

they spring is unknown. Maladjustments appear in the individual, in the village life, in group, class, racial and international relationships. The old world is vanishing before the effective magic of the machine. A new cultural orientation is inevitable and it will involve the fundamental principles of philosophy and religion. Science has not only introduced the virus of change into the social organism but has also given us a new interpretation of the universe, of the place and status of man, of the evolution of morals, laws and religions, of the function of gods and institutions.

Under all the changing embodiments of culture through the ages runs the unconquerable drive of the desires of men for the satisfactions of the complete life. This creative force does not fail. The phoenix arises from its own ashes. Out of the dissolving cultures of the past new forms and structures based on new philosophies of life are emerging. To the observer of world change the most fascinating phase is the creative transformation of the "unchanging East."

The purpose of this sketch of the heritage of Eastern Asia is not to trace origins, nor to write history, nor to discuss theories concerning the culture problems involved, but rather to present the characteristic pattern of cultures in which the soul of each people has expressed itself in the past and to indicate the trends of re-orientation today.

## INDIA

**I**N the story of man, the human individual is a fragile and transient factor. The waves of the generations rise and pass swiftly. Two things continue, changing and immortal, the biological and social heritages. The first is the product of millions of years of biological evolution and, in the germ cells, transmits the learned experience of physiological adjustment to the kind of planet in which man lives. It is relatively stable and slow to change. The second, or social heritage, is the bearer of the learned experience of a people in their age-old struggle with the problems involved in winning the values of a good life. The generations are born into it, shaped, controlled, guarded and consoled by it. Their desires are patterned and channeled to goals approved by it. They make their contribution to it and disappear. It remains. Because of this quality of continuity of the cultural heritage, it is possible, in spite of the changes of the centuries, to speak of the soul of a people. The ages of ex-

perience produce a pattern of family, community and economic habits, symbols and ideals embodying hopes and dreams, organizations of religious and philosophic ideas adjusting the group to the total universe. A scientific history of any culture would indicate temporal accretions and changes in both content and meaning of the broad outlines of the pattern. Local studies would show great diversity of detail and endless variety of emphasis from place to place. But the pattern of the cultural heritage would be unmistakable.

The heritage of India differentiates this land not only from its great Asiatic neighbors, China and Japan, but from all the world. There is an Indian style, a cultural unity, its roots deep in a past of more than three thousand years. This is the more remarkable because a surface view of the Indian scene yields the impression of endless variety and irreconcilable diversity. It is a land of geographic extremes, running the gamut in rainfall, climate, temperature and altitude. Many races have mingled here or remain side by side—Dravidian, Mongol, Semite, and several strains of the Aryan family. Lack of political unity through the ages gives India the appearance of a loose, patternless mosaic of hundreds of separate blocks of population better described by their local names as Bengali, Telugus, Tamils, Marathas, and the rest, rather than as Indians. To this must be added the multiplicity of languages and the rich details of peculiarity of local customs, rites and occupations. The panorama of political history with its varied racial dynasties, the successive empires disintegrating or falling abruptly apart gives the feeling that in this land there is an incurable disease of disunity. In addition to all this there is the wealth of religions with their allied and varied systems of philosophy. Superficially there seems to be no relation between the naked ascetic and the great Shankaracharya, between the Shakti bhakta and the decorous Jain, between the village goddess and the ineffable Brahma, between the monistic Vedanta, the dualistic Sankhya and the pluralistic Vaisheshika. It is this variety that has given rise to the statement that no generalization is true for all of India. There are, indeed, in India spots that are not Hindu. The Moslems are Indians whose religion colors and alters the Hindu style. In a different way this is true also of the Sikhs. The Parsis are Indian but not Hindu. The Indian Christians illustrate how a foreign religion can ruin the indigenous cultural mode. Yet in spite of all this apparent diversity and disunity there is, underlying it all, a cul-

tural unity, the social and intellectual heritage of the ages. The warp and woof are common to all groups; the great design and motif of the weaving are also the same for all. Differences appear in peculiar emphases, in emotional coloring and in greater elaboration of special details of the pattern. It is this common pattern of cultural heritage, now confronted with incalculable factors of change, with which we are here concerned.

