern Travancore), Pandya, Chola, and later Pallava and Chalukya—ruling Tamil populations whose worship of dread spirits persists, but whose general culture was as high as that of the Aryans, and who kept even the great Mauryas at bay.

From the west coast Solomon imported 'apes and peacocks and ivory', about the time when the Rig-Veda was being compiled, and our word pepper, for one of the spices which inspired Western expansion into India, is derived from the Tamil pippali. Babylon traded with China by way of the Dravidian south, and Arab traders have kept up unceasing commerce with it.

Roman coins are found in large numbers in this southern part of the peninsula, and with the great Poros medal of the north we may compare one found in the south on which is commemorated the conquest of Britain by Claudius (A.D. 41-54). From this centre there spread many cultural influences: from Kalinga they passed to Java (where 'Kling'

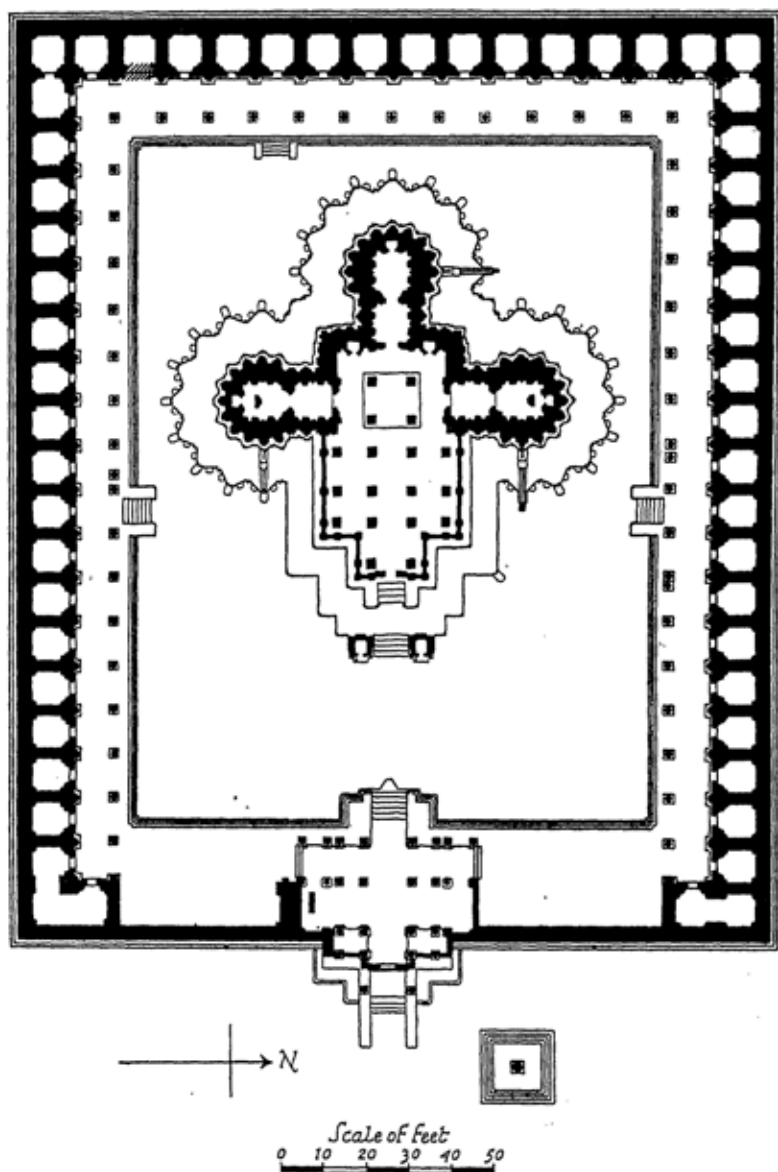
still means Hindu): from the Andhra kingdom to Ceylon, where great sculpture remains to tell us of Buddhist missions: from Pandya and Chola to Indo-China—geographically a peninsula of China, culturally an offshoot of India. In India itself southern influence penetrated north-west to the peoples of Maharastra, and mingling with Andhra and Guptan art at Ajanta are works of the Chalukyan style—more sensuous and full of the devotion of the tropic south.

As to dates and dynasties we know that the Satakarni House ruled the Andhras from about 250 B.C. to A.D. 236, and built up a stable and elaborate civilization, tolerant of religious differences but favouring Buddhism, whose magnificent monuments are scattered from Amaravati to Karli and Ajanta in the west, and to Ceylon in the south.

As this great power declined, a Scythian satrapy defeated it and ruled an important south-western kingdom till Vikramaditya Gupta overthrew it in 388. Gujarat was part of this 'great satrapy', and after a period of rule by White Huns a Rajput kingdom arose in 495—from which descend the Sesodhias of Udaipur—India's foremost Rajput house. Meantime Pallavas (perhaps Parthians) penetrated the south and waged unceasing war with the Chalukyas, who in the seventh century defeated them, and made the Marathas a great power. A fresco at Ajanta shows Pallavas paying tribute to the Chalukya, Pulakesin II, and the exquisite star-shaped temples in Mysore are another monument of the great Chalukyan power.

In the eighth century a Maratha chief Rastrakuta revolted, and his House ruled till 973—hewing out the grand Kailasa at Ellora. A vast temple cut from the solid rock, and about eighty feet high, it is supported on ornate rock-pillars, and surrounded with animal sculptures—elephants trampling and rending demons and chimaeras. Other temples stand about it, and deities abound in this world of tropical luxuriance, some of great beauty, some





Plan of the Kesava Temple at Somnathpur, Mysore.

(Mysore Archaeological Survey.)

to our Western eye grotesque. 'This contrast of refined grace and massive horror is indeed the most striking note of Dravidian art.'

The more familiar figures of the contemporary Elephanta caves are also Dravidian, the grand Trimurti or Three Aspects of the Godhead being a work of unique power, a massive and yet serene symbol of power creative, indwelling, and destructive.

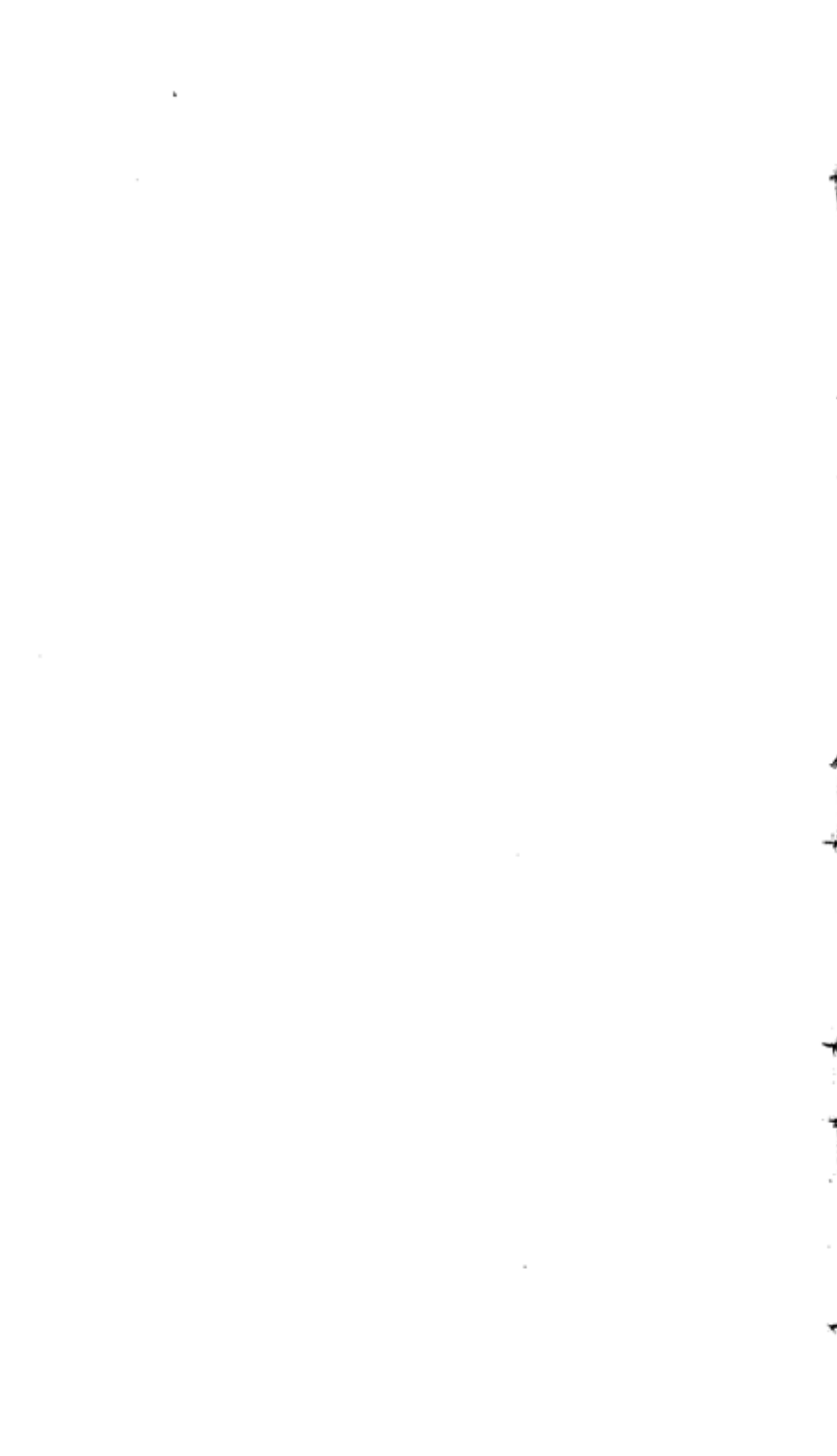
Mystery too is essential in religion, and I know of no more impressive temple than the dark cave in which these gigantic and splendid torsos loom in the dim twilight, nor is there anywhere a more magnificent dramatization of the earth's forces than another Dravidian group near Kanchi, where Siva is seen seated with his consort on the mythical Mount Kailasa, steadying it as it rocks beneath the heavings of the demon Ravana.

Here religious art becomes a true expression of the science as well as the philosophy of a people. History and geography find dramatic expression in such massed figures as those upon a hill-side near the Seven Pagodas where the descent of the Ganges is depicted; while in many Dravidian temples in Mysore and elsewhere the whole pageant of Hindu story is magnificently set forth, as didactic as the frescoes of Ajanta and as full of religious symbolism and secular meaning.

If Ajanta with its three classic schools of painting is a cradle of Indian painting for all Asia, and if in its frescoes can be seen Greek and Persian as well as Guptan and Chalukyan influences, these Dravidian galleries of sculpture became the inspiration of the peoples of Indo-China and Java—where by the ninth century Buddhist and Hindu myths are being made into friezes of charm and of astounding power, till a Borobodur in Java leads on to an Angkor Wat in Cambodia. So too the music, drama, and dance of India find ready imitators among peoples of Polynesian and Mongolian stock. To China also Dravidian Buddhist teachers, driven out by Hindu rivalry, took a kind of Vedanta which China found congenial, and Chinese pil-



SOURCE OF THE GANGES, WITH HERMIT, SHRINE, GODS,  
AND ANIMALS  
MAHAMALLAPURAM



grims visited Southern India—from Fa Hian who came to Ceylon to Hiuen Chang who visited the Pallava city of Kanchi in 640, and the kingdom of the great Pulakesin II in the following year, just before it went down before the Pallavas. Within a century the tables were turned, and the Chalukyas also defeated the Cholas in the eleventh century, after they had pushed as far north as Bengal.

The Dravidian south, then, has its own great record of peace and war, but we can only glance at it here. Influenced by the Aryan invasion of the north, by the coming of the Greeks and by the Buddhist movement, it was not dominated by any of them, and it leads its own life to-day, less modified than the rest of India by the coming of the West. Some of its kingdoms, such as that of the Cholas, became predominately Saivite, and the cult of Siva is marked by its great Dravidian temples. Saivism is in fact a development of old phallic worships which the Aryans found in India. As the Vedic sun-god Vishnu has attracted to his cult a northern and Aryan architecture, so Siva has dominated the southern kingdoms. Yet the Pandyas were largely influenced by Jainism, and the Pallavas, patrons of northern culture, were largely Vaishnavite. Their great capital Kanchi is full of monuments which date back to Guptan times, and are perhaps a reflex of the Hindu awakening in the north with its great religious revival manifested in the rise of Bhakti—devotion to personal gods—and its emotional hymnology.

To this the south contributed its own passion, and Tamil literature is largely the product of this age and of this spirit. It spread far afield, and took Dravidian culture with Chola armies into Ceylon and with Hindu missions to Indo-China.

Tanjore, greatest of Dravidian shrines, was built by Rajaraja at the time of the Norman Conquest to celebrate the victory of his armies, and Angkor Wat, last outpost of Hinduism, rose in the ninth century to proclaim that of the missions.

Pallava genius reared the temple of Kanchi; and at Mahamallapuram 'the Seven Pagodas' or monolithic Rathas blend secular and religious in a happy synthesis. Completed by Mahamalla (625-45) who conquered and slew Pulakesin II, they are named after him.

Some of these rulers were men of real statesmanship, tolerant and far-sighted, others were persecutors and tyrants. The great Chola conqueror Rajaraja was the noblest of them—a great builder and an able administrator, who had revenue surveys made, abolished internal tolls and customs, and kept up the roads and irrigation tanks so much needed in the south. Pulakesin II of the Chalukya was also a great soldier and statesman, known to the Arabs and courted by the Sasanian Chosroes II, whose embassy is celebrated at Ajanta and whose splendour was known to China. He was a contemporary of Harsha and of T'ai Tsung. His brother founded another dynasty—the eastern Chalukyas—which produced some great rulers and lasted till the thirteenth century, and is noted for the efflorescence of Telugu literature.

On the ruins of these kingdoms rose Hoysalas of Mysore, Yadavas of Devagiri, and others, to be crushed by the power of Islam, which swept on into the extreme south till in 1336 arose Vijayanagar, founded by Hoysala and Yadava refugees and noted for its magnificence and for its courage in defying the Muslim power till Akbar's time. Then in 1565 its splendid capital fell and was destroyed after the fierce battle of Talikota.

How far the Brahmins influenced the statecraft of these kingdoms is illustrated in the first-century Kural of Tiruvalluvar, a didactic poem setting forth political, social, and religious ideals in 133 chapters, some clearly indebted to Manu and to the Arthashastra, but all having special reference to south India. The poet was a low-caste weaver of Mylapur with a lyric gift and a keen understanding. From this early start southern religious thought reached its climax with the great Vedantists Sankara and Ramanuja. They did for Hinduism what Aquinas and the Schoolmen

did for Christianity in the Dark Ages. Born in 788 at Kanchi, of Saivite parents, Sankara was too great a mind for sectarian interests, and seeking to unify Brahminism he travelled ceaselessly, attacking Jains and Buddhists and triumphantly vindicating monism. 'As Fire which is one, assumes many forms, so the Atman—one and indissoluble—is in all, and is all', says Sankara. This is orthodox Upanishadic teaching, and Sankara was followed by a school of teachers such as Madhava, abbot of the great Sringeri Abbey, founded by his master. Ramanuja, a Vaishnavite, held that there are three Realities, not one—Brahman, Man, and Nature. His system is akin to the Sankhya of Kapila in recognizing the world and eternal spirits as real, and akin to that of Sankara in its devotion to the Godhead. But with the influence of Islam becoming potent this One is thought of as personal, and Bhakti, or devotion to him, as the real way of salvation.

