

is heading. Erratic old David, with all his backslidings, his very disreputable doings and his often shameful indulgences—though he frequently stumbled and fell frightfully—yet had an upward urge; a surging aspiration Godward which the Father of all could not but bless.

And this is not to preach the shallow comforts of other-wordliness with its self-complacency. It merely means that we who have returned from the twilight zone endeavor to focus our attention principally upon the direction of the stream of life; we mean to see to it that we have an ideal which ever whispers "Upward! Onward!" and that the potency of that living ideal shall be the sign by which we almost automatically conquer.

Lastly, the very fact that the individual soul inevitably emerges from the most staggering misfortune with a trust in the ultimate Good renewed, a faith in God intensified, and a hope of immortality aroused, furnishes the most effective rebuke to those who, having suffered little, yet deplore the mad unreason of the universe. Winifred Kirkland's *The New Death* wonderfully attests this in the light of the battlefield.

And unless when the shades gather, the tongue thickens, the mist obscures our vision, and science stands impotent with folded hands, there comes suddenly into those dimming eyes a look which sees beyond earth's shadows; there appears on that wan face an expression incredulous, half of wonder, half of sheer joy—and we can softly say "Gladly I come for rest—may there be no sadness of farewell"—all—All has been lost. Erudition, wealth, power, acclaim, achievement—these mean nothing at such times. And the simplest maid who trusting passes on is more to be envied than a fitful king in a cloak of purple.

## THE HINDU VIEW OF LIFE.

BY BENOY KUMAR SARKAR.

IT has often been said that Europeans and Americans cannot understand the Hindu or the Asian mind. Oriental view-points and ideals are supposed to be fundamentally different from Occidental.

But what is the characteristic Oriental way of looking at things? Is it mysticism or the cult of the Eternal and Hereafter? There have been in Europe also mystics or "seers" of the Infinite, as many

and as great as in Asia, from the earliest times till to-day. The very first speculations of Hellas were embodied in the teachings of Pythagoras. He believed in the transmigration of the soul and preached the esoteric doctrine of numbers. He was a vegetarian and believed in general abstinence and ascetic mortification of the flesh. Plato's "idealism" also was mystical as much as the monism of the contemporary Upanishadists of India and Taoists of China.

Who has been a greater occultist than Jesus? His message was: "My kingdom is not of this world." His other-worldliness and pessimism are undeniable. He said: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." "If any man cometh unto me and hateth not his father and mother and wife and children, he cannot be my disciple." Indeed, the greatest passivist and submissionist among the world's teachers has been this Syrian Saviour of Europe and America. His political slogan was: "Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." Such extreme "non-resistance" was probably never preached in India.

Plotinus (third century A. D.), the greatest neo-Platonist, was a mystical pantheist. He actually practised Yogic exercises by which he hoped to attain union with the "ultimate principle," the highest God of all. The monasticism, celibacy, nunnery, and notions about "the world, the flesh, and the devil," the "seven deadly sins," etc., of Christianity have been practically universal in the Western world. They have had too long a sway to be explained away as accidental, or adventitious, or imported, or unassimilated overgrowths. Spiritualistic "self-realization" was the creed of many a transcendentalist denomination in Europe during the Middle Ages. To the English Puritans, even music and sports were taboo. The painters of the romantic movement in Germany, e. g., Cornelius, Overbeck, etc., fought shy of women and preached that all artists should be monks. The race of Jacopone da Todis, Rosicrucians, Ruysbroecks, and Boehmes is not yet a thing of the past in Eur-America. And now that the philosopher of the "*élan vital*" has enunciated his doctrine of "intuition," mysticism is going to have a fresh lease of life.

Thus the psychology of the "soul" and the metaphysics of the infinite life and permanent verities, are as good orthodox Occidental commodities as Oriental. Even in the conception of the universe as a living being the tradition of the Occident has been as long as that of India.

According to Plato in his *Phædo* this universe is a living crea-

ture in very truth, possessing soul and reason by the providence of God. Virgil in his *Æneid* (Book VI, 96ff) writes:

“First, Heaven and Earth and Ocean’s liquid plains,  
 The Moon’s bright globe and planets of the pole,  
 One mind, infused through every part sustains;  
 One universal animating soul  
 Quickens, unites, and mingles with the whole.  
 Hence man proceeds, and beasts and birds of air,  
 And monsters that in marble ocean roll;  
 And fiery energy divine they share.”