The all-inclusive word for the Hindu pattern is Dharma. It means the correct mode of conduct for each individual according to time, place, circumstances and status. Every phase of life is synthesised in the unity of Dharma. It includes law, morality and religion. The journey of the individual from birth to death in every rank and class of society has its appropriate guiding Dharma. Within the larger whole, the Dharma of humanity which is common to all, there is a special Dharma for age groups, for the sexes, for the ruler, the ruling class, the priests, the craftsmen and workers. Dharma covers the family, education, the village life, the guilds and the far-flung caste structure. Faithful obedience to the code from stage to stage of existence leads at last to the goal of all desires—the supreme bliss. From the inorganic to the absolute, everything is under the domination of Dharma. This locates the fundamentals of Hinduism in a pattern of behavior not in a system of beliefs. "Hinduism is what the Hindu does." All modes of philosophic ideology, all fashions of theological belief may be tolerated, for orthodoxy depends upon correct conduct not upon acceptance of authoritative dogmas. Since each phase of the Dharma is embodied in and sanctioned by intimate groups it makes for stability and conservatism, even rigidity, so long as the rythm of social life flows smoothly. It has made it possible for the masses of India to endure without difficulty and with little change the many and convulsive changes in political weather. But the very fact that the sanction for India's Dharma is in the various social groupings exposes the fundamentals of Hinduism to the danger of dissolution before the factors of change at work in the modern world, for one sure and ubiquitous effect of the new industrial civilization is to loosen the cement and undermine the foundations of the old, simple forms of social and economic organization.

For two thousand years at least the social system, in which social control was embodied for historic India, was unique and ef-

fective. It is unfortunate that the history of this achievement of social control is lost in the shadows of time. South India was apparently not brought under the influence of the Aryan dominated north until after the fourth century B. C. The Indo-Aryan pastoral culture seems to have met and blended with a very high form of indigenous civilization centering about the great rivers of the north. It was the combined product of these two types, different from each of the parent forms, which emerges into the light of later ages as the characteristic Indian social structure. The swift and easy spread of the general pattern over the whole peninsula without violence suggests, but does not prove, that the basic design was probably indigenous, overlaid and made orthodox by the ruling and priestly Aryan classes. This would explain the vast variety of local differences within the broad, general type.

The educational technique developed in the new situation of the late Vedic age was perfectly calculated to produce an attitude of submission to the accepted code. There were no castes in the Vedic period but functional groupings, the ruling class of Kshatriyas, the priestly Brahmans, the agriculturalists and traders, the Vaisyas. The Brahmans were the bearers not only of the sacred lore but also of the traditional social wisdom. They became the educators of the Aryan youth. From eight or ten years of age and for at least twelve years, every boy of all the Aryan classes was expected to live in the home of his teacher. There he learned the duties and responsibilities of his class. This practice of lifting the boy out of the environment of his social group during the impressionable years of his life undoubtedly worked as a democratizing influence but it also had the inevitable result of contributing to the progressive ascendancy and increasing influence of the Brahman class which still persists.

Theoretically life was divided into four stages, the Ashramas, each with its special duties. After the period of student life came the responsibility to society as a householder and father of sons. From the point of view of the priests of the early Vedic age this was the most important value. But India was soon afflicted with a nostalgia for an existence better than the best life in this world. As a concession to this new and powerful desire, a compromise was arranged in the interest of society and the priestly structure, by adding the Hermit and Sannyāsin stages as approved disciplines for the evening of life.

Another phase of the social pattern of historic India was the joint-family, which was a commune, sharing religious cult, food and property. The oldest living descendant was the head of the family having control not only of the common property but also of the moral and spiritual development of the members. The wife of the family head was responsible for control of internal affairs in the household including the arrangement and provision for marriages. Social pressure has demanded such lavish display in the celebration of marriages as to create a serious problem in the form of debt and impoverishment for innumerable family groups. The old code of Hinduism which demanded that every girl must be married at puberty often led to the evil of child marriages, while widow remarriage was forbidden to all except the lower classes. Here are two social problems inherited from the past with which modern India has been wrestling with some success in spite of the determined opposition of orthodoxy.

The social institutions that have molded human behavior in India for more than a score of centuries are the village, the guilds and caste. In the 750,000 villages flowed the slow current of Indian life. Under the leadership of the head man and village council or Panchayat, they carried on the affairs of living, indifferent to politics and concerned with government only when it was necessary to pay the tax or rent due on the village holdings of land.