The way was prepared by wandering bards—Vaishnavite Alvars and Saivite Adiyars—who hymned the Divine Grace and offered salvation to all: as in Japan and in the west, the chief difference between men was not between the claims of morality and religion: all agreed that without Divine Grace man is nothing—'his righteousness is but filthy rags'. What divided them was the question whether there was room for human effort. Should man be passive as a kitten whose mother carries it to safety—or, like the little ape, do his part by holding on? These differences of emphasis hardened into sects; in the thirteenth century the Tengalai corresponded to the followers of Shinran, their contemporaries in Japan, in magnifying the Divine Grace, while the Vadagalai insisted with the Jodo of Honen on some effort on the part of the devotee.

Ramanuja's piety, in a word, like that of St. Paul and of Nagarjuna, gave birth to sect-feuds, and in devotion to God men were stirred to conflict with their brothers.

The deep impress of religion on the south is seen in its devotional lyrics and in its great temples, where it appears

as symbolic and erotic, and as little mindful, may we not add, of the claims of men?

The Gopuram, or tower of the Dravidian temple, symbolizes the One behind the many; and within, in the Vimana or Shrine, are to be found the phallus of Siva, or a vast reclining Vishnu, emblems of this pantheistic monism. This on the one hand, and the popular cults of Krishna and Rama on the other, inspired erotic poetry such as the *Gita-govinda* of Jayadeva in Bengal, and the lyrics of Namdev and Tukaram in the west, and art such as the superb dancing Sivas of the South, emblems of cosmic activity and of the play of the Eternal in time. Secular art is also stimulated by this tide of spiritual thought, and bronze figures of kings, singers, and courtiers, survive to show how the South spread its characteristic culture side by side with that of the Guptan North into Further India, a bit of Mongolian Asia now half Indian. A luxuriant and even voluptuous beauty clothes the energy of its genius, and crowded friezes of intricate and graceful pattern celebrate the cosmic activities of the gods and the warlike prowess of epic heroes. Khmer art is a wonderful blend of Aryan, Dravidian, and Mongolian, and we shall look more closely at it in the last section of this brief sketch of a great culture.

### III

The Island of Ceylon on the other hand is a bit of India; palm-fringed and rising to a noble mountain-peak, it is a paradise for the anthropologist, the archaeologist, and the historian. Several waves of invaders have left notable traces upon it, and animism, Buddhism, and Hinduism have been welded into an interesting whole.

Two characteristics determine the island's history: its geological unity with India, its national spirit of separateness and pride in the culture which it has made its own. In its tropical forest, a very Eden, it has kept alive its mystic dream until our own day. A bit of Indian soil kept intact from the time of Asoka where ancient wisdom





THE NATARAJA  
DANCING SIVA OF THE DRAVIDIAN SOUTH IN TANDAVA DANCE



has perpetuated itself into the Middle Ages—that is Ceylon', says René Grousset.<sup>1</sup>

While, then, the aboriginal Veddas survive in forest-fastnesses, still using bow and arrow, and while out-caste tribes tell of Hindu victories over Buddhist tolerance, the Sinhalese claim descent from several Aryan invasions from Bengal, and the Tamils claim to be the children of later invasions from south India. And these two races have each built a characteristic civilization, mingling at times in intermarriage and synthesis. The real history of Lanka begins in the third century B.C. with the classic mission of Asoka's son Mahinda, whose rock study at Mihintale is perhaps its most sacred spot. That, and the aged Bo-tree (*figus religiosa*) at Anuradhapura—a symbol of the Buddhist religion and of its vitality through twenty-two centuries—are solemn reminders of the great-hearted missionary.

From Behar (land of Viharas) he and his sister came, and soon stately dagobas or stupas arose, with monasteries, lotus-pools, and pilgrim-shelters clustering about them. From such centres the Way of the Buddha in both its Theravada, or more stoic, and its Mahasangha, or more liberal forms, spread to surrounding lands. Kings, influenced by great abbots, vied with one another as builders of monastery and dagoba, Abhayadushta (early first century B.C.) founding the Bronze Hall or Lohaprasada, Vatta-gamini thirty years later the great Abhayagiri for the heretical monks of the more liberal school. In its prime it towered four hundred feet above the plain, overshadowing and rivalling the exquisite little Thuparama, attributed to the first Buddhist king—Devanampiyatissa, 'Beloved of the Gods'—friend and imitator of Asoka, who built it to lodge the collar-bone of the Buddha himself. Such is the legend, which also tells of his dramatic conversion when hunting with his court. All this and much more can be read in the Great Chronicle or Mahavamsa—a pious narrative, with much historic truth and much edifying legend, which reminds us of the Diaries of Fa

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire de l'Asie*, ii. 150-1.

Hian. They confirm much of his picture of a great Buddhist kingdom, and his contemporary Buddhaghosa came from Magadha in A.D. 420 and at the Great Monastery translated the Ceylon version of the Tipitaka back into Pali, writing a commentary and a great original treatise—the Visuddhi Magga—the Pure Road to Nibbana. It is a classic of Pali Buddhism, clear, concise, and eloquent, and Buddhaghosa went on as a missionary to Burma, and was followed by several missions to Indo-China.

#### IV

There in three great river valleys different races pursued their destiny—the Talaings and Burmese in that of the Irrawaddy, the Cambodians in that of the Menam, the Khmers in that of the Mekong; and there Hindu and Buddhist influences from Ceylon and India began to mould the Chinese and native cultures. So arose the characteristic civilizations of Indo-China.

Meanwhile Hindu civilization was invading Ceylon—Pandyas from Madura, Cholas from Coromandel and others, and Saivite temples rose side by side with Buddhist dagobas—while warring sects were united in face of the common foe or yielded slowly to their pressure, and saw the Buddha becoming an Avatar of Vishnu. In 1161 Parakrama Bahu I brought all together, and initiated a great new era of building. His armies invaded south India, and he made alliances with Burmese rulers. His great capital at Polonnaruwa is an interesting blend of Buddhist and Hindu styles of architecture, and a vigorous statue reveals him as of Dravidian type, reading a Buddhist book of palm-leaf strips.

In the thirteenth century Vijaya and his son Parakrama Bahu III went on with the work of building a united people, but the latter, like his neighbours, had to bow to the all-conquering Kublai Khan, and Marco Polo, his ambassador, was the first European to visit the lovely island, which has since fallen in turn to Portuguese, French, Dutch, and English. The worthy Marco—perhaps

because of his sympathetic interest, is honoured as an Arhat in China. His contemporary Dharmakirti continued the succession—Ceylon's proudest heritage—of great and saintly monks.

The influence of Buddhism has been and is profound and pervasive. From Dutugamini, who became a pacifist in the first century, to Parakrama Bahu III, who abolished capital punishment in the fourteenth, great kings have demonstrated its gentle power. And if there are unsavoury chapters like the revolt of the parricide and usurper who shut himself into his great rock fort of Sigiri, there are in its vast fortifications and amazing frescoes ample proofs of the cultural mission of Buddhism—a true civilizer of the Island as of the mainland. Neither caste nor the erotic excesses of the Saivite South have reared their heads in Ceylon, and its people have learnt the lessons of peace and of detachment. 'Why do you no longer build great monuments and irrigation works?' I asked my Pali teacher: 'You English run about so vigorously we like to sit and watch you', was the calm yet incisive reply of this true Stoic. We called him Nagasena, for in all things he resembled the classic sage of the Milinda Pañha. So the soul of ancient India lives on, and a friendly but detached calm is its true expression. In the jungles of Anuradhapura sits a great Buddha in meditation, a true Indian Yogi with hands folded and eyes closed 'erect as a flame in a windless place'. It is a work contemporary with both the Gita and the Milinda Pañha—a masterpiece of Andhra sculpture as these are of Indian poetry and prose, and like them is a true symbol of the soul of a great culture.

## V

In Burma a different task met the monks of Buddhism, and to Mongolian cheerfulness and wisdom was added a touch of other-worldly Indian sadness, much as in Japan. In these kingdoms Buddhism of the two great types may be best studied—adapting itself to national needs, moulded by national genius, and free from foreign suzerainty.

In Siam the king's brother is Head Abbot, and the monarch himself cares for the welfare of the monks, promotes their unity, and stimulates their education and their work as schoolmasters. As in Burma every boy is at some time a novice, and Buddhism is 'Siam-custom' as it is 'Burma-custom'—a potent influence in national life. In Cambodia it has had to struggle with Hindu rivals, and Angkor Wat is to Hinduism what Borobodur is to Buddhism—a monument of the confidence of these missions from the mainland and a picture-gallery of the legends of epics and puranas.

## VI

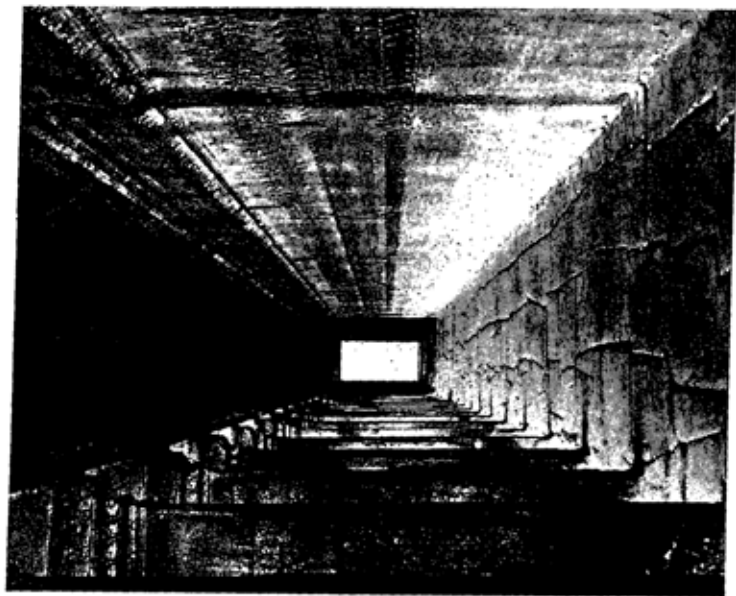
The development of Hindu temple architecture may now be traced from the exquisite little Rathes of Mahamallapuram near Madras to the vast quadrangles and pyramidal towers of Angkor Wat in Cambodia. Both commemorate epic heroes and the cosmic activities of Vishnu and Siva, and both are free from the erotic and phallic—happy blends of Aryan and Dravidian culture.

Let us glance first at 'the Seven Pagodas' of Mahamallapuram. From great monoliths artists of about the seventh century have carved life-like and gigantic animals—the elephant and the bull of Siva, towering beside the little Rathes which are exquisite miniature shrines; they belong to an age of sobriety and hero-worship rather than to one of the erotic and phallic worships which gradually spread from the early to the later conquering groups; and with this process went the development of a tropical imagination, which reared vast towers, gopurams, about the central god-shrine and carved every inch of their surfaces with the teeming figures of the pantheon.

Like the early Buddhist stupas these temples are rooted in sun-worship, and Hindu processions circulate through their open courtyards, as those of the Buddhists circulated around the shrines at Sanchi and Amaravati. Here too Jains reared characteristic monuments, with vast rock-sculptures of the Founder, and it was not without a struggle



'THE SEVEN PAGODAS', AND A  
SCULPTURED PANEL  
MAHAMALLAPURAM



A CLOISTER AND A FRIEZE. ANGKOR WAT



that the south became Hindu. These religious battles went on side by side with wars between the kingdoms—long and learned debates between chosen champions, accusing each other as in Sung China of ignorance and heterodoxy, and claiming for their own interpretations the authority of great names.

If in Ceylon Buddhist scholasticism was victorious, in Dakshina Patha it was the monism of Sankara and its popular polytheistic expressions which drove out both Jains and Buddhists and stimulated the already sensuous devotion of the south and its already tropic imagination. These reared the vast and intricate gopurams of Trichinopoly and Madura where mystery and grotesque symbolism abound, and erotic mysticism degenerates into strange forms of perversion.

But before this development missionaries had carried the best art of the south to Cambodia.

Here about the tenth century was built the great temple of Angkor Wat, and about a century later the exuberant and rather florid Angkor Thom—a city of palaces. If the palaces are good examples of baroque the temple is the best preserved example of classic Khmer art, and is indeed one of the world's architectural masterpieces. Facing west it is dedicated to Vishnu whose image (as in Somnathpur) was set up in the central shrine, a high pyramid some 200 feet above the pavement, to which the lines of the whole structure converge. It is built on five terraces, and like Borobodur is in effect a series of sculpture-galleries. Here they vary from massive avenues of snakes and lions to delicate lace-work of trees and dancing-girls and intricate friezes of heroic legend—Hanuman and his monkeys rescuing Sita, Krishna sheltering sheep and shepherd from the storms of Indra by holding a mountain over them, the churning of the sea, and other cosmic activities of the gods and demons. Here in a word is the whole fantastic world of the Puranas transplanted to Chinese soil.

Nor is the didactic element lacking: here are hells worthy of the Italy and Japan of this age: and amidst

all this turmoil the calm serene Buddha in several masterly statues, which are in striking contrast with their pure and simple line and their spiritual aloofness.

At the corners of each main terrace are towers, and the height of each terrace is twice that of the one below—a device which increases the impression of height and space, and of a whole strange world of fancy incredibly intricate and bizarre—a world deserted yet living to remind us of a perished civilization. Was it malaria, or an earthquake, or some caprice which led to its desertion soon after the immense toil of its creation?

To turn from it to its Buddhist analogues is like passing out of a nightmare into a placid dream. Here too are legend and myth, but imagination is harnessed to history and the middle path of sanity has prevailed.

## VII

The development of Buddhist architecture may be studied from the stupa of Sanchi to the much more elaborate Borobodur of Java with its galleries of didactic art, in which crowds of figures are blent in a harmonious and rhythmic whole. It is a long evolution from the naïve and spontaneous to the classical and sophisticated—yet naturalism is not lost, especially in plant and animal forms in which India still excels.

Sir John Marshall's skilled work of reconstruction at Sanchi supplies us with the opportunity of studying another early masterpiece of Buddhist art. Here is a fine specimen of an Asokan pillar and a simple stupa, or mound, of about the same period (the third century before Christ), with its flat reliefs and naïve folk-art—at once crude and arresting, with a kind of childlike charm. This early Indian art, so well illustrated on the Barhut rail in the Indian Museum of Calcutta, is of great interest. Lacking as it is in composition and weak in perspective, yet it is a great beginning; it is essentially Indian, and often has lovely plant forms, even if its animals and men are clumsily done; and it passed rapidly into the noble art of such masterpieces as that of the



BOROBODUR. GENERAL VIEW



THE BUDDHA ANOINTED BY DISCIPLES



main stupa at Sanchi, which, like it, is largely independent of Greek influence and is much greater art than that of the North-West Frontier, which is so obviously and so poorly Greek.

Here at Sanchi we have, in fact, an art which is Indian, and which sometimes rises to sublime heights, and we can enjoy it in a perfect setting. It is easy here to let the imagination have free play and to people this lovely hill-top with a long procession of monks in yellow robes and pilgrims in clean white garments as it winds its way up the great stone stairs and enters by the Eastern gate. Though this is not the earliest of the gates,<sup>1</sup> it is part of a scheme gradually completed, and was no doubt set up so that the pilgrims should enter it as the rising sun revealed the meaning of its sculptures. Here they would pause as some revered teacher explained these symbolic scenes of the young Sakyamuni leaving his father's city—his horse and the royal umbrella tell us what is happening—of his illumination beneath the Bo-tree—an empty seat is here the symbol—of the homage paid to him, and of various miracles attributed to him until the Nirvana is reached. This is symbolized by a stupa with worshippers, human and divine. All this, however familiar, was a story which they loved to hear; and there was ample time in the long Indian day to follow the sun's course in the Buddhist pradakshina around the platform of the stupa. At each gateway they would pause to study its lessons afresh. Here at the north is the Vessantara story set out in great detail and that of the six-tusked elephant which is also told on two other gateways.<sup>2</sup> Here are incidents in the life of Sakya-muni, such as the Temptation, and the gift of a bowl of food by a monkey.