—*Taylor’s trans.*

Similarly the Earth-Spirit conceived by Goethe is a personification of the *élan vital*, the active, vital forces of nature, the principle of change and growth within the universe.

This doctrine makes Plato, Virgil, and Goethe virtually Hindu Vedantists. How, then, does European mentality differ from Hindu? According to the Vedantists, the world originates out of Brahma (Self), the absolute Reality, the absolute Intelligence, the absolute Bliss. To the same group belongs also Browning with his message of immortality of soul or continuity of life-energy:

“Fool! all that is, at all,  
 Lasts ever, past recall;  
 Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure:  
 What entered into thee  
 That was, is, and shall be:  
 Time’s wheel runs back or stops: Potter and clay endure.”

The whole stanza can be bodily transferred into a section of the Hindu *Gæta*. The Emersons of America also disprove the notion that “transcendentalism” is an Oriental monopoly.

Let us take the other side of the shield. What is alleged to be the characteristic standpoint or philosophy of Eur-America? Is it secularism, optimism, or, to be more definite, militarism? But, this has not been the monopoly of the Western world. Hindu culture has always been an expression of humanism, positivism and other isms following from it as much as Hellenic, European and American culture.

Take militarism. Hindustan started the cult of Kshatriyaism, which in Japan is called Bushido (“The Way of the Warrior”). The first Hindu Napoleon, Chandragupta Maurya (fourth century B. C.) had a regular standing army of 600,000 infantry, 30,000 cavalry, 9000 elephants, and a multitude of chariots. Excluding followers and attendants, but including the archers, three on each

elephant, and two fighting men on each chariot, the whole army consisted of 690,000 men. A race which can organize such a vast fighting machine and wield it for offensive and defensive purposes is certainly not over-religious or unpractical or other-worldly.

Such vast armies have not been exceptional in Indian history. According to a Portuguese observer, Krisna of Vijayanagara (1509-30) in South India commanded an army of 703,000 foot, 32,600 horse, and 551 elephants, besides camp-followers. One of the smallest armies of the Hindus has been that of the Andhras in the Deccan. It had only 100,000 infantry, 2000 cavalry, and 100 elephants.

Hindu Bushido had a spiritual "sanction" too. It was backed up by a theory which found its place in all Sanskrit treatises on warfare and political science. Thus we read in the *Shookra-necti* (Shookra's "Politics"):

"The death of Kshatriyas (warriors) in the bed is a sin. . . . Cowardice is a miserable sin. . . . People should not regret the death of the brave man who is killed at the front. The man is purged and delivered of all sins and attains heaven. The fairies of the other world vie with each other in reaching the warrior who is killed in battle in the hope that he be their husband."

*Ahimsa*, i. e., non-killing or non-resistance, has neither been a fact of India's politico-military history, nor a dominant trait of Hindu national thought and character. Kalidasa (c. 400 A. D.), the Hindu Virgil, enunciated the energetic ideal of his countrymen thus:

"Lords of the lithosphere from sea to sea,  
Commanding the skies by air-chariots."

Wherein do Hindu ideals then differ from Eur-American?

We shall now analyze Hindu secularism or positivism a little more deeply. Desire for the good things of this earth, life, strength, and general well-being, is not a feature exclusively of the Occidental mind. If this be called optimism or materialism, the Hindus also have been profoundly optimistic and materialistic since the days of their commerce with Egypt during the Theban period. In fact, all through the ages the Hindus have been famous to foreign nations principally as materialists.

It is a glib talk among economists to-day that India is an essentially agricultural country, and that the Hindus are a thoroughly non-industrial race. But were the Christian nations down to the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century less agri-

cultural than the Hindus? Were they more "essentially" industrial? Historically speaking, Hindu materialism has manifested itself as much in commerce and industry as in agriculture.