The self-sufficiency of the village is one of the characteristics of India's history. Eighty percent of the activities of the people centered on the land. Elphinstone has said, "These communities contain in miniature all the materials of a state within themselves and are almost sufficient to protect their members if all government were withdrawn." Thus the storms of political conflict left them unchanged and the lack of efficient means of communication threw them back upon their own resources. The village pattern persists as the fundamental form of association for the millions of India but the old forms are changing, for now even the Indian village cannot escape the forces which are altering the social structures of all mankind.

In the village all trades were normally united in one guild, whose head was often the Headman of the village. This guild organization of craftsmen is twenty-six hundred years old. In the early days when the ruling class was described as "devourers

of the people" and the priests shared the spoils, these trade unions served as a protection for the middle class and became powerful enough to have their rulings recognised and enforced by the King. The guilds trained apprentices, acted as their own law courts, and cared for their members in times of distress. Occupational castes coincided with the guilds and had the same form of government. In modern times the guilds tend to disappear. Where they still persist the signs of the new age appear in the combination of the wealthy guilds of bankers, traders and business men over against the workers' guilds of artisans and craftsmen in the large centers. Modern economic forces thrust aside as futile the good old customs.

Caste is a distinguishing characteristic of Hindu culture. Like an indispensable thread it has been woven through the total structure of cosmology, philosophy, law, ethics and social relations. It binds individuals and families into a closed group marked off from all others. There is no entrance except through the portals of birth. Members are controlled by the peculiar dharma of the group. In all castes the laws are strict and inexorable in regard to diet and marriage. Indian society is thus divided into thousands of compartments with the Brahman claiming and until recent years being freely accorded the highest rank. The caste feeling is not, however, akin to the snobbery of class in the west, since it shuts out prince and plutocrat as well as men of lower caste with equal impartiality. It is as though some irrevocable fate of birth grounded in cosmic order had separated the individual in some activities of life from all but a small circle of his fellows. The institution has exerted an incalculable influence on the side of social stability and conservatism. The caste, acting as a primary group, compels uniformity and, through its sanctions, exerts a powerful moral control over its members. Only men of heroic mould, revolutionary reformers who attained status in a new group or saintly Sannyāsins who turned their backs forever on society could dare to relinquish the security and authority of the caste control. The ordinary individual was obedient to the point of self-sacrifice and in return was enfolded by a group providence which banished the fear of poverty and bolstered self-respect. This attitude of self-esteem and exclusiveness may, on the other hand, become a pride in status which, in the setting of Indian philosophy, inhibits all practical expression of human brotherhood and inter-

feres with all concrete programs of social cooperation. The extreme and pitiable illustration of this is the condition of the untouchables, one-fifth of the population of India, and one of the major modern problems. The caste pattern is so firmly entrenched in Indian culture as to be the despair of social reformers. But signs of disintegration appear. Even if the revolt against caste evident among the intellectuals and the radical popular groups should fail, modern industrialism has within it the threat of doom for this age-old system—but not today nor tomorrow.

The approved patterns of behavior involved in these traditional forms of social organization are dharma. They include endless details regulating life in family and community, orienting the individual to his fellows and to nature from birth to death. But the dharma as behavior is set in a larger background of philosophic ideas. Dharma is religion. Philosophy in India is also religious philosophy. For more than twenty-five centuries a common pattern of ideology has constituted the unquestioned groundwork of all systems of Indian thought. These fundamental ideas are—karma and its twin concept transmigration or reincarnation, the primary importance of a spiritual reality beneath or behind the endless whirl of the world phenomena on the wheel of time and change. This wheel of samsara, on which souls move through vast cycles of rebirth, is from a cosmic viewpoint beginningless and endless. Man's essential being is one with the perfect and blissful, ultimate Reality. The goal of life and man's supreme task, therefore, is self-realization, by means of which the individual may break the bonds of desire which hold him fettered to the karma-driven wheel of rebirth and win eternal bliss. To the superficial observer the maze of Indian religious systems and philosophies has seemed tangled as a jungle growth but through them all these ideas have been constant and inalienable until today. The seers and saints most revered in India for two thousand years are those who led the way from a world struggling feverishly in the web of desires to the ineffable peace of a deeper spiritual reality.