<sup>1</sup> The South gate is the oldest. For an admirable study of the East gate see A.oucher in *The Beginnings of Buddhist Art*, pp. 62-110.

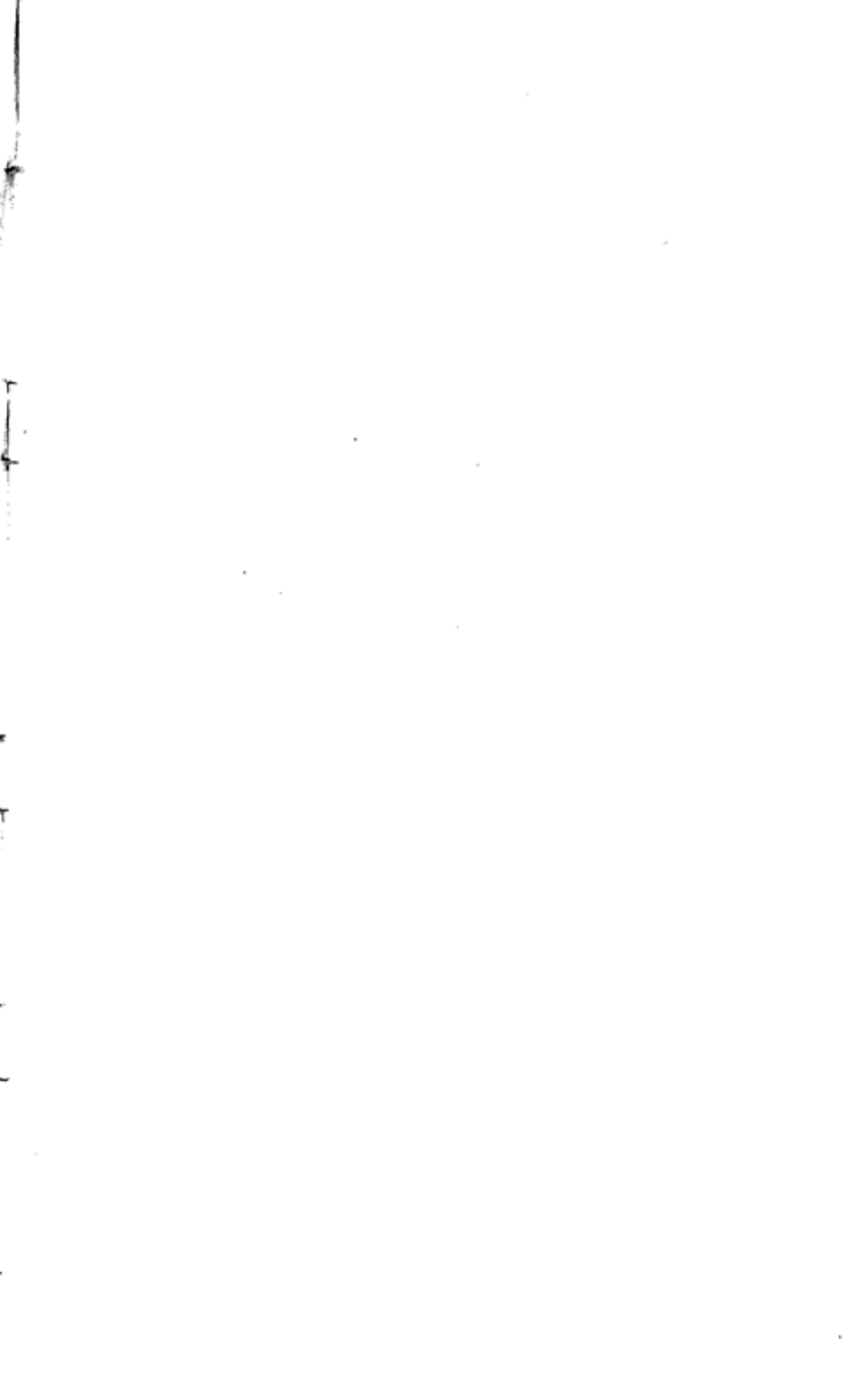
<sup>2</sup> For an interesting interpretation of the development of the art of Sanchi as illustrated by these elephant scenes of the South and West gates—from the low 'tapestry' relief of the earlier to the high relief of the later—and also from a work of creative genius to the more finished yet less masterly imitation—see Marshall's *Guide to Sanchi*, pp. 1-4.

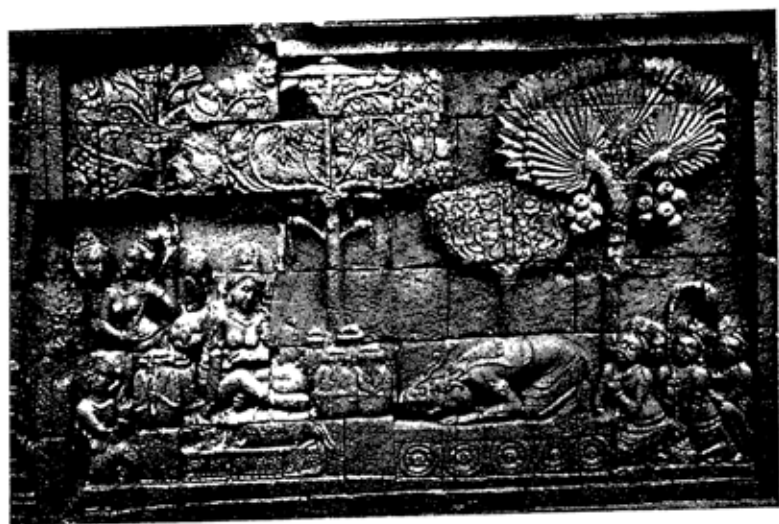
So do the sublime and the homely mingle in these charming works of art. On the Western and Southern gateways similar, often the same, incidents occur. And as the procession passes out through the Western gate, emphasis is laid, as we should expect, upon the Nirvana. With thoughts full of the meaning of this victory of the spirit—this final conquest—they depart as the sun sets, and the stonework changes from rose-red and gold to black and silver.

Of the date of this great monument we are not sure, but it may well belong to the first century before the Christian era. If these admirable sculptures show Greek or Persian influence they are yet in subject-matter and in execution Indian, and it was an Indian impulse which passed on from these centres to Cambodia and Java, to Siam and Burma. It was an Indian impulse, too, which carried the Greek influence of Gandhara to Chinese Turkistan, and so on to the Far East. From Barhut to Borobodur, even more than from Gandhara to Horiuji, is a natural development covering in each case nearly a thousand years, and illustrating the evolution alike of Buddhist art and thought. Here one may trace the growth of the stupa from a simple burial mound to an elaborate terraced cenotaph. One may see the Buddha legend grow from the story of a young chieftain who renounced the joys of home to find salvation for himself, to the cosmic drama of a god above the gods, who revealed, as men were able to receive them, the mysteries of Transcendent Truth.

At Barhut and Sanchi some of this mystery no doubt was present from the beginning. It is partly because of this that the Buddha appears only in symbols. They tell us of his birth, first sermon, and enlightenment, or of his death, and we know that pilgrimages were instituted by Asoka to the sacred spots connected with these events. In the account of his death, the most lifelike and touching of Buddhist scriptures, the Master himself is represented as instituting them.

Before these symbols kings and other lay-people, animals,





DETAILS OF SECULAR AND RELIGIOUS LIFE  
BOROBODUR



and the gods themselves are seen at worship; and one can trace the growth of this bhakti upon the monuments, until with the coming of the artists, or artisans, of the North-West Frontier, it was inevitable that Buddhist devotion, wedding Greek art, should produce a young Indian Apollo, or a young Greek Buddha, with halo and toga. This is an art of little significance except as a link between Western and Eastern forms, and only at times does it rise above Eurasian mediocrity. Yet it introduced the ikon and the features and draperies of the Greek gods, and so its influence can be easily traced southward to Mathura, Benares, Magadha, Amaravati, Anuradhapura; northward and eastward to Turkistan and China, and thence to Korea and Japan. From now on images of the Buddha replaced symbols, and we can trace the transition in the Amaravati sculptures, where indeed there are some panels which represent him by symbols side by side with others, perhaps of later date, but seeming to belong to the same period, where he appears in human form.

Architecturally a development of the stupa with gates and procession-path, Borobodur is a great picture book in stone; it is the work of artists who were missionaries to simple folk and sought to lead them by natural stages, first to a Buddhist view of the universe as an orderly sequence of cause and effect, a drama of retribution, and then to a knowledge of the story of him who so interpreted it and won salvation from it. Beyond this human life of Sakya-muni lay its interpretation; and so in one great gallery they set forth a long series of Jatakas and opposite to them all the wealth of legends drawn from the Lalita Vistara. Beyond these again they depicted the story of the young seeker Sudhana who, after visiting the teachers and deities of the world, learns from the coming Buddha Maitreya the hidden truth.

Entering by the Eastern gateway one passes over a series of splendid carvings. In this lower terrace the villagers must have taken special delight, for here are set forth vivid scenes of the worldly life, with its lures and its

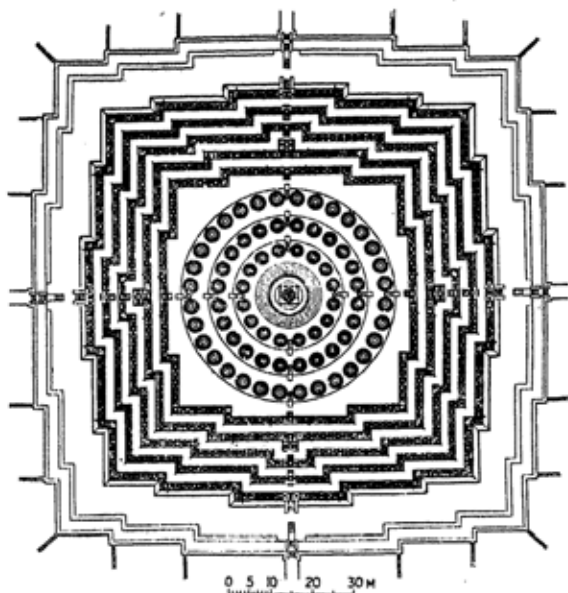
punishments. Here are men who beat their wives being cast into hell by the torturers of King Yama. Here are women making turtle soup. It is done, we are not allowed to forget, by plunging the living creature into a cauldron of boiling water. Here beside it, as the wheel of Samsara revolves, the cooks are being cooked!

This lowest series of sculptures has only lately been re-discovered by archaeologists. For centuries it had been buried, proving perhaps too attractive to simple minds; or perhaps the great structure began to slide and needed buttressing; or it may be that it was deliberately hidden by artists who conceived this life of man as a kind of underworld. The Borobodur does in fact represent the Universe of Buddhist Cosmogony.

Next above these human scenes are set out gods and demi-gods, the Yakshas and the Devas of Indian mythology, and only above them do we come to the first main gallery with its scenes of Jatakas facing those of the Buddha legend. These begin at the East gate with the young Bodhisat in the Tusita heaven, declaring his intention of being born on earth; and they pass right round the great stupa until they end again at the East gate with his attainment of bodhi and his anointing, or abisekha. We are shown the great moments in the classic story—the joy in the Tusita heaven that he is to be born among men, his prowess as a young Rajput Prince, his first meeting with the fact of disease.

Passing up beneath splendid archways, or torana, we enter now upon the world of mystical or transcendent truth. As in the series below he was seen handing his crown to the next Buddha, Maitreya, so here it is Maitreya who is the Teacher. The scenes are drawn from the Gandha Vyuha, one of the nine great scriptures of Nepal, and a portion of the Avatamsaka Sutra. It tells how the young seeker Sudhana found ultimate truth, and sets out in great detail his long search. Gods and men, monks, ascetics, and Bodhisattvas, all are consulted. Maitreya alone can initiate him.

Here, besides these long galleries of pictures, are innumerable small stupas, each with its Dhyani-Buddha; so that whole great building resembles nothing so much as a mandara of the sect which thrives to-day on Koya San.



The Ground Plan of Borobudur.

It may well be that the central stupa which crowns the whole work is meant to be occupied, like the central place in a mandara of this school, by the Sun Buddha, Vairochana.

The whole building, as it was lit up with innumerable candles in the niches of its small stupas, must have glowed like a galaxy of stars about a central sun.

Here in any case is symbolized the central idea of Buddhist art that behind the many is the One. Perhaps it is a symbol of the main thought embodied in the Lotus Scripture that behind the many ways there is one way, and that behind the many Buddhas and Bodhisattvas there is the eternal Sakyamuni. It may well be that we are led back from the elaborate pantheon and the mystical formulae to the historic Founder, for an unfinished statue

discovered in the Central Stupa may be a copy of the Bodh-Gaya Sakyamuni.

It is pathetic to-day to find that there is nothing left of this great system except the stones, and one little bit of local worship. Before one of the sculptures we may see a small group of Javanese villagers lighting their little sticks of incense. It is an illustration of one of the Jatakas, which tells how the Bodhisat in the form of a great turtle rescued a shipwrecked crew and took them on his back to safety. Here women come, believing that these small figures are babies, and that here is magic which will help them to become mothers. All that remains of a great and stately cultus is this—a few peasants seeking to propitiate a local godling—that and the stones of a mighty past.

Here, outside India and for a brief moment, Indian art reached its climax, and Indian religion sought to popularize amidst simple peasants the amazing philosophy of a cosmopanteistic realism, to-day best studied in Japan. Here, then, was the swan song of Indian Buddhist artists—or as they prefer to say, the glorious efflorescence under tropic skies of the venerable tree about to die. Unique architecturally—even if a great French critic has called it *une omelette mal soufflée*—its sculptural decorations are a fine flower of the ancient tree which flourished during the long era from Asoka and Kanishka to the Guptas (200 B.C. to A.D. 500) and which now in the eighth and ninth centuries blossomed once more luxuriantly.

It is not only due to the wonderful vastness and the excellence of those hundreds of panels which adorn the walls and balustrades of the four long passages through which the faithful, rising from terrace to terrace, performed the solemn perambulation of the monument. It is, above all, the spirit of supreme repose, of serene calmness pervading them in which the Buddhist religious ideal finds so eloquent an expression.<sup>1</sup>

Nor can one ever forget that lovely setting. On a small hill rise the six square terraces and the crowning stupa, set amidst its rings of smaller ones; beyond are the green fields—

<sup>1</sup> J. Ph. Vogel in *The Influence of Indian Art*, pp. 57-8.

a patchwork such as Sakyamuni saw in Magadha and took as the pattern for robes of his order—the great trees, the vast circle of high peaks—Merapi, Minoreh, Soembing, Sindoro. It is a place of enchanting loveliness, at dawn or in the bright sunlight, or in twilight with its lovely after-glow. And the Buddhas of north, south, east, and west—Amoghasiddha, Ratnasambhava, Akshobhya, and Amitabha—vie with the great Vairochana of the zenith for the honour of the most lovely view. There they sit, ninety-two images of each gazing out over the wide and fertile plain and the distant peaks, and over all towers the simple and serene stupa of Sakyamuni. Even Vairochana with his many images at last gives place to the historic Founder.