The age-long international trade of the Hindus points to their thoroughly commercial genius. Egypt, Mesopotamia, Syria, Persia, the Roman Empire, China, they all have profited by the commerce of the Hindus. This was possible because of the adventurous seafaring character of the people of India. It inspired them in their colonizing exploits in the islands of the Indian Ocean, and enabled them to establish a sphere of influence comprising Japan on the east and Madagascar on the African coast. Besides, they were past masters in the art of ship-building and naval architecture. They constructed seagoing vessels of considerable size, and effected gradual improvements in shipping industry. Some of the ancient Hindu ships could accommodate 300, 500, 700, 800, and even 1500 passengers.

In the fifteenth century, according to Nicolo Conti, the Hindus could build ships larger than the Europeans, capable of containing 2000 butts and with five sails and as many masts. One of the Hindu ships on its way to the Red Sea, in 1612, was 153 ft. long, 42 ft. beam, 31 ft. deep, and was of 1500 tons burden. The English ships of that date were 300 or 500 tons at most.

The art of navigation was part of the education of Hindu princes. There were Sanskrit treatises on this and allied subjects. Lighthouses were constructed on the seacoast in Southern India. The marine interests were looked after by a special department of State. Marine affairs were important enough to call forth Asoka the Great's attention to them in his celebrated "Edicts" (third century B. C.). Something like marine insurance even occurs in Hindu legal literature.

A few shipping regulations are here reproduced from the *Institutes of Manu* (not later than the fourth century, A. D., but embodying the oldest tradition):

"For a long passage the boat-hire must be proportioned to the places and times. Know that this [rule refers] to passages along the banks of rivers; at sea there is no settled [freight].

"Whatever may be damaged in a boat by the fault of the boatmen that shall be made good by the boatmen collectively [each paying] his share.

"This decision on suits [brought by passengers holds good only] in case the boatmen are culpably negligent on the water; in

the case of accident caused by [the will of] gods, no fine can be [inflicted on them].”

Surely the Hindus knew how to appreciate and manage the earthly interests of men and women.

The industrial genius of the Hindus was not exhausted in ancient and medieval times. Even in 1811 the Frenchman Solvyns wrote in his *Les Hindous* about their efficiency as naval engineers and architects: “In ancient times the Indians excelled in the art of constructing vessels, and the present Hindus can in this respect still offer models to Europe—so much so that the English, attentive to everything which refers to naval architecture, have borrowed from the Hindus many improvements which they have adapted with success to their own shipping. . . . The Indian vessels unite elegance and utility, and are models of patience and fine workmanship.” This certainly is materialism with a vengeance.

Ship-building was not indeed the sole industry of the Hindus. During the nineteenth century India has been converted into a mere market for the Western manufactures. Her role at present is only to produce raw materials at the dictate of modern industrial powers. This is the exact antipodes of the part she has ever played in the economic history of the world. All through the ages it was the manufactures of the Hindus which had sought markets and created demands in foreign countries.

Varahamihira's *Brihat Samhita* (sixth century, A. D.) is among other things a record of the achievements of Hindu industrialism. Cements and powders were made “strong as the thunderbolt.” There were “experts in machinery.” Experts in applied chemistry specialized in dyes, cosmetics, and even artificial imitation of natural flower-scents. Fast dyes were made for textile fabrics by the treatment of vegetable dyes with alum and other chemicals. The principle of indigotin was extracted from the indigo plant by an almost modern chemical process. Metallurgists were expert in the tempering of steel and could manufacture the so-called “Damascus swords.” Pliny, the Roman of the first century A. D., admired the Hindu industrial attainments; Tavernier, the Frenchman of the seventeenth century, did likewise.

If Hindu civilization has not been materialistic, one wonders as to what is materialism. In what particulars did the “Greek view of life” differ from the Hindu?

We have spoken of the genius of the Hindus for martial exploits, naval organization, and colonizing adventure. We have noticed also their capacity for capturing the markets of the world

by the promotion of industry and commerce. All these activities bespeak a richly diversified institutional life, and indicate their ability to organize men and things, as well as administer public interests.

In a political work of the fourth century B. C., the *Arthashastra*, eighteen departments of State are mentioned. The war office of the first Hindu emperor was a highly organized and efficient public body. It consisted of thirty members, who formed themselves into six boards: (1) admiralty, (2) transport, commissariat, and army service, (3) infantry, (4) cavalry, (5) war-chariots, and (6) elephants. The heads of some of the other departments discharged the functions of the superintendent of manufactures, accountant-general, collector-general, and so forth.