It was not always so. There was a time when the Indo-Aryans were lovers of life, a confident, yea-saying people with their eyes upon the joys of this world and an unshaken certainty of their ability to win them. The reversal of their attitude as they blended their blood and their culture with the older civilization of the land is one of the dramatic phases of India's cultural history. They

were not conquered by climate, nor adversity, nor reduced to despair by hopeless defeat. The ruling classes were amply enfolded in wealth and luxury. Yet it was this very group that was shaken by a "failure of nerve," for it is clear that the masses of the common people for many centuries were following the old Aryan path, seeking a good life here and a better one to follow it in an after life. Only intellectuals turned their backs upon earth and heaven to seek a more spiritual ideal. The key to the change seems to lie in the idea of transmigration which, coupled with the old concept of karma, became the starting point for every later thinker. Whatever the source of the karma-reincarnation formula, it altered their total world-view and life-view and cast a dark shadow over all life. The old "religion of light and gladness" was ruined. The inexorable law of the reward of the deed laid hold of the whole universe. The gods were caught on the wheel. Heaven could no longer be a refuge, for it too was infected with karma and could only be a transient abode. The priestly technique of sacrifices was reduced to futility since the best they could do was to guarantee a good life in the heaven of the fathers. Moreover the attitude of glad, yea-saying became a menace because the desires of life freely fulfilled made death a threat, for karma dictated the new birth status. And life in happy existence was so short when set against the background of the endless immortality on the wheel. But even to live in the highest human status in every successive life was too much if it must be faced forever, because in every life, even the best, there was suffering, sorrow, grief, lamentation, old age, despair and death. Even a king can say: "Sir, in this ill-smelling, unsubstantial body, which is a conglomerate of bone, skin, muscle. . . . what is the good of the enjoyment of desires? In this body, which is afflicted with desire, anger, covetousness, delusion, fear, despondency, envy, separation from the loved, union with the unloved, hunger, thirst, senility, death, disease, sorrow and the like, what is the good of desires? And we see that this whole world is decaying. . . . In this cycle of existence I am like a frog in a waterless well." (Maitri U. I 3, 4.) The only answer was escape from the round of samsara. From that far-off day until modern times this has been the central motif of India's religious quest. Yet there were some among the intellectuals, called in scorn Lokayatas, materialists, emancipated from the traditional Vedic orthodoxy who refused to accept the new karma-transmigration idea



and continued for a few centuries the earlier Aryan attitude toward life. But the pattern was too pervasive. It conquered not only all the intellectuals but reached even to the masses in the villages.

The quest for release took many forms creating a religious and philosophic literature which India has treasured as her most precious heritage. Even now respect for Sanskrit as the sacred language and a desire to ground a new way on the authority of the scriptures are important items in Indian consciousness. In spite of the diversity of form and the separate streams of literature leading back to the fountain head in the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Epics there is a unity underlying all these systems. They all

seek to realize the true and eternal status of the self which is at the same time the ultimate and perfect Reality. The teachers



MAITREYA  
*Japanese*

of India have gloried in the world-transcending quality of their religious and philosophic systems. For them it is an indication of the unique spirituality of the age-old culture of their land. It has been customary for even scholars in the West to refer to it as pessimism. Perhaps a better way to describe it is to say that it is the most amazing optimism to be found anywhere in the history of human cultures. When other peoples have despaired of the world and human powers, and turned away from the present to another age or another world for compensation of frustrated desires, they were egotistic enough to demand that the gods and the universe must guarantee to man sometime, somewhere, the perfect life. But man kept his place as a beneficiary of the High God. India went much farther and made the individual human soul the focus of the total meaning of the whole universe, and identified the soul of man with the Supreme Soul or with the ultimate spiritual nature of Reality. This is man's most glorious optimism.

To those who are able to realize its full significance it gives perfect peace in the midst of the sorrows of existence, crowns the lowliest with dignity, reduces the external world of time and turmoil to a transient dance of *Māyā*. The realm of the phenomenal becomes a secondary level of reality, in which the beginningless and endless procession of souls move on the wheel, or spiral, of samsara from life to life, driven by desires, fettered by habits which fulfill desires, blinded and bemused in the thick shadows of avidya (ignorance). It is the sphere of activity of prakriti and the gunas. Karma runs like a thread of order through it, but no one knows why this sorry drama in which *Māyā*-blinded souls must play their parts should ever have been begun. Indian optimism again asserts itself and suggests that it is the *lila* of the Absolute One, the Sport of God, the dance of Shiva, and that through it all runs the melody of joy and love and beauty. Nevertheless the quest of man is for release. Let him therefore realize that in eternal calm beyond the "snowstorm of illusion" is the primary level of reality, the realm of the Atman which is Sat-chit-ananda, perfection of being, consciousness and bliss. This is not only the status of the Supreme Soul but also a description of the true nature of every soul, and the final goal of every program of salvation. But in high philosophy it may not be defined, for this perfect Sat-chit-ananda is beyond all human experience, and therefore beyond all possibility of description in terms available to hu-