What are they all, with their gestures of protection, of giving gifts, of meditation, of witness and of preaching—what are they but reflexes of the Great Monk of Kapilavastu? What is this serene and lovely monument but the embodiment of his spirit?

But if Java reminds us of Sakyamuni and the great things of Buddhist India it reminds us too of Muhammad and the sword of Islam with its clean-cut monotheism. These had won much of Asia as well as of Africa by the tenth century A.D., and with the coming of the great Mongols India and China as well as the Islands begin to yield to a Semitic influence—strong in its insistence on the unity of God, and of all believers in His resistless power and His great compassion. To all who did not make submission Islam was a veritable scourge, and much of the finest culture went down before its ruthless iconoclasm. But if it destroyed it also preserved, in Asia as in Europe, what it felt to be worth preserving—and the services of its great soldiers are in themselves an interesting and intricate study.

## THE SPIRIT OF SOUTHERN INDIA

## I. FROM THE KURAL

(The Tamil Veda of Tiruvalluvar)

*Home-Life*

He lives home-life who stands in Virtue's path,  
 And helps the orders three in their good paths.  
 He lives true home-life who's a help  
 To the lost, the poor and to the dead.  
 Pitris, gods, kin, one's guests and self—  
 To serve these five is duty chief.  
 Ne'er shall be lack of offspring in his house,  
 Who fearing ill, gives ere he enjoys.  
 If in the home true love and Virtue dwell,  
 Home-life is full of grace and fruit.  
 If home-life's lived always in Virtue's way,  
 What good is there in leaving house and home?  
 He, who lives home-life worthily,  
 Shall first among all strivers be.  
 Home-life, that helps the saints and swerves from Virtue ne'er,  
 Endures more trials than lonely hermit-life.  
 Home-life itself is Virtue's way;  
 The other, too, is good, if men no fault can find.  
 He, who lives home-life worthily on earth,  
 Will win a place 'mong gods who dwell in heaven.

Tr. H. A. POPLEY.

*Love*

Is there a bolt that can avail to shut up love?  
 The trickling tears of loving eyes would tell it out.  
 All for themselves the loveless spend;  
 The loving e'en their bones for others give.  
 The link of soul and body, say the wise,  
 Is but the fruit of man's own link with love.

Love doth the trait of tenderness beget;  
 That, too, begets true friendship's priceless worth.  
 The bliss of earth and heav'n the blessed gain,  
 The learned say, is rooted in a loving life.  
 The foolish say, 'Love helps the good alone';  
 But surely 'tis a help 'gainst evil too.  
 As the sun's heat burns up all boneless things,  
 So virtue doth burn up all loveless things.  
 To live the home-life with a loveless heart  
 Is like a withered tree flowering in barren sand.  
 To those who lack the inward means of love  
 What use is there in any outward means?  
 The living soul subsists in love;  
 The loveless are but skin and bone.

Tr. H. A. POPLEY.

## II. A HYMN OF THE ALVAR PERIYA

'He condescends to them of low estate.'

### *Tirumangai*

Thou didst not call him dull, or foe to life,  
 Or low of caste, but pitiedst him,  
 On him thy kindly grace didst pour, and say:  
 'She with the shy deer's modest glance  
 Thy friend is—and my brother thine'; and when  
 He would not stay behind, for joy,  
 'Thou art my friend: stay here!' thou saidst. Such words  
 So fit my heart that I have found  
 Thy feet, thou with the colour of the seas,  
 Lord of Srirangam with its beauteous trees.  
 Thou didst not spurn the great son of the Wind  
 As Ape, and of another race,  
 But, so that love and longing greater grew  
 Than ocean, thou didst love, and say:  
 'There cannot be a recompense for all  
 That thou hast done for me; I will  
 Embrace thee, thou of faultless truth!' That such  
 A shining boon to me may come,

Longing, the refuge of thy feet I seize,  
 Lord of Srirangam with its beauteous trees.

When gathering lotus in a beauteous pool  
 By groves of fragrant flowers girt,  
 The elephant by mighty crocodile  
 Was seized, so that its end was nigh:  
 He thought upon the shelter of thy feet . . .  
 Knowing the mighty wrath thou hadst,  
 Such that the life of that beast, cruel-mouthed,  
 Was shaken, I, too, come to thee,  
 Thy slave, the refuge of thy feet I seize,  
 Lord of Srirangam with its beauteous trees.

When came a poison-dropping angry snake  
 To Thee for refuge, terror-struck,  
 Thou didst become its refuge, and didst give  
 It for protection to the Bird,  
 Thy beauteous slave. Knowing this grace thou show'dst,  
 I, fearing Yama's messengers  
 So harsh of speech, and cruelties which they,  
 Fierce ones, will do, have come to thee:  
 Thy slave, the refuge of thy feet I seize,  
 Lord of Srirangam with its beauteous trees.

Tr. J. S. M. HOOPER.

The Alvars are the wandering poets of the South, forerunners of Ramanuja, inspired by the Gita. The above are from volumes in 'The Heritage of India Series', Oxford University Press.

### III. A SOUTHERN CHALLENGE TO BRAHMINS OF WESTERN INDIA

'Ye Brahmins, hearken to what I say! When men die and their sons give you a seat and food so that you recite delusive catch-prayers and enjoy yourselves, tell me, who has ever seen (the ghosts), stirred by hunger, come back and stand there thrusting out their hands? whose hunger is assuaged by the food that you consume! In the various lands of the Ottiyas, Mlechchhas, Hunas, Sinhalese, the slender-waisted Jonakas, Yavanas, and Chinese there are no Brahmins; but ye have set up in this land a fourfold division as if it were an order distinguished in primal nature. By conduct are distinguished high and low degrees. The bull and the buffalo are unlike of kind; have male and female of these two classes ever been seen to unite one with another and breed offspring? But ye men, who are by



birth all of the same kind, do ye not see that if male and female of the orders which ye proclaim to be different unite one with another, offspring is born from the union? Whatever be the seed and whatever the ground whereon it is sown, on that same ground that very seed will spring up; it would be against nature's law that it should become different. Are not the sons of a Pulai-woman united with a Brahmin likewise Brahmins? . . .'

"Kapilar"—a Southern Poet. Tr. L. D. Barnett in "The Heart of India", *Wisdom of the East*: John Murray.

#### IV. SOME POEMS OF TUKARAM

##### (a) *Creator and Protector*

Who guards the unborn babe within the breast?  
How skilled His hands, who guides and holds  
This Universe! Who cherishes the little snake  
That its unnatural mother would molest!  
Who feeds the life within the dry cocoon,  
And pulses in the living rock. Awake!  
And firmly meet thy fate, says Tukaram.

TUKARAM (A.D. 1608-49).

By birth a Sudra, a small shopkeeper by occupation—he was a great-hearted 'devotee' whose hymns are probably the largest religious influence in the Maratha country. These Bhajanas are in an irregular rhymed metre. Naïve and spontaneous, they are full of trust and confidence in God, who is all-pervading, yet very present and personal. We easily comprehend him for what he is, an unlearned man struggling with the mysteries of faith by such light as he can find. This light is sometimes reflected from the great Sanskrit classics, it is sometimes borrowed from the traditions of Krishna worship and the Bhakti school of Bengal. It is always concentrated, however, on the image of Vitthoba at Pandhapura in which Tukaram finds a power actually present to help and save him.'

##### (b) *God Immanent yet Transcendent*

Father, Mother, bosom-friend,  
Treasure, darling of my heart!  
Thee I know—no other proof attend:  
On Thee I lay the burden of my care!  
All action Thou, all deeds of piety,  
Clan art Thou, Guru, Vows, Austerity:  
The very place of pilgrimage Thou art.

In every spirit dwells Thy life divine,  
 As fire in fire-stick, even so it hideth!  
 Reflected lights in every vessel shine:  
 The vessels break: yet still the Light abideth.  
 Pound thou the grass—no milk dost find:  
 Yon cow doth chew, and change it:  
 The plantain blossoms into fruit and flower—  
 Search thou its stem—what trace dost find?  
 None knoweth this strange alchemy,  
 Save He who's in it all, save He  
 Who wields o'er all His power.

215-16.

(c) *Vishnu*

We see Thy footprints, Vishnu, everywhere:  
 Lord of the misty hue, lo! all are Thine!  
 The ground beneath us is Thine altar-stair,  
 And by Thy love all days auspicious shine.  
 Thou art our all, our hope, our very life,  
 Our livelihood. The daily meal we eat  
 An offering is to Thee, e'en to the betel-chew!

We walk—around Thy throne circle our feet:  
 We sleep—before Thy Face we lie so still!  
 We talk with folk—to find Thine Image there.  
 Wells, rivers, lakes are all by Ganges filled:  
 Huts, palaces, alike are temples that we build  
 To Thee. All sounds Thy Name declare,  
 All worlds are Thine, that are or ever were.  
 Of Thy great love Thy servants take their fill.

1703.

## (d)

He who this universe pervades  
 Does He not dwell within my heart?  
 His grace my spirit guides and aids,  
 My mind empowers to do its part:  
 My energies quiescent lie,  
 No purpose of my own have I.  
 See how the puppets dance and move  
 The strings are in His hands above!

2881.

*(e) Tukaram and Sivaji*

When the great Marathi emperor Sivaji invited him to his court, Tukaram refused. 'Look upon my modest speech,' he wrote, 'as a grace of Him who dwelleth in the hearts of all men; for we that have submitted ourselves to Panduranga are not poor or pitiable; Panduranga guards and supports us; what are others compared to Him? What can I ask of thee, that I should see thee? I have brought to naught all worldly longings. My fief is Desirelessness, for which I have surrendered the land of Desire: as the chaste wife longs only to see her lord, such am I to Vitthala. All the world is to me Vitthala, naught else; thee likewise I behold in Him.'

Tr. L. D. BARNETT.

## VII

### AKBAR AND THE GREAT MOGULS

The success of a Government hangs on the King's use of his leisure.—

AIN-I-AKBARI.

This world is a bridge—build not on it.—INSCRIPTION AT FATEPUR-SIKRI.

#### I

IN 712, within a century of Muhammad's death, Arabs set up an Islamic kingdom in Sind, and in 987 a freed slave of Ghazni in Afghanistan declared war on Hindu India, routed the Rajput clans, and left to his son Mahmud the grim task of repeated invasion and conquest. Thus while the Cholas were conquering Ceylon, and the Normans England, the Ghaznis were gaining a precarious foothold in India, and by 1193 were lords of northern Hindustan. Mahmud, first sultan, made of his task of conquest a Jihad or Holy War, and in addition to raids and looting began a peaceful penetration by encouraging such men of letters as Firdausi, and Albiruni the mathematician, to produce their great histories—the *Shahnama* or 'Tale of the Kings', and the 'Treatise on India'. But all about his court at Lahore were proud Rajput kingdoms also promoting their own culture, and to this age belong the flower of Indian chivalry and the efflorescence of Hindu popular literature—the *Bhagavad Purana* and the *Ramayana* of Tulsi Das as well as the tales of warlike deeds against the invader and against rival kingdoms under such leaders as Bhoja of Malwar, Jaichand of Kanauj, and the Prithiviraja Chauhan of Ajmer and Delhi.

In Delhi itself there are traces of seven cities, where as upon the ancient Kurukshetra, successive rulers vied with one another in rearing new tombs and mosques: thus in the eighth century Amangpala, a Hindu ruler, built a temple where the mosque by the Kutub Minar now stands, and from this to the great Pearl Mosque the evolution of Indian Islamic architecture may be traced. It is a syn-

thesis of Hindu, Persian, and Arab styles as Hindustani, the *lingua franca* of the North, is a blend of Hindi, Persian, and Arabic. Now minarets rise beside vimanas—sultans vie with rajas, fakirs with sannyasis, and dervishes with bhaktas in the long processes of rivalry and mutual influence; and a slave dynasty rules in the name of the Prophet over proud solar houses which stoop to marriage with the outcaste 'Turks'.

Some of these slave kings were ruthless, some enlightened rulers, and patrons of learning and letters. But iconoclasm was a religious duty, and many noble works of art—Buddhist and Hindu—perished. The slave dynasty was succeeded by Khiljis who ruled thirty years (1293–1323), led by able conquerors who penetrated far south, and were succeeded by Tughlaks, of mixed Hindu and Turkoman descent, who ruled till 1410, and are remembered for the amazing Muhammad, 'learned, ruthless, religious, mad', who promoted fantastic wars, and no less fantastic experiments in finance and statecraft, attempting to move all Delhi to his new capital Daulatabad seven hundred miles away. In such caprices he reminds us of Richard II of England, who was almost contemporary with him, and also brave, good, and cultured, but a little mad. After Muhammad came Firoz (1351–88) a much less brilliant but more stable character. Both were zealous builders, and Firoz made canals still used between Jumna and Sutlej, and did other useful things. But the main interest of these early Islamic dynasties is that they were forerunners of the Great Moguls and pioneers of a new synthesis between Semitic and Aryan cultures in which the age-long struggle finds surcease and fruition.

## II

The Mogul dynasty, like that of the Mauryas—and many another—was founded by an adventurer. Babur, the Tiger, had long watched from his lair at Kabul the rich prize for which 'lesser breeds' wrangled in the plains

of Hindustan. Then with one irresistible leap, he seized it, and spent the rest of his days holding it. In this raid he avoided the hideous cruelty which had disgraced his ancestor Timur, when prisoners were massacred in cold blood and cities were sacked without reason. And though he carried away much loot, he left no great bitterness behind him.

But he held India as conqueror, and, like Alexander, seems to have dreamed of it as a province in a much vaster empire. And he too died before he could consolidate it even as a province, holding Agra for five short years. Nor had he, like Chandragupta, a Chanakya to do his thinking for him. A great soldier, a poet and a man of genius, he was no administrator: and the need for one was urgent.

The India of the fifteenth century was more divided and much harder to unite than that of Chandragupta. Many Hindu kingdoms were still unconquered, and the Muhammadan rulers of Delhi had only the title of emperor: none of them had yet made himself at home in India, nor learnt the art of conciliation. They all made the fatal and characteristic mistake of ruling by armed camps, and their generals became rebel kings. One great Hindu kingdom, Vijayanagar, defied them all: it covered all the south up to the limits of Asokan India, and it took an Akbar to subdue it. Above it stretched a line of Muhammadan powers—Gujarat, Malwa, and the Deccan—and north of these was the solid Hindu wedge of Rajputana, resentful and haughty, unbending before the conquering might of Islam, and eagerly watching its internal divisions, Afghan and Turk, Shia and Sunni. These cleavages, whether of race or of sect, also took an Akbar to bridge: and the great Rajput dynasties, claiming descent from the Sun, were either to go down before his ruthless imperialism, or to be won over by his policy of conciliation.

Above this wedge of solid Hinduism lay a northern group of Muhammadan powers stretching in a great sweep from Sind to Bengal, kingdoms still nominally vassal to

Delhi. What a prize and what a task awaited the conqueror! Only a leader of infinite daring and skill could subdue all these proud powers, most of whom kept up large standing armies. Then, as now, the task was only made possible by a 'balance of power': each great Islamic group being flanked by a strong Hindu kingdom, with pride of race and religious intolerance to inflame the ambitions of its rulers. To the Hindus the Muhammadans were upstart invaders, defilers of Mother India and of the temples of her gods. To the Muhammadans, even the great Rajput princes were infidels—to crush whom was to serve Allah, to die in battle with whom was to win Paradise.