Pataliputra (site of modern Bankipore, on the Ganges, in Bihar, Eastern India), the Rome of the Hindus, was nine miles in length and one and one half miles in breadth. The rectangular wall around it was pierced by sixty-four gates, crowned by five hundred and seventy towers. The thirty city-fathers of this capital constituted a municipal commission, which managed the affairs through six boards. These boards (1) superintended the industrial arts of the people, (2) looked to the needs of foreigners visiting the country, and managed their estates as trustees, if required, (3) collected the vital statistics by registering births and deaths for revenue and other purposes, (4) regulated trade, commerce, and weights and measures, (5) supervised manufactures, and (6) collected taxes on sales of commodities.

In subsequent ages Portuguese, French, and English visitors were struck by the volume of traffic in Indian cities, the well-ordered administration of civic life, and the sanitation and economic prosperity of the crowded urban areas. Tavernier found, for example, traveling conveyances more commodious in India than anything that had been "invented for ease in France or Italy."

The Hindus have exhibited their capacity for administration of public bodies to promote general well-being in other spheres as well. Fa-hien, the Chinese scholar-saint, visited India early in the fifth century A. D. He has given an account of the charitable institutions, colleges, monasteries, rest-houses, free hospitals, etc., endowed by the enlightened Hindu philanthropists of those days. His description of the free metropolitan hospital at Pataliputra says (Giles's translation):

"Hither come all poor or helpless patients suffering from all kinds of infirmities. They are well taken care of, and a doctor

attends them; food and medicine being supplied according to their wants. Thus they are quite comfortable."

The Hindus were the first in the world to build hospitals and have anticipated the activity of modern "Christian charity." The first Christian establishment for relief of the sick was founded in the fourth century A. D. during the reign of Constantine. But in India hospitals both for men and animals are at least as old as the time of Asoka (third century B. C.).

The same genius for organization and administration has been displayed by the Hindus in the management of their great universities, to which scholars flocked from all parts of Asia. The university of Nalanda in Bihar (Eastern India) was run for at least seven hundred years, from the fifth to the twelfth century A. D. The number of halls in it was 300 and that of scholars 5000. It was a residential-teaching university and gave instruction, room, board, and medicine free of any cost whatsoever.

Eur-American scholars are wont to think that Amphictyonic Leagues and Olympic institutions, Councils of Trent and Conferences of Westphalia, congresses of scientists and academies of learned men, etc., are Hellenic, Greco-Roman, Christian, or Occidental patents. These have, however, been plentiful in the history of Hindu civilization.

*Parisats*, or academies, whether permanent or peripatetic, have existed in India since time immemorial. Medicine, grammar, logic, chemistry, mathematics, political science, jurisprudence, in fact almost every branch of learning has grown up in India through the clubbing of intellects. Cooperative researches and investigations have been the tradition of intellectual life among the Hindus. As a result of this we know to-day only of "schools" or "cycles" or "systems" of thought, very rarely of the individuals who built them up through the ages. Most of the names in the annals of science and philosophy in India are those of masters or pioneers, and these, again, are but pseudonyms associated with the patronymic saints or gods, e. g., the Prometheuses and Apollos of Hindu culture.

It is this collective or *parisadic* origin which explains why the treatises on arts and sciences in Sanskrit literature have in general the title of *Samhita*, i. e., compilation. Mostly encyclopedic works, they bear internal evidence of the collaboration and cumulative experience of many minds.

Individualistic ideals and ends are as a rule associated with moral, religious, and spiritual affairs in India. Yet even here the Hindu capacity for cooperation has been equally evident as in other

spheres. Every twelve years the Hindus have had a Council of Trent, so to speak, since the earliest times. These congresses of spiritual leaders are called "Koombha-Mela," after the planetary conjunction (of Koombha) which recurs periodically. These are tremendously vitalizing forces; their delegates number about 75,000, and the audiences millions. The name of other moral and religious associations is legion.

Like the Greeks and the medieval Italians and Hansards, the Hindus also developed republican city-states, corporations and guilds. The folk-motes of European politics were represented in India by the village communities. And as for the vices of political life, they have not been confined to the East. Internecine warfare, feudalistic disintegration, absence of national unity, arbitrary taxation and