man intellect. It is ineffable. To all efforts at definition of this transcendent and divine state of bliss the philosopher answers: "Neti, Neti—It is not so." In Indian religions, however, the goal is pictured in human imagery, in symbolism that speaks to the emotions; and in the popular theisms, the ineffable nature of the philosophic Ultimate is translated into vivid visions of kindly gods and the human joys of lovely heavens. From the most refined subtlety of the Advaita Vedanta, however, to the lowliest, layman level of the bhakti cults there is a unity in the Indian pattern. There is the same evaluation of the maze of samsara, the same acceptance of the superior worth of the spiritual, universal acceptance of karma and rebirth, and the same goal, but the paths to the goal are many. They are conditioned by and adapted to the intellectual and emotional capacities of the millions with their diversity of traditions.

This brings to view other characteristics of the religious heritage of India. From at least the sixth century B. C. there has been a separation in religious thinking between the intellectuals and the masses. Yet the people were allowed to retain their own thought forms and their own modes of worship undisturbed. The principle of universal tolerance in belief which made it possible for Hinduism to include monist, dualist, pluralist, theist and atheist comfortably within its fold extended to the gods of the folk. The extension of the aegis of the Brahman over the vast variety of tribal and local forms of cult illustrated the same principle. There has, therefore, never been any necessity of quarrelling over the idea of god in Hinduism. It has been assumed that all ways of enclosing the ineffable One in a network of words must be merely approximations. While the philosopher defined Reality in abstract terms, others thought of a personal Supreme Being, or human Avatars of the Supreme, or god in functional forms, or god meeting his lowly ones in image or symbol or the human guru. And all ideas were tolerated and woven into the unity of the total god-idea. Their detached tolerance seems at times to be a rationalized indifference on the part of the intellectuals to the condition of the masses. At this point there is a great change in recent times. When social forms were stable there was no urgent demand upon the intellectuals to interest themselves in the ideas of the people but when the whole fabric of the social order begins to disintegrate and its maladjustments involve all classes of the popula-

tion, it becomes necessary for the intellectuals to leave their lofty heights and take their places among the folk to wrestle with the common problems.

Akin to this attitude of detachment and perhaps a phase of it, is the apparent loneliness of the individual in all the religious philosophies of India. The soul wanders in the labyrinth of samsara reaping the fruit of its own deeds and responsible for its own destiny. In the Vedanta, Sankhya, Vaisheshika, Jain and Early Buddhist systems the parting words of Gautama might express the exhortation of them all—"Be a refuge to yourselves, seek no other refuge. Work out your own salvation." There is no help of kindly gods here, and no sense of communal responsibility. But once more the severe austerity is softened in the religions of the people where savior-gods toil for man's emancipation.

This world of changing forms holds the soul by the fetters of desires. For the ordinary man beset by the problems of living and enfolded in the familiar routine of home and work, the task of winning liberation from the wanderings of rebirth by his own efforts must have seemed as remote as dreams of fairy lands. Consequently the saint, who severed all bonds, and undertook the travails of the spiritual quest, became the man most revered in India. The rishi who taught the sacred lore was more important than the ruler. The Sannyāsin who broke all fetters ranked above all other men. The householder has been willing through the ages to fill the begging-bowls of an endless procession of wandering saints. Self-torture, asceticism carried to fantastic extremes, violent distortions of natural impulses, suicide by slow starvation, could win awed respect, not because asceticism in itself was ever an ideal but because it was a sign of the detachment that means release. The householder's status had dignity and the approval of the sacred law. Moreover, by following his own dharma in the satisfaction of desire through the correct means, he might be confident of happiness even in the rounds of samsara. But only desirelessness could push open the door to the bliss of eternal release. This is the glory of the saints. India is proud of her great kings and learned scholars, but the heroes best beloved are the saints, whether they were royal rulers, ascetics, or wandering singers of the divine love. Even in the midst of the noises of an industrial era, the man who best embodies India's soul and is accorded unquestionable loyalty is one whom they can call—Mahatma.