Such was the India of the fifteenth century: and the masses, terribly taxed to support great armies and visited with devastating famine, were busy with the problem of living. Nor were their rulers much concerned with helping them in the struggle for existence: by their system of tax-gatherers and local governors they made life only the more intolerable. The landlords collected even more than the rulers exacted, and the governors decided cases without appeal. To the rulers who preceded Akbar and to his successors we may apply these words of an ancient Chinese patriot, who said of the kings of his day: 'In their kitchen there is fat meat; in their stables are fat horses. But the people are famished, and in the fields lie the starved bodies of the dead.' But there was no one at the court of the conquerors to voice the crying needs of the people. There was not even a courtier like Mencius to remind this race of connoisseurs that the people hearing the sweetness of the music within the palace, cry, 'How our ruler loves music. But why does he reduce us to such misery?' And as these mighty hunters went out against lions and tigers, there was no one to dare their anger and say: 'The people hear the noise of your chariots and horses. They see the splendour of your plumes and pennons, but with aching brows they cry, "How our ruler loves hunting, but we perish with misery"'. The Moguls were to do something to alleviate India's pain; Akbar realized that their sorrows were

chiefly economic: as the Arthashastra says, 'The one great need is wealth'. But Mogul splendour was an added burden.

Of the founder of the great Mogul dynasty, Babur, we know much. His own *Memoirs* give us a partial autobiography, though with long gaps, and there are contemporary works of art, including portraits, and descriptions of the great adventurer and his romantic career. Here is excellent reading for those who like tales of bloodshed and of personal heroism; but he stands almost outside the story of India, though he regarded himself as rightful heir to the Empire of Timur.

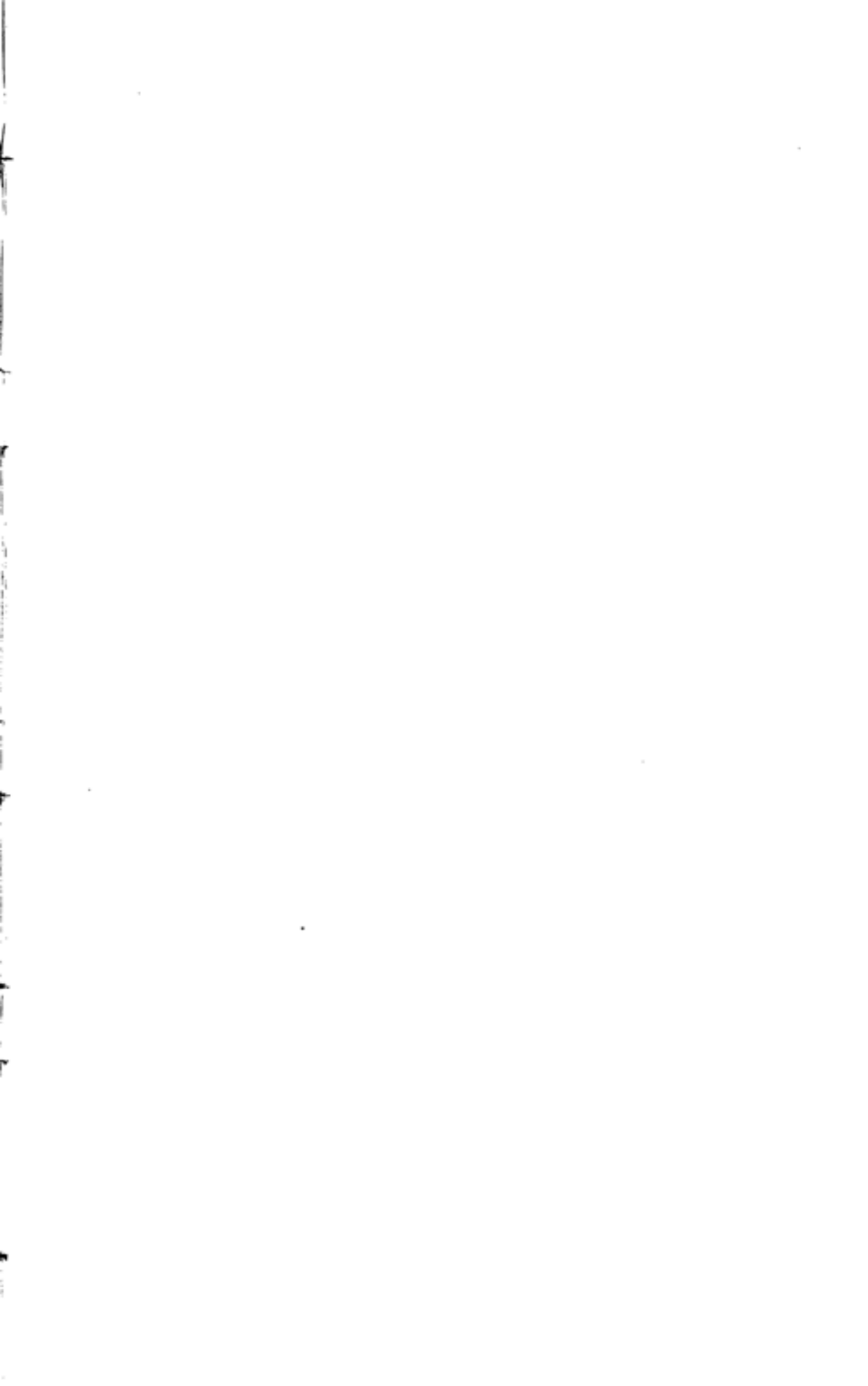
Like all his house, he was a strange mixture; often drunk, yet always religious; frank about his sins, which he often renounced; a poet as well as a soldier, a devoted father who set his face against the family rivalries so usual in this age, a just ruler according to his lights; 'a very gallant gentleman' says his latest biographer. A man of immense vitality, with a genius for friendship and a broad humanity, he 'had not merely to conquer a kingdom; he had to recreate a theory of kingship'. And for this he had neither the capacity nor the length of days granted in overflowing measure to his grandson Akbar.

Nor had his son, Humayun, the personality and the gifts. He is like Bindusara, son and father of a genius, himself of less than average ability. He was a slave to opium and lacked moral purpose in other ways. Yet he handed on to Akbar—born of a romantic marriage with a girl of thirteen—the charm and culture of his race. And he tried to give him a good education, though he was for many years himself a homeless wanderer. He died in 1556, when Akbar was thirteen.

### III

Akbar was named Badru-d-din—'the Full Moon of the Faith'—and Muhammad Akbar—'Muhammad the Great'. If ever names mean anything these were big with destiny







THE BOY AKBAR  
ON 'SKY-ROCKET'



AKBAR'S SON JAHANGIR  
WITH HIS FATHER'S PORTRAIT

—good or evil, as we interpret the life and character of this great man.

We know that his baptism of fire came when he was still an infant. Kabul had been captured by his uncle Kamran, who basely exposed the child until the besiegers withdrew; and he grew up amidst camps and marches and the alarms of war.

His tutors naturally found it hard to turn his thoughts to book-learning, and to the end of his days this man of action—religious reformer, patron of poets and artists, collector of a unique and priceless library of manuscripts, student of art and of music—was unable to read and write. Cultured but unschooled, he is a type of ruler not unfamiliar to history in Europe as in Asia.

His mastery of animals as of men began early, and the story of his taming of the mad elephant is well illustrated in a contemporary picture. He is seen seated on Hawai or 'Sky-rocket', whom he has pitted against Ran Bagha—'Battle Tiger'. They have crossed a bridge of boats after a furious combat and Akbar is mastering the victor, while his attendants flee in terror and amazement. It is a symbolic scene, for Akbar had greater tasks ahead.

Heir to little more than a claim to suzerainty, he was busy for many years taking and consolidating his empire. As we have seen, it was a desolate and unhappy India that he found, devastated by a terrible famine, impoverished by misrule, and divided into warring kingdoms. That he left it settled, united, and, if not prosperous, yet with some measure of economic as well as political stability—this is his chief claim to greatness. A pupil and ward of the great general Bairam Khan, he rallied his forces at Panipat, where India has thrice been lost and won, and defeated the great army of the Afghan pretender Hemu, whom he slew in cold blood with his own hands at the bidding of Bairam Khan. They entered Delhi in state, and a month later turned north against another rebel, Sikander Sur, whom they also defeated, but not without a severe struggle. So in the first year of his reign the Boy Emperor had made

himself master of northern India, and set himself to the tremendous task of uniting the rest of the empire.

Finding the high hand of Bairam Khan intolerable he 'allowed him to go on pilgrimage to Mecca'. As he was setting out an assassin killed him, and Akbar found himself free to work out his own policies. He had not only to make India his, he had the more delicate task of making himself India's. To both problems he found a key in the proud kingdoms of Rajputana, whose heroism and pride of race at once attracted and challenged him. As Alexander found an Indian king ready to submit and another prepared to die first, so Akbar: the Raja of Amber gave him his daughter in marriage, but the proud scions of Udaipur fell defending their rock-fortress, Chitor, 'sanctified by the memory of eight centuries of heroic deeds and heart-rending tragedies'. A curse fell upon it, and it is still derelict.

The flight of its degenerate ruler was an even more crushing blow to Rajput pride than the alliance of Amber with the Muslim. But his successor, Pratap Singh, long kept up a stout resistance. He succeeded in reconquering some of the lost territory and at last, as the Mogul genius waned, his house came once more into its own.

But like the Manchus in China the Moguls lasted nearly three centuries in India; and while the pride of China and Rajputana are alike inexhaustible, the Rajputs have neither the patience nor the long view of the Chinese, who knew that their rulers would become degenerate if they were given time and wealth. The Rajput chiefs chafed under the barbarian yoke, though Akbar tempered it to the submissive, and made it crushing to the restive.

At Chitor he slew as ruthlessly as Timur, till the caste-cords of the slain were gathered up in baskets: yet he set up statues to the brave defenders Jai Mall and Patta, and 'finally succeeded in healing the wounds his ambition had inflicted'.

The repeal of two oppressive levies within the first eight years of his reign, a poll-tax and a pilgrim-tax, which had

borne very heavily upon the Hindus, greatly aided the healing process; and in this and other acts we can watch Akbar's growth in understanding and sympathy.

The Rajputs, true to their race, won even in yielding to the victor; and Akbar, though he had no drop of Indian blood in his veins, became in a true sense an Indian, as he gradually fell in love with Indian civilization. Which is the more remarkable, the military genius of this youthful conqueror, or the magnanimity and understanding which guide him in the moment of victory to conciliate the vanquished? It is small wonder that the name of Alexander, so long forgotten in India, begins in Akbar's time to be remembered with respect.

Nor did his work of conciliation stop with his peers. High office was given to Hindus as to Muslims, and Todar Mall, his wazir, worked loyally with him for the financial and economic reforms India so sorely needed. Upon his work the British in India have founded their fiscal system.

Tax-farming was done away: the land was re-assessed, and taxes levied on crops rather than on soil. This mitigated the burden in times of drought, though it was still heavy. Agriculture was encouraged by loans, and though the traditional levy of one-sixth of the produce was sometimes raised, and although official corruption cannot be wholly prevented even by an autocrat, Akbar did much to prevent extortion and to fix tariffs.

English residents in India in the early seventeenth century bear out the official records in stating that food was fairly plentiful and very cheap, and that wages were terribly low, when judged by Elizabethan standards. One of them lived on from a penny to twopence a day; but the day labourer got less than a penny, and in hard times the people died like flies. Nor was life and property secure even to the rich, and under Akbar's successors the dangers increased, and there was little encouragement to commercial enterprise. Akbar himself hoarded enormous sums of money and jewels, as did the royal house of Vijayanagar.

## IV

The process by which Akbar made himself an Indian of the Indians can only be understood by a study of his religious life. Religion is the most potent factor in Indian culture, and fascinating as is the story of Akbar as conqueror, reformer, and patron of arts, the story of his religious development is at once the most characteristic and interesting chapter in his history. Did he inherit from the poetic and adventurous Babur and from the gentle and dreamy Humayun this strain of mysticism and this theological aptitude, which makes him so remarkable a figure among the kings of the world?

Babur was a devout and orthodox Muhammadan; and there is an interesting story that he met Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion, who spoke with him of a Universal Faith. It may be that this meeting bore fruit fifty years later in Akbar's strange attempt to find one, for Humayun was also religious, and did his best to turn the boy's mind to serious things. As Abul Fazl is fond of saying, the boy was for some years 'behind a veil'. He was in fact under the influence of the women of the harem, who were orthodox Sunni Muhammadans, while his guardian, Bairam Khan, made himself hated as an adherent of the Shiahs.

The boy was thus early impressed with the endless rivalry between these two sects, whose original difference concerned the Khalifat, or secular headship of Islam. He soon began to rejoice in playing off one against the other, and there is no question that their squabbles had much to do with his repudiation of Islam. A first step in this direction was taken when he married the princess of Amber, and was able to see Hinduism in practice. It is greatly to his credit, and to hers, that underlying its sectarian differences he found a depth of devotion to the Unseen, a noble ideal for the home, and an all-inclusive code, the dharma of Hindu life. Hinduism is much more a way of life than a set of beliefs.

Another great milestone in Akbar's religious develop-

ment was the birth of a son to this Hindu wife. He had prayed for a son, and had been promised one by Salim Chisti, the saintly recluse of Sikri near Agra. When the child was about to be born he went with his queen to the hermitage, and made it the nucleus of the great and noble Fatepur Sikri, a city built partly in Hindu style and partly in that of Islam, and a superb symbol of the work of reconciliation which now began. Here and at Ahmedabad the blending of Hindu and Muslim styles may be conveniently studied: never perhaps were two widely differing traditions more successfully wedded.

The buildings at Sikri include the noble mosque where Akbar was soon to act the mullah, and the great hall known as the Ibadat Khana, where religious discussions were held every Thursday night, and often prolonged to the small hours of the morning. That it has completely disappeared is probably due to his more orthodox successors, for he went far in his search for a universal religion. In the eighteenth year of his reign the Sufi leader Sheikh Mubarak and others met him returning from a victorious campaign, and made the subtle suggestion that he should become spiritual as well as temporal head of the Empire. On this fateful hint he acted six years later in the famous proclamation of 1579, which Colonel Malleeson calls the Magna Carta of his reign, and which Dr. Vincent Smith condemns as a monument of folly and ridiculous vanity. If we look at this act in the light of Hindu ideals it is rather one of policy than of either magnanimity or conceit; but its detailed working out was to say the least unwise.

In this decree Akbar claims to be the head of the Din Ilahi, a monotheism which some authorities regard as a reformed sect of Islam, but which the accurate Jesuit fathers who were summoned to his Court at this time, and the orthodox Muhammadan Badaoni, are agreed is tantamount to a repudiation of Islam. The latter quotes a form of confession used by its adherents: 'I . . . do voluntarily and with sincere devotion and of my free will utterly and entirely renounce and repudiate the religion of Islam,

which I have seen and heard of my fathers, and do embrace the Din Ilahi of Akbar Shah: and I accept the four stages of entire devotion—sacrifice of property, life, honour, and religion.’ These are no doubt suggested by the four asrams of Hinduism, and the new faith had in it more of Hinduism and of Zoroastrianism than of Islam, though it interpreted these monotheistically with a tinge of pantheism, and laid great stress upon sun-worship. Akbar was in fact like Louis XIV, *le Roi Soleil*, and deliberately fulfilled the old Indian tradition of the solar origin of the king. The crux of the matter lay in his assumption of infallibility, and the initiation-ceremony of the new Order, which included prostration at his feet, was conducted by the Emperor in person. He gave to the initiate a tablet engraved with his own name, using the ambiguous words ‘Allahu Akbar’, which (in this connexion) had a blasphemous sound to orthodox ears, and his portrait, to be worn in the turban of the faithful, was a symbol of his lordship in matters spiritual as well as secular. Initiates were accustomed to meet one another with the greeting ‘Allahu Akbar’, ‘Great is Allah’, and the response ‘Jalla Jalaluhu’, ‘Resplendent is his brightness’.

It seems clear that the Emperor went out of his way to annoy the orthodox, even insisting that members of the Faith should be buried with their heads towards the sun, and their feet towards Mecca. This is sun-worship after the old Vaishnava tradition, and an insult to Islam, and it was so meant.

No man was to build a mosque, or to repair those in existence; and later on mosques were actually destroyed; the slaughter of cows was forbidden, and for more than a hundred days in the year all India was to abstain from eating meat. For Akbar had accepted the Hindu doctrines of ahimsa to animals, and of the sanctity of the cow.

There is here, as in so much that he did, a mingling of genius and stupidity, of magnanimity and pettiness. Right in conciliating his Hindu subjects, he was perverse in persecuting Muhammadans, and his interest in the Parsis and in sun-worship seems to have been enhanced by his



claims to be the ideal and inspired Indian king, while his coquetting with the Jesuits led to no good result. Rome and Islam are agreed in this at any rate—they abhor the free-lance in religion. Both see in the individualism of the mystic a danger to the stability of the Faith.

Mysticism is indeed a heady wine; and Akbar quaffed deep of it. His attitude toward the orthodox theologians of the day is that of the Sufi poet,

Come leave we the pious to their piety,  
And get us to the Tavern of Reality.

This means of course let us drink of the wine of mysticism, and find truth at first-hand. There is this element of sincerity in Akbar's quest, and his friends Faizi and Abul Fazl, sons of Mubarak, were constantly with him to encourage this tendency. In an inscription which Abul Fazl prepared for a shrine in Kashmir the philosophy of this search is well set forth:

O God, in every shrine I see Thy people seeking Thee,  
In all tongues, O God, I hear Thy people praising Thee.  
The devotee of many gods and of One feel after Thee,  
Crying 'Thou art one, unrivalled: there is none else.'  
If it be a mosque men are there murmuring holy prayers:  
If it be a church there are bells tolling in love of Thee.  
I frequent the cloister or the mosque, and 'tis Thee I seek,  
For neither heretic nor orthodox may pass within the Veil of  
Truth:

Heresy to the heretic, to the orthodox orthodoxy:  
But the fragrance of the rose-petal is in the heart of the perfume-seller.

Religion in other words is a matter of inner experience, and Akbar was subject to moments of mystical realization of truth. On the great gateway at Fatepur Sikri are words which show us that beneath the egoism and the frivolity of his religious search there lay a deep sense of the transiency of the temporal, and of the mystery of the Eternal:

Jesus saith 'The world is a bridge: Pass over it, but build not on it:  
The world passeth as an hour: spend it in prayer, for the Unseen  
is at hand.

But on the other pillar of this stupendous gateway, erected to glorify the emperor, are the haughty words:

His Majesty, Lord of Lords, enthroned in the shadow of Allah, Jalal-ud-din Muhammad Akbar, Emperor, hath conquered the Deccan. . . .

These two inscriptions, read together, remind us of Asoka's Kalinga Edict in their blending of pride and humility; and we may picture to ourselves the scene which reveals Akbar as preacher, like Asoka earnestly concerned with religious truth. The vast courtyard within the great gateway is crowded with the nobles of the Mogul court in their splendid brocades and flashing jewels. Here is some orthodox moulvi standing in austere disapproval, and near him the tense and eager forms of Faizi and Abul Fazl triumphant in this crowning moment, as the Emperor, clad in white, mounts the pulpit, and begins the service with the hymn of Faizi:

To me hath God the Empire given;  
My strength and wisdom are of heaven.  
Mercy and justice in Me blend,  
And love of truth doth Allah send:  
No mortal tongue his might can state.  
Allahu Akbar! God is great!

Here perhaps he caught the eye of the critical leaders of Islam, aghast at the blasphemy of his claims, for he here sets himself up as Sultan-i-Adil—Just Ruler, Head of the Faithful. Or perhaps it was the vision of a united India with himself as Prophet and Father. Or again perhaps it was the emotionalism of the epileptic, and the stab of an uneasy conscience not yet toughened to his new role: who shall say? He broke down, and hurriedly left the pulpit.

Yet he persisted, continued to bait the orthodox, and as the Jesuit Bartoli tells us, in due course

summoned a general assembly, keeping out only Father Rudolfo, who could not but oppose himself to this sacrilege. . . . When he had them all assembled in front of him he spoke in a spirit of astute and

knave policy saying, 'For an empire ruled by one head it were a bad thing to have the members divided among themselves and at variance one with the other. . . . We ought therefore to bring all into one . . . not losing what is good in any religion, and each gaining from the other. So would honour be rendered to God, peace given to the peoples, and security to the Empire. Let all who are present voice their concerted opinion';

and he would not move until they had spoken.

And the men of note, especially the commandants, who had no god other than the king, no law other than his will, all with one voice responded 'Yes, he who is nearer to heaven both in his high office and his lofty intellect should prescribe for the Empire as to gods, ceremonies, sacrifices, mysteries, rules, solemn ritual, and whatever else be needed to make a perfect and universal religion'.

Yet there were many, even of the Hindu generals who served him so faithfully, that rejected the new faith, and his own family were puzzled as to what the Emperor himself really believed. Thus we find Jahangir sustaining at his father's tomb the readings of the Koran and the solemn dances of the dervishes, and giving gifts and money to its Muhammadan custodians, but at the same time decorating it with Christian pictures. In these at any rate Akbar delighted, and he had an image of the Virgin Mary in his private apartments. Perhaps it was this benign Presence at the Court, as well as that of his three Hindu queens, which moved him to attempt reforms of Hinduism especially in the interests of women. He forbade the practice of sati, and on one occasion rode in person 120 miles in two days, to attempt to stop a young widow from burning herself on her husband's pyre. There are several striking instances of such attempts; but they were all vain. The hideous yet heroic practice went on, and we learn from European travellers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries of its appalling frequency. The Emperor and his court-poet were alike deeply moved at the proof of this devotion on the part of a child-wife whose husband had

been killed on the day of their marriage, and the following verses of the poet have come down to us:

May those whose hearts burn with the flame of Love  
 Catch from this pure girl the flame of courage too!  
 Teach me, O God, the Way of Love, and so  
 Inflame my heart as hers with Love's pure fire.  
 And for that maiden rare and pure, I pray  
 Exalt her head, accept her sacrifice.

But it was only the abuses of Hinduism that Akbar attacked. He encouraged the Rajput nobles to build shrines to Krishna at Brindaban and Mathura, the holy cities of Vaishnavite Hinduism; and a very remarkable work of art has preserved for us the spirit of his reforms. Here is a band of dancing dervishes whom a group of courtiers, two Europeans among them, are watching. Below are seated a row of Hindu sannyasis—with critical eyes examining this exhibition of ecstasy. Familiar in Hinduism with the emotional cult of Krishna, the dances for instance of Chaitanya, it could not but be distasteful to them as a Muhammadan practice. Their still forms, their dignity, their natural poses, and the expressions on their strongly drawn features make this a superb example of the portraiture of the Mogul artists.<sup>1</sup>

Akbar's own attitude to art is a proof of his courage and emancipation in matters of religion. The traditional tabu of Islam is said to have sprung from the teachings of the Prophet, that to paint a human form is to usurp the functions of the Creator, who will summon the artist at the Day of Judgement to do in reality what he has presumed to do in idea—to give life to his painting. Akbar's revolt against this is represented in the famous passage:

There are many that hate painting; but such men I dislike. It appears to me as if a painter had quite peculiar means of recognizing God; for a painter in sketching anything that has life, and in devising its limbs, one after the other, must come to feel that he cannot bestow individuality upon his work, and is thus forced to think of God, the Giver of life; so he will increase in knowledge.

<sup>1</sup> See *Court Painters of the Grand Moguls*, Arnold and Binyon.

This is a bold and noble reinterpretation of tradition, one of several examples which go to show that he was sincere and original.

Like the Prophet he seems to have experienced intuitions which came to him with the authority of a divine visitation. One of these occurred during the cruel practice of an animal-drive, when the game were penned into an enclosure, and wholesale slaughter followed. Suddenly 'a strange state of strong ecstasy came upon him. . . . a sublime joy took possession of his bodily frame, and the lure of the vision of God shed its light on him'.

These phrases are taken from different authors, the first from the critical Badaoni, the second from the devoted Abul Fazl. They are agreed that he immediately ordered the hunt to be stopped, and proceeded to give alms to the poor and to the fakirs, that he shaved his head, and laid the foundations of a great building to commemorate this vision. It seems clear that it was some kind of realization of the unity of all life which is the underlying thought of Hinduism; 'some thought that the beasts of the forest had with tongueless speech revealed divine secrets to him'. It is clear that like all his gifted family, he was a combination of gifts and tendencies not often found in one person. A mighty hunter he was also a lover of nature, and sensitive to her voices.

Of his interest in the sun-worship of the Parsis, we have clear evidence. He learned their rites and was accustomed to prostrate himself before the sun and before fire; a fire-temple was built within the palace, and Abul Fazl was put in charge; courtiers were bidden to stand as the lamps were lit in solemn reverence for fire, which is Agni the priest among the gods of ancient India, whom the emperor had long worshipped with his Rajput queens in the Hom or Fire Rite. It is this reverence which helps to explain, if it does not condone, his passionate outburst when a lamp-lighter was hurled from the palace walls for carelessness in his duty.

From his Rajput wives Akbar no doubt learned too the Gayatri, the orthodox salute to the sun, in whose worship

Vaishnavism had its origin. As the sun rises the upper castes greet it daily with the words: 'May he, the life-giver, enlighten our minds.' No man ever more urgently needed light and guidance in a great task: that Akbar sought it from many sources is not surprising. His family had a way of consorting alike with mullah and sannyasi, and the lovely painting of such a visit here reproduced is a supreme example of the blending of Hindu and Islamic cultures. The women at the well and the whole atmosphere of the scene are Indian.

The immemorial life of the Indian fields goes on in its wide tranquillity around these seated figures—the Emperor Shah Jahan, divested of all his pomp, and the Mullah before whom he is reverently seated on a mat in front of the teacher's hut; and the whole scene is bathed in a tender quietness. We feel the happiness, which the painter must have had in escaping to this congenial atmosphere, overflow in his work.<sup>1</sup>

Here is a key to much in Akbar and his family. India's wide spaces and her stillness are at work on these scions of a mountain stock. The Persian streak in them is being developed and the Turk and Mongol, though they flame up at times, are being mastered. The transcendent God, absolute and autocratic, finds a corrective in the mysticism of the Sufi and in the monism of the Hindu. And if a sense of the 'numinous' is a hall-mark of the religious, Akbar was a religious genius of no mean order; indeed if he had developed this gift he might be known for it better than for his many activities. Being a king he had to return to his duties, and his Hindu advisers would remind him that in doing the duties of his high station he was to find God. This is the central theme of the Gita, and we know that translations were made at this time of the Mahabharata, in which it occurs as in an interlude in the Civil Wars of India. It was a Mogul translation of the Upanishads which first came to Europe and won the devotion of Schopenhauer. From this source no doubt Akbar gained

<sup>1</sup> *The Court Painters of the Grand Moguls*, by Laurence Binyon and T. W. Arnold.



EMPEROR AND MULLAH



SANNYASIS (WATCHING DERVISHES)





his sense of the unity of all things, of the indwelling of the divine spirit in matter, of the joy of God in his world. It helped also to develop his tolerance, and Akbar tells us of its growth.

Formerly I persecuted men into conformity with my faith and deemed it Islam; as I grew in knowledge, I was overwhelmed with shame; not being a Muslim myself, it was unmeet to force others to become such; for what constancy can be expected from proselytes on compulsion?

This tolerance grew as Akbar realized the strength of religious conviction in Muslim and Hindu alike, and as he grew to hate the bitter intolerance of the orthodox moulvies and pandits. He came as we have seen even to admire the idealism in such hideous practices as sati, in which the less sympathetic eyes of European visitors saw only a method invented by men to prevent their wives poisoning them! Cruel as it was, Indian heroism sometimes rose in this custom to great heights: Akbar could not but admire the Rajput women of Chitor. 'I am the lioness-mate of a great soul', said one Indian Rani to her son when he sought to hold her back from the flames. And the Mogul women were not less devoted or heroic.

## V

Of the family life of the Moguls it is hard to speak without exaggerating on the one hand its fineness and on the other the brutality into which it often lapsed. Do nothing to hurt your brothers even if they deserve it', said the dying Babur to Humayun, who kept the charge at terrible cost. His life in spite of hardship and failure was one of married happiness with Hamida, and their great son Akbar was a good father and generous to all his house.

But Jahangir rewarded him by black treachery, and we see Shah Jahan and Aurungzeb both in turn lapsing into deeds of unnatural cruelty, such as the blinding of the charming Prince Khusru and the imprisonment of the aged Shah Jahan in his turn by his ambitious son. Bitter experience speaks in the saying of Aurungzeb, 'Never

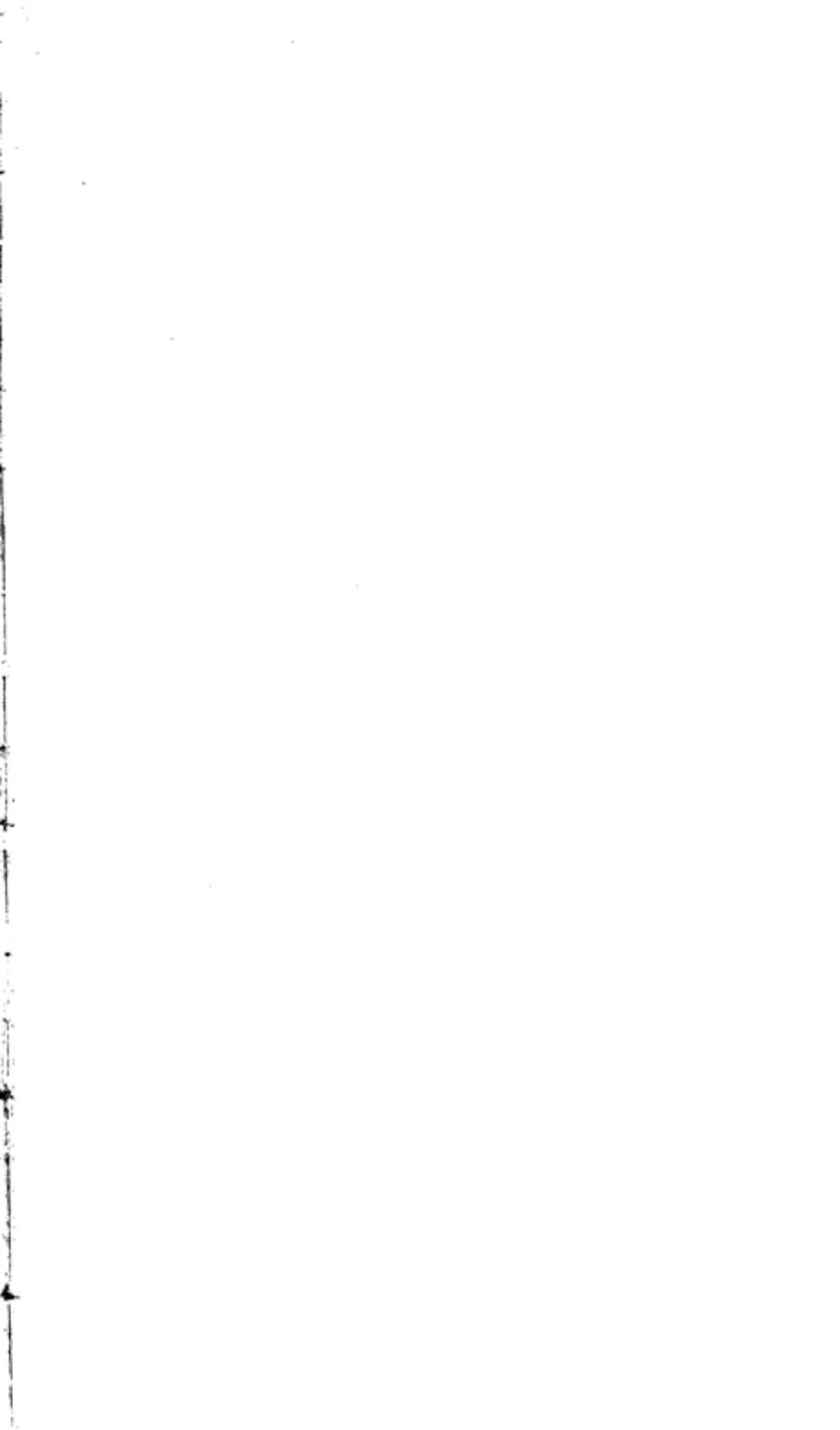
trust your sons'. There are indeed many unsavoury deeds to show that the Moguls were men of their times; that they rose above them in some splendid cases is greatly to their credit. They were all better as fathers than as sons, sometimes over-lenient, always ready to forgive. When Humayun was sick his father after religious ceremonies walked solemnly around his bed three times, declaring that he was taking on himself his son's illness: no other sacrifice, even that of the famed Koh-i-noor, would suffice. Whereupon, say the records, the son began to recover and the father to sink. 'I have borne it away, I have borne it away,' cried the Emperor in exaltation of spirit.