The roots of the tree of Indian philosophy and religion, the Bharata Dharma, run back to the Vedic age, but like the banyan tree it has put fresh roots down in every age to embody the new influences and meet altered conditions. Through all the variety of the changing centuries runs the continuing pattern. According to the Hindu theory, with the cyclic turning of the Kalpa, there is the need of adjusting the truth of life and salvation to the changing capacities of men. Thus there is a transition from the Vedas (Shruti, revelation) to smitri (traditions), to the Puranas and the Agamas. This description of the grading of the scriptures corresponds to the recognized gradation of the modes of presentation of the truth—from the philosophic systems to the manifold, popular, sectarian divisions. The gradation and accommodation appears also in the many approved ways of salvation by knowledge, by works, and by loving devotion (bhakti). To each of these ways belongs a correct Yoga as a means of achieving the equanimity of spirit which brings the soul to Samadhi, the ecstatic, immediate experience of god. The Jnana Yoga, the Bhakti Yoga, the Karma Yoga are the three main forms, but there are other more specialized types to include all human needs. The first gives the perfect realization of the self as god, the second sees the whole universe as god manifested in love, the third identifies all practical dharma, all action in the everyday world, as service of god. But all are Hinduism, and all lead to the same deliverance in Sat-chit-ananda.

In the historic development of Vedantism a unity runs through the varied forms of the Upanishads, the Advaita Vedanta of Shankaracharya, the modified Vedanta of Ramanuja, the synthesis of popular religions of the Ramayan of Tulsidas and the Shakti cult of Tantrism. Sankhya, Jain and Vaisheshika seem to be complete variants, but examination shows that they are different only because of special emphases in the common Hindu pattern. They interpret differently the relation of the soul (Atman) to the material world but like the Vedanta they make it the ultimate reality, define its nature as Sat-chit-ananda, and make the goal of life and religion the realization of the eternal status of the soul in super-conscious bliss. Even Buddhism in its original form was Hinduism in its main premises though it repudiated both Atman and Paramatman. In its later Mahayana form it was so assimilated in the general Hindu pattern that the Vedantic system of the

great Shankara could be called "crypto-Buddhism." The bhakti groups have an integral place in the unified design. The Tamil Saivite sects of the south, the Krishna and Rama movements of the north, the Bhaktas of the Great Mother in Bengal are united in making devoted love to god the ideal way of release from the wheel. The symbols which stir emotion are different, the names of gurus are numberless, but beneath all, and the goal of all, is the unity of the One Supreme Paramatman. Under the influence of Islam, Kabir escaped the popular symbols of image and ceremonies as well as the avatar idea, proclaiming a blend of Vedantic idealism and Sufism. After him, Nanak and the Sikhs fell into the general bhakti pattern. Ramananda, Chaitanya, Madhva, Vallabha, Tulsidas, Kabir, Nanak, Tukaram cross the stage of Indian history as brilliant and colorful presentations of the one great theme—mystical, ecstatic union with god through love. On the philosophic level, from the Upanishads to Tagore, the same motif binds the centuries together—"Reality is One. That art thou. To realize this is bliss now and forever." Weaver, carder of cotton, Maharshi and philosopher all meet together in the unity of the mystic insight. Gathered into a single statement it would be—god is one in many, the universal soul of all existence, the ocean of which worlds and individuals are as waves and drops, the same in infinite forms; to the rapt vision of the saint appearing as glorious personal beings embodying the full perfection of love, light, wisdom, beauty, justice and power; for suffering, sinning humanity, lost amid the illusions of the phenomenal world, incarnated again and again in human form to teach the way of life by word and example; touching the lowliest and most ignorant in image, ritual and symbol; many-named mystery, soul of all souls, in whose blissful silence the turmoil of the ages comes to rest at last.

An all-pervasive spirituality, a nostalgia for the lost status of the soul, is the unique and outstanding characteristic of India's religious heritage. The world of material and social events in this age threatens to take a terrible toll from men who neglect it for another level of Reality. Spirituality as a flight from the actual and spirituality as a compensation for frustration are both futile today. Many-headed science has sounded a "lion-roar" which challenges the dreamy idealisms of the rishis.

Indian culture through the ages has been synthesised in religion. The religious literature of India is a vast monument to the genius

of the people. The sacred books of the various groups, enlarged by commentaries through the centuries and the popular religious writings in the vernaculars produced during the last thousand years constitute an immense library. The origins of Indian science are traced to the requirements of the ritual. The great universities, from the forest schools of the early days to the great centers at Taxila, Benares, Nalanda, and Vikramasila were schools of religion. But it would be a great mistake to overlook the fact that India, in the past, produced a great secular literature on the sciences, particularly, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, and medicine, on law and state craft, as well as drama, poetry, novels and popular moral tales. Over against the religious Shastras of austerities, may be set the Kama Shastra, the scripture of eroticism. While modern India may feel that her greatest heritage lies in the field of religions, literature, architecture and art, there is also a proud consciousness that in the far past the sciences and practical arts flourished as indigenous products.

During the last two decades Indian leaders of reform have complained of the quietism, resignation, submissiveness and "sickly refusal of life" of the people. Western writers, particularly Christian writers, have attributed these characteristics to the religious philosophy underlying Indian culture. Native interpreters place the blame upon the social-economic forces which have been at work since the eighteenth century when after the decay of the Mogul empire, India began to swing as a satellite under the influence of a foreign power. The truth probably lies in a combination of both factors. So long as the desires of life can be satisfied without too great anxiety and social hopes are not entirely frustrated, a religious philosophy remains peripheral and does not interfere directly with the attitudes and behavior of ordinary folk. Values that may be attained are not weakly refused or surrendered because religion teaches that man is helpless and his life a transient shadow. The Indian villager is as eager for life and as appreciative of happiness as any other human being if the joys of life are available. But when living is difficult, and freedom is denied, when ambition is thwarted and evils in social life multiply, then a religious philosophy which includes ideas of karma and world-denial is a dangerous invitation to an attitude of quiescence, resignation and patient endurance. It is all the more attractive because it rationalizes impotence as spirituality. And it must be admitted that the

ideal ethical codes of India's spiritual guides were calculated to produce an attitude toward life peculiarly susceptible to philosophies of spiritual compensation. They counsel restraint, self-effacement, the severe curbing of desire. The statement of the ideal in Manu (II 224) is healthy enough: "Some say that the chief good consists in the acquisition of spiritual merit and wealth; others place it in the gratification of desire and the acquisition of wealth; others in the acquisition of spiritual merit alone and others say that the acquisition of wealth alone is the chief good here below; but the correct decision is that it consists of the aggregate of these three." But all the teachers of the centuries exalted as virtues—patience, self-control, non-aggression, contentment, humility and love. Both poetry and popular story preached the ideal expressed in the Dhammapada—"Hatred does not cease by hatred at any time; hatred ceases by love" (5). "Overcome anger by love, overcome evil by good, overcome the greedy by liberality, the liar by truth" (223).

The doctrine of *ahimśa*, non-injury, is as old as Buddhism and was a dominant element in the social consciousness by 200 A.D. The Yogi who was able to follow the ascetic discipline was revered, and asceticism, as a technique of self-suffering, was an instrument of aggressive power capable of bending the will even of a reluctant god. Moreover, the *bhakti* cults stressed the value of disinterested action as a means of breaking the karma bonds. Moral ideals are never more than approximated in actuality, but in so far as these ideals of India's seers were embodied in the attitudes and habits of the people, they prepared them to suffer quietly and with infinite patience as victims of injustice and exploitation. A generation ago, wise men rationalized this suffering as India's karma and kept their self-respect. Suffering merely endured leads only to a slave mentality and loss of soul. Suffering consciously and gladly accepted for a cause gives dignity and heroism. This is the dynamite in the present Indian situation. These very characteristics which the West has found so difficult to understand—*ahimśa*, patience, non-violent willingness to suffer—become, at the call of Mahatma Gandhi, an incomparable power of compulsion in the cause of *Swaraj*. Their weakness transformed into heroism, India's silent masses become vocal.

To an observer a generation ago it would have seemed—as it did to Swami Vivekananda—a colossal task to rouse India from



the bondage of age-old ways. But the forces reshaping the modern world work swiftly. The educated classes in India have been exposed for a century to the influence of modern scientific and political thought. They are well acquainted with the writings of the West in the departments of natural science, economics and psychology, as well as with the new philosophies which have arisen from the new knowledge in the Western world. The intellectuals, who have been satisfied to rest in the all-enveloping security of an eternal Absolute, grow restless in the presence of a doctrine which insists upon universal change and relativity. It is no longer possible to hold the ancient ideas in exactly the same way. Books pour from the press attempting to reinterpret the traditional philosophies in the light of the new science. It is not an impossible task for a people, who have been able to welcome within the same Hinduism all forms of world-view, to come to terms with the new ideas by the rationalizing, modernist technique. There will be no insuperable difficulty in India to stand in the way of acceptance of a thorough-going humanistic naturalism if the demands of our modern knowledge of the universe and man's culture history make that necessary. Tagore says—"India is not afraid of naturalism." The renaissance in India may be expected to come easily in the area of thought.