Of Akbar, too, it is recorded that when his advisers urged him to put out of the way his treacherous foster-brother, then in open revolt against him, he replied, 'No! no! There flows a stream of milk between us'.

And though the Moguls surrounded themselves with innumerable concubines, their history is not lacking in romantic and lifelong married devotion. Jahangir allowed Nurjahan to rule him, even to the extent of inducing him to give up drunkenness and some of the opium to which he was addicted. Most touching of all is the passionate and romantic affection of Shah Jahan for Mumtaz. The Taj Mahal, most perfect of memorials, was built in her memory, and she was not, as is sometimes thought, a young bride, but the mother of fourteen of his children. He planned for himself another Taj in black marble to stand on the other bank of Jumna, and to be linked with the tomb of Mumtaz by a silver bridge, that their spirits might meet and commune for ever.

Are we to see in the later Moguls the qualities of a mixed race? They were all descendants of Timur and of Chingiz Khan and, as we have seen, Akbar married the Princess of Amber, and his son, Salim or Jahangir, was the fruit of this marriage. The later Moguls were thus partly Indian, and very much of Mogul civilization stands to the credit of India, which won their whole-hearted devotion.

Abul Fazl tells us that three-fourths of the court artists





A RAJPUT IDYLL  
DEER ENCHANTED BY THE RAGINI TODI

were really Rajput painters working under Mogul patronage, and compares them with the Persian painters: 'Their pictures surpass our conception of things. Few, indeed, in the whole world are equal to them.' It has been well said that the so-called Mogul art 'however magnificent its brief achievement, was but an episode in the history of Indian painting. Rajput painting . . . belongs to the main stream'.

The real life of India went on, in fact, not greatly affected by the splendour of the Moguls. The Hindu painters of this time continued their work at many a court, nominally vassal, but carrying on its own independent life. The old legends of the Krishna cult, his childhood and mischievous pranks, the animals charmed by his flute, his loves and his heroic deeds—these are themes which meant little to the orthodox Muhammadan, and though the emperors had translations made of the great epics into Persian, yet all this belonged to a different world, and it is this world which Rajput art illuminates—'a magic world, where all men are heroic, all women are beautiful and passionate and shy, beasts both wild and tame are the friends of man, and trees and flowers are conscious of the footsteps of the Bridegroom as he passes by'. How different all this is from the elephant-fights, the lion- and tiger-hunts, the durbars and barbaric pageantry of the Mogul painters. If these rose to their height in noble portraits of emperors and their courtiers, that of the Hindu painters reached its zenith in its dedication to romantic love, to the life of the people with their wayside camps, their pilgrimages, their eternal quest for the Unseen. While therefore Mogul art perished with the dynasty which had called it into being, Rajput art lives on, albeit with a feeble flame.

It is curious yet not entirely unintelligible that in his quest for a religion which should unite his people, Akbar seems never to have met or heard of the great poet Tulsi Das, whose Hindi Ramayana has much more profoundly influenced India than all the splendours of Agra and Fatepur Sikri.

The keen interest of the Moguls in natural phenomena

and their curiosity is well illustrated by Jahangir's account of a report which had come in from one of his subjects.<sup>1</sup> This curiosity in the make-up of the Moguls might well have led them into scientific research; it often led them to unnatural deeds of cruelty. As an example of the former tendency there is the story of Akbar, who in his keen interest in deciding whether religion is inborn is said to have isolated a group of infants. As they grew up they were questioned about their religious beliefs: all were found to be dumb. This discovery pushed farther has led in our time, under the impulse of the Christian spirit, to the invention of methods of teaching the deaf and dumb; but in Mogul India it remained sterile.

Of the lengths to which this spirit of curiosity could go there is an unpleasant example, amounting to sadism, in the treatment by Jahangir of one of his children, a little boy of seven. Failing to make the child cry by a severe beating, he thrust a needle through his cheek, and was proud to note the child's stoicism.

All the Moguls, though Akbar seldom and only under the impulse of a burst of temper, allowed themselves deeds of abominable cruelty. Several of them had men flayed alive, and enjoyed the death agonies of criminals. The following reports are from the record of Captain William Hawkins, who from 1609 to 1613 was a careful observer of Jahangir's India. He notes the strange mixture in the character of this queer man, who surrounded himself with religious pictures and expressed great respect for Christ and for the Virgin Mother, who was as covetous in accumulating possessions as he was generous in rewarding his servants, and who thought no act too small or undignified to have it recorded by his secretaries, who as we have seen had a real love for nature and a genius for appreciation side by side with a barbaric strain which expressed itself in such incidents as the following recorded by Captain Hawkins:

My selfe, in the time that I was one of his Courtiers, have seene many cruell deeds done by him. Five times a weeke he commandeth

<sup>1</sup> See below, p. 191.

his brave elephants to fight before him; and in the time of their fighting, either coming or going out, many times men are killed or dangerously hurt by these elephants. But if any be grievously hurt which might very well escape, yet nevertheless that man is cast into the river, himselfe commanding it, saying: dispatch him, for as long as he liveth he will do nothing else but curse me, and therefore it is better that he die presently. I have seene many in this kind. Againe, hee delighteth to see men executed himselfe and torne in peeces with elephants. He put to death in my time his Secretary, only upon suspicion that Chanachanna should write unto the Decan King; who, being sent for and examined about this matter, denied it; whereupon the King, not having patience, arose from his seate and with his sword gave him his deadly wound, and afterwards delivered him to be torne by elephants.

Yet Jahangir's journals are full of notes of the beauty of some bird or plant, and he would instruct his court painters to make drawings of any that especially pleased him. He tells us that Mansur painted more than a hundred of the wild flowers of Kashmir: and he was himself a connoisseur of ability: 'My love for painting and my critical sense are so developed,' he writes, 'that when any work is put before me, either of dead or living artists, I can tell at once whose work it is. And if it contains many portraits by different pens I can say which is the work of each. Even if it is an eye or an eyebrow which has been done by another hand I can tell who did it and who did the face as a whole.' There is something of the child as well as the connoisseur here, and it is certain that his courtiers encouraged him in these claims to infallibility. He never knew when he was wrong! He had the collector's rage, and would pay ridiculous prices for anything which seemed rare or curious. Thus one courtier was rewarded with the sum of thirty thousand rupees for bringing him a good specimen of some mottled ivory which was the craze of the moment. 'He was an amateur of all rarities and antiquities,' says a contemporary Dutchman.

But the true artist in the Emperor shines out in many passages in his diaries. Of a valley in Kashmir he writes: 'How shall I sing its praise? As far as eye could see

many-hued flowers bloomed, and through the green meadows flowed rivulets. A page truly limned by the Painter of Destiny with the brush of creation! The very heart burst into bloom beholding it.' In another passage he quotes enthusiastically a poem full of exaggerated imagery, but his own words are simple and sincere. 'In the entrancing spring hill and plain are full of bloom; the gates, walls and courts, the very roofs are lit up by the flames of tulips, like torches at a feast.'

That is well and aptly said: but we cannot help wondering if his eye missed the much greater and more sublime spectacle of the Himalayas, and the lakes whose still waters mirror the snowy peaks of Kashmir. That Jahangir thought and saw for himself is clear. 'The old songs', he exclaimed in youth, 'wearied my heart: few were read at all. If we sing let it be of what we have seen, and are seeing ourselves.' This quick eye for facts redeems with a touch of humour the dullness of his diary, for the most part a sequence of rewards and punishments, of trivial acts, of the collection of curiosities, and of pleasure-trips. Here is a note that the Kashmiris 'though living by the water's edge are unclean within and without': and there is a delightful contrast in his description of a noble lady and of a fat courtier. She is described as 'sitting down in the bride-chamber of the eternal'; he as 'leaving his mass of clay in the dustbin of the transient'.

Jahangir has been aptly compared to his contemporary James I, who longed to be librarian of the Bodleian rather than King of England. As the curator of a natural history museum Jahangir would have been happier, says his translator, than on the throne of Akbar.

The family love of the Moguls is tragically illustrated by our portrait of Princess Zeb-un-Nissa, eldest daughter of Aurungzeb. It is surrounded by verses of a poem by her lover Aqil Khan, written in nastalik script of great beauty, and has a poignant history or legend. The poet, it is said, found his way to the apartment of the Princess; and her father, who doted on her and took great pride in her poems



and in her strange Mongolian beauty, heard of the intrigue. He made his way unannounced to her apartment, and she had just time to hide her lover in a large bronze bath, which stood full of water and with firewood ready to be lit under it. The Emperor and his daughter chatted as usual, and she recited her poems. Aurungzeb then, being informed by a spy of the hiding-place of the poet, ordered the fire to be lit, and a heavy weight to be placed on the cover of the bath. It is said that neither lover showed any sign of pain during this terrible ordeal, and while the poet was boiled to death, the Emperor and his daughter continued to discuss poetry. Though Aurungzeb had his informer killed, the crime became known to Bernier and to the general public, who idolized the Princess as they had idolized the unhappy and charming Khusru, the victim of Jahangir. The painting shows the Princess mourning under the tree where her lover is buried, and the verses at the top mean 'the painter has here drawn a living picture of this idol of China. Life itself were not too great a price to pay to look upon his face'. The first reference is of course to the Chinese beauty of the Princess, for the Mogul Court greatly admired the golden complexion and the long eyes of the Chinese type; and the second verse seems to mean that the Princess is ready to die to see her lover once more. She did not long survive him, but was buried in the 'Garden of Thirty Thousand Trees' by the Kabul gate of Delhi: her tomb was destroyed when the railway was built.

The extreme artificiality of the Court poets of the Mogul Era is illustrated by the poems of this ill-fated Princess, whose mother was a Persian:

Like Laila I, my heart like Majnun loves:  
 Manlike my mind to desert spaces moves,  
 But woman's shyness anchors fast my heart.  
 Lo! To my garden comes the nightingale:  
 My pupil she in love's melodious tale,  
 The moth himself my pupil in love's art.

This is true to its Persian models, devoted to the tales of Laila and Majnun, or of Yusuf and Zuleikha which form

the theme of many poems and miniatures. But sorrow attuned the Princess to pity and to kinship with the people, and some of the spirit of India breathes in other lines:

An Emperor's daughter I have gazed on dire distress:  
Ornament of women—Zeb-un-Nissa I,  
And poverty adorns my comeliness.

In similar strain the glorious and masterful Nurjahan wrote her own epitaph:

Upon the graves of us the poor no light nor wreath,  
Nor voice of nightingale, nor fluttering wing of moth.

Here too the simplicity of India is seen at work subduing the luxury of the Moguls.

## VI

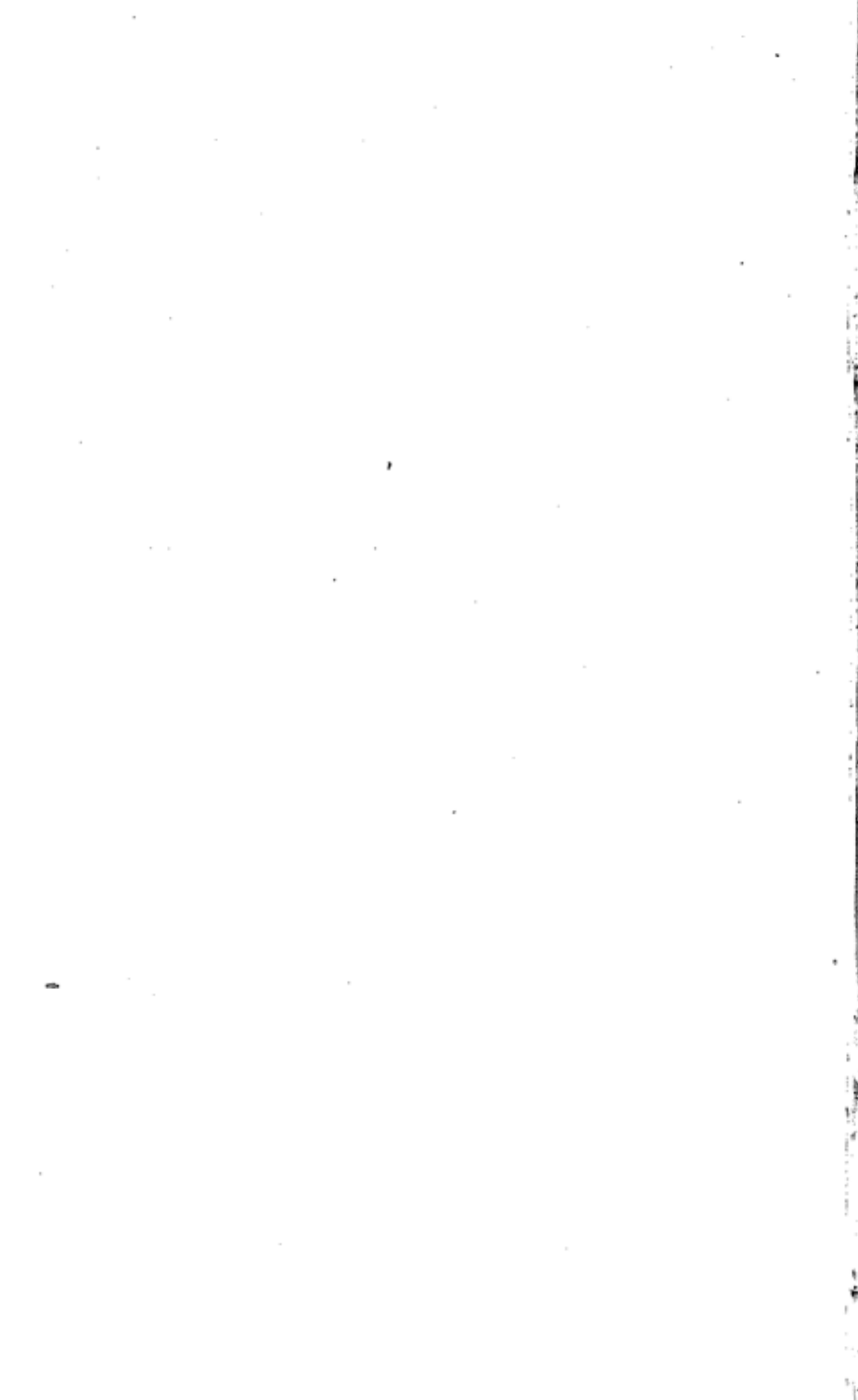
We may close this study with a few scenes which are at once typical of their chief actors and interesting moments in the rich pageant of India.