The real transformation of any culture, however, is accomplished not by changes of ideas but by reconstruction of the social order. The shaking of the whole edifice of the past has centered in India about changes in social life brought about by the material fruits of the sciences. Western influences in the form of trade, the insatiable need of the new machines for raw materials, the pushing of great industrial plants for markets, the grasping of the arms of empire for wealth and power—all that the world has come to know under the name of economic imperialism—have so transformed the old India that a new dharma, a new way of life, is inevitable. Agriculture is no longer adequate to meet the needs of life, so disturbed is it by the new economic forces. The most remote villages are affected. Long ago the home industries were undermined. A slow poverty has settled down upon the masses. In the larger towns and cities the control of the home and caste is gradually lifted from the individual. It is not so much the shock of a new scientific vision challenging traditional ideas but the application of the products of science to the exploitation of

the resources of India that accounts for the revival of her sleeping spirit. The intellectuals began to see that the soul of India was threatened with death. They could no longer remain aloof in the isolation of spiritual superiority. The upheaval of the social foundation under them, compelled them to abandon their quietism and and subjectivity and to seek solutions for the problems of the social life.

The leaders are agreed upon many things. They call the people of India to remember the glories of the past; they remind them of the ancient grandeur of the land in material wealth, of the admirable achievements of the race in the realms of art, literature, philosophy and religion and especially of that emphasis in culture in which they feel India has stood above all other peoples—the age-long, self-denying quest for the values of the spirit. Contrasting this with their present servile degradation and poverty they call their people to the labor of recovering their soul. In the face of the threat of Western materialism and industrialism with its grinding, grasping greed for goods, they call India to assert the supremacy of the spiritual, to win wings for her spirit by breaking the bonds which have threatened to crush out her life, a goal that may be won only by a courageous idealism brave enough to overthrow all the barriers, not only of materialistic civilization, but also of the old social heritage. The battle is being waged on a score of fronts against the dead weight of inherited customs and institutions—the isolated and meagre life of the masses, their ignorance and illiteracy, the seclusion of women, child marriage, caste and caste restrictions, the supremacy of brahman, and especially against the social treatment of the untouchables. Economic and political problems for the moment are in the spotlight, but organizations are busy with all the crucial issues creating the new pattern of Indian society—the All India National Social Congress, All India Women's Congress, League of Indian Youth, Child Welfare Leagues, Widow Remarriage Associations, Social Hygiene Councils, Unemployment Leagues, Child Marriage Abolition Societies, Hindu Widow Reform League, Social Equality League—to mention only a few. A surprising thing is that the women of India, counted a decade ago as a force for rigid conservatism, are now among the most active workers for the new order.

In the social forms of culture the traditional heritage is yielding to radical change. The thick jungle growths of inherited social

habits, as well as the oppressive or superficial new social ways of the West, begin to yield to the creative fire of the soul of an ancient people awakened to a new age of the world. The ideas of the past dissolve or grow into new vitality in the light of modern scientific insight. It may be that India will add to the religious philosophies of mankind, as a reinterpretation of her all-inclusive idealism, the most beautiful of naturalisms, an appreciation of the oneness of human life with the planet from which it has sprung, the oneness and solidarity of humanity in the quest for life values. Artistically and poetically the ancient theme of the dance of Shiva could so easily express the joyous and terrible rhythms of nature in the spiral of evolutionary change. Karma may mean in the future only the responsibility for the deed and the certainty of the inheritance of achieved values, from generation to generation, in the social structure of the race. Though the West may be mastered by mechanism and forget the higher life in the blind weltering of the whirl of things, India must still be India, and will keep her eyes ever upon the stars. Life and the world must, for her, find spiritual interpretation. True to her ancient quest, in winning emancipation for her own soul, she may be able to claim and win, for herself and for the world, that civilization in which economic, political and scientific instruments are servants of the higher life of man. Then her peculiar cultural emphasis on spirituality will take on practical and concrete meaning for the modern world.