It is March 1627, and the fierce heat and dust of the Punjab summer is beginning. Jahangir is sick to death and longs for the coolness and beauty of Kashmir, its Persian gardens and its rich memories, Mansur painting some exquisite flower, Nurjahan herself beside him, and the long pleasant days by the Jhelum with only the famous Journal to demand attention. So the Court moves north, only to find that old joys cannot be renewed, nor the torch of life rekindled. Autumn comes, and they go south again till at the gate of the Vale of Kashmir, the Emperor is seized with a desire to hunt once more. A horrible accident—one of his servants dashed to pieces on the rocks—hastens his end, and he dies blaming himself for it.

His son, Shah Jahan, lies dying in his gilded cage at Agra. He gazes out at the Taj, a vision of moonlit witchery, and thinks of Mumtaz, and of his sons. In the palace garden without sits Aurungzeb. His servants bring him the head of his brother Dara, foully done to death. He tramples it under foot with a sneer: 'Behold the head of this aspirant to the Realm of the Moguls'.



A MOGUL IDYLL  
ZEB-UN-NISSA MOURNS HER LOVER



This fanatic Aurungzeb is on his way to worship in the great mosque at Delhi, when he meets a funeral procession of musicians chanting a dirge: 'Whom are you burying?' he asks: 'It is Music whom the Emperor hath slain,' says a voice from the crowd: 'See that you bury her deep,' says this devotee of Islam. Of him his brother had said: 'It is the prayer-monger whom I fear'.

With these glimpses of the later Moguls we must be content. They are of interest largely as a study in heredity, and throw light on the complex character and the varied gifts of Akbar. In Jahangir it is the connoisseur and the observer which come out; in Shah Jahan it is the artist and the sensualist; in Aurungzeb it is the religious fanatic. Upon all India plays as on a harp of many strings and they, as is the Mogul habit, call out much that is best in her. But none is worthy to compare in true piety, in nobility of character, or in service to India, with Akbar. 'He was great with the great, lowly with the lowly,' says a contemporary, and even the Jesuits, of whom he hardly deserved so much, pay generous tribute to his memory. 'Never for a moment did he forget God,' says Jahangir; and his critical English biographer, Vincent Smith, to whom this sketch owes much, writes: 'He remained a mystic to the end,' and also, 'He was a born king of men . . . one of the great sovereigns known to history'.

## VII

In the century and a half during which they dominated India, 1556-1770, the great Moguls had unified the country, kept peace (often at the cost of great punitive expeditions such as those of Aurungzeb against Shivaji and the Marathas), developed an elaborate administrative system much of it admirable, and fostered the arts and crafts for which India was famous until Western competition killed them.

They are also noteworthy for opening the door to the West, and in one dramatic story this is well symbolized, for the West came characteristically with Science in one hand and Commerce in the other, and if Benares is the symbol

of Hindu India, and Delhi of the Moguls, Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras with their universities, wharfs, and factories are the symbol of the British in India.

Shah Jehan's beloved daughter Jahanara had been so badly burnt that her life was in danger. The English surgeon Broughton was called in, and his skill saved her. The Emperor, overjoyed, offered him any reward he liked to name, and he chose a grant of land and the concession of equality with Dutch and Portuguese for the Trading Company which was to become the great East India Company and the instrument with them for the 'awakening' of Asia.

If India and the Middle Ages of Europe made a business of religion, the new era was to make a religion of business, and to introduce a new order into Asia.

#### CHIEF EVENTS OF AKBAR'S REIGN

##### *Date*

- |        |  |
|--------|--|
| 1549   | Birth of Akbar at Umarkot in Sind.   |
| 1556   | Enthronement of Akbar at Kalanaur.<br>Hemu defeated at Panipat by A. and Bairam Khan.<br>Surrender of Sikandar Sur at Mankot.<br>A. arrives at Delhi. Fall of Bairam Khan. |
| 1563   | Remission of pilgrim-tax.  |
| 1565   | Founding of Agra Fort.<br>Mines exploded.<br>Birth of Prince Salim.  |
| 1569   | Abolition of <i>jizya</i> . Non-Muslim poll-tax.<br>Orders given for building Fatepur-Sikri.<br>A. arrives at Fatepur-Sikri; Shaikh Mubarak's address.                     |
| 1573   | Revenue settlement of Gujarat by Raja Todar Mall.  |
| 1574   | Abul Fazl and Badaoni presented at court.  |
| 1575   | A. at Fatepur-Sikri: orders for building the Ibadat-Khana.   |
| 1576   | Two Jesuit missionaries in Bengal.<br>Comet; Todar Mall resumes office of Vizier; reorganization of mint.  |
| 1578-9 | Debates on religion.   |
| 1579   | The 'infallibility decree'.<br>Arrival of First Jesuit Mission at Fatepur-Sikri.   |
| 1582   | Proclamation of <i>Din Ilahi</i> .   |

- 1582 Close of formal debates on religion; abortive embassy for Europe.  
 1591-2 Second Jesuit Mission.  
 1600 Rebellion of Prince Salim.  
 Queen Elizabeth's charter to E. I. Co.  
 1601 Prince Salim assumes royal title.  
 1605 Death of Akbar.

## THE SPIRIT OF THE MOGULS

## I. EARLY EUROPEAN COMMENTS

(a) *On the Shalimar Garden*

The most beautiful of all these gardens is one belonging to the king, called Chah-limar. The entrance from the lake is through a spacious canal bordered with green turf, and running between two rows of poplars. Its length is about five hundred paces, and it leads to a large summer-house placed in the middle of the garden. A second canal, still finer than the first, then conducts you to another summer-house, at the end of the garden. This canal is paved with large blocks of freestone, and its sloping sides are covered with the same. In the middle is a long row of fountains formed into a variety of shapes and figures.

The summer-houses are placed in the midst of the canal, consequently surrounded by water, and between the two rows of large poplars, planted on either side. They are built in the form of a dome, and encircled by a gallery, into which four doors open; two looking up, or down, the canal, and two leading to bridges that connect the buildings with both banks. The houses consist of a large room in the centre, and of four smaller apartments, one in each corner. The whole of the interior is painted and gilt, and on the walls of the chambers are inscribed certain sentences, written in large and beautiful Persian characters. The four doors are extremely valuable, being composed of large stones, and supported by two beautiful pillars. The doors and pillars were found in some of the idol temples demolished by Shah-Jahan, and it is impossible to estimate their value. I cannot describe the nature of the stone, but it is far superior to porphyry.

SIR THOMAS ROE.

(b) *On Mogul obstinacy*

I found it impossible to convince them that the Christian faith was designed for the whole world, and that theirs was mere fable and gross superstition. Their answer was amusing enough. 'We

pretend not', they replied, 'that our law is of universal application. God intended it only for us. We do not even say that yours is a false religion; it may be adapted to your wants and circumstances, God having, no doubt, appointed many different ways of going to Heaven.'

IBID.

(c) *Three Jesuit Fathers on Akbar*

The King is by nature simple and straightforward.—FR. MONSERATE.

He is naturally humane, gentle, and kind.—FR. PERNUSCHI.

He never gave anybody the chance to understand rightly his inmost sentiments or to know what faith or religion he held by, but in whatever way he could best serve his own interests he used to feed one party or the other with the hope of gaining it to himself, humouring each side with fair words. A man apparently free from guile, as honest and candid as could be imagined, but in reality so close and self-contained, with twists of words and deeds so divergent from each other and most times so contradictory, that even by much seeking one could not find the clue to his thoughts.—FR. BARTOLI.

## II. SAYINGS OF AKBAR

### *Akbar on Kingship*

The noblest quality of princes is the forgiveness of faults.

The test of government is how the ruler uses his leisure.

### *Akbar on the Divine Faith*

We ought therefore to bring them all into one, but in such fashion that they should be both 'one' and 'all'; with the great advantage of not losing what is good in one religion, while gaining whatever is better in another. In that way, honour would be rendered to God, peace would be given to the peoples, and security to the empire.

## III. A POEM OF NANAK

Make contentment thine earrings, modesty and self-respect thy  
wallet, meditation the ashes (to smear on thy body).  
Make thy body, which is only a morsel for death, thy beggar's coat,  
and faith thy rule of life and thy staff.



Make association with all thy church, and the conquest of thy heart  
the conquest of the world.

Hail! Hail to Him,

The primal, the pure, without beginning, the indestructible, the  
same in every age!

Make continence thy furnace, forbearance thy goldsmith,

Understanding thine anvil, divine knowledge thy tools,

The fear (of God) thy bellows, austerities thy fire,

Divine love thy crucible, and melt God's name therein.

In such a true mint the Word shall be coined.

This is the practice of those on whom God looketh with an eye of  
favour.

Nanak, the Kind One, by a glance maketh them happy.

The air is the Guru, water our father, and the great earth our  
mother;

Day and night are our two nurses, male and female, who set the  
whole world a-playing.

Merits and demerits shall be read out in the presence of the judge.

According to men's acts, some shall be near and others distant  
(from God).

Those who have pondered on the Name and departed after the  
completion of their toil,

Shall have their countenances made bright, O Nanak; how many  
shall be emancipated in company with them!

NANAK (1469—).

From L. D. Barnett's 'The Heart of India'. *Wisdom of the  
East*. John Murray. (After Macauliffe in *J.R.A.S.*)

#### IV. JAHANGIR—NATURALIST

One day in the courtyard of the house I saw a mouse rising and  
falling in a distracted state. It was running about in every direction  
after the manner of drunkards, and did not know where to go. I  
said to one of my girls: 'Take it by the tail and throw it to the cat!' The  
cat was delighted, and jumped up from its place and seized it  
in its mouth, but immediately dropped it and showed disgust. By  
degrees an expression of pain and trouble showed itself in its face.  
The next day it was nearly dead, when it entered into my mind to  
give it a little treacle (opium?). When its mouth was opened, the  
palate and tongue appeared black. It passed three days in a state of  
misery, and on the fourth day came to its senses. After this the grain  
of the plague (buboes) appeared in the girl, and from excess of

temperature and increase of pain she had no rest. Her colour became changed—it was yellow inclining to black—and the fever was high. The next day she vomited and had motions, and died. Seven or eight people in that household died in the same way.<sup>1</sup>

## V. A HYMN OF KABIR

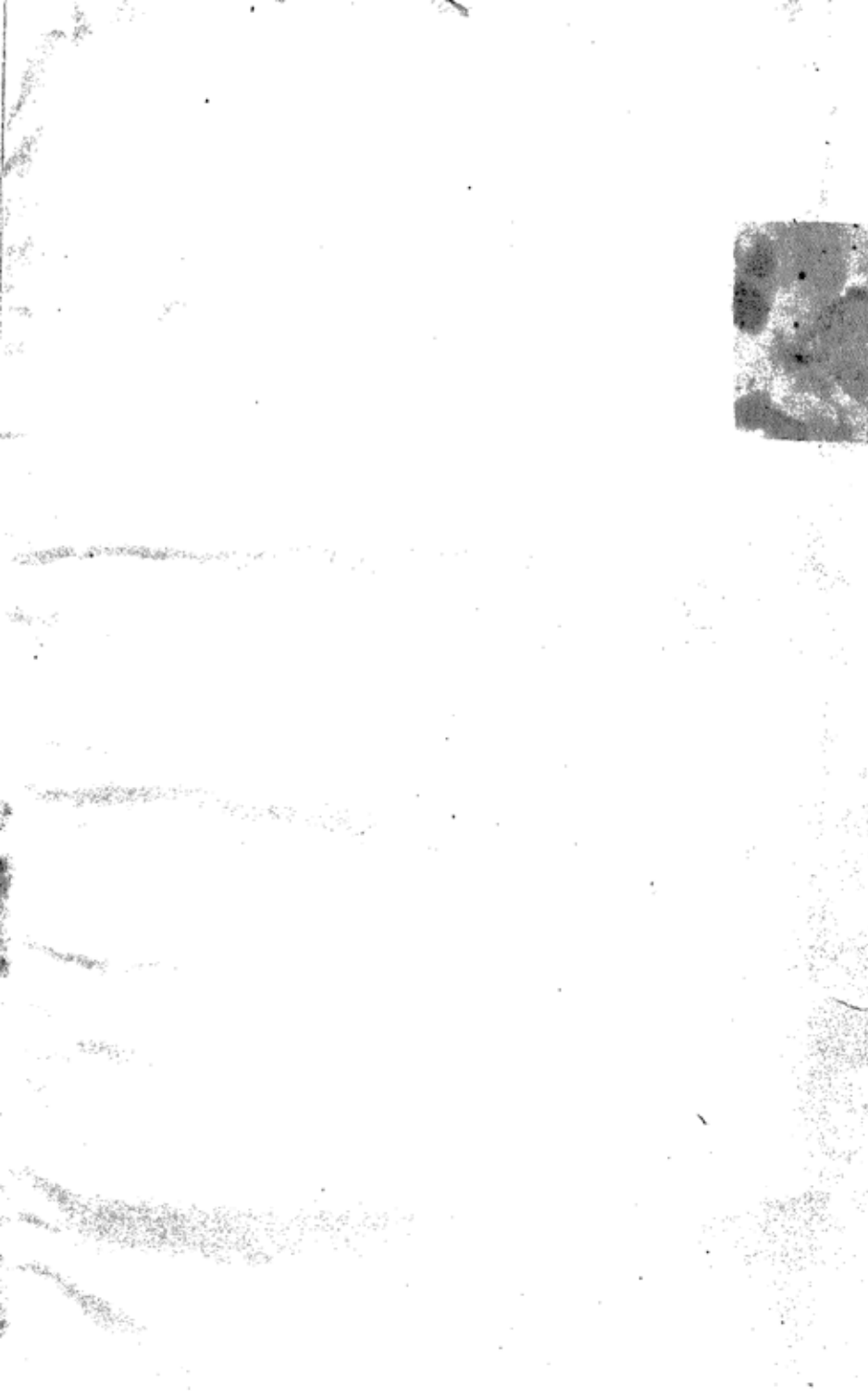
### *The Joy of Creation*

Formless is He yet hath a myriad forms,  
 God of his creatures, and their Living Norm.  
 His Body infinite, unfathomable,  
 Immaculate and indestructible!  
 In rapture dancing, waves of form He maketh;  
 When his great rapture this our body shaketh  
 It and the mind leap up in ecstasy!  
 In all our thought He dwells immersed,  
 In all our joys and sorrows versed,  
 Endless is He, beginningless  
 Containing all things in perpetual Bliss.

KABIR (A.D. 1440-1518).

In Kabir, the weaver of Benares, we find blended the mysticism of the Muhammadan Sufi and the monism of philosophical Hindus. Possibly there is also Christian fervour in his hymns, for the India of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was eclectic.

<sup>1</sup> *Memoirs of Jahangir*, ii. 66.



CENTRAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL LIBRARY,  
NEW DELHI

Borrower's Record.

Catalogue No. 901.0954/Sau.-1921.

or—Saunders, Kenneth.

ant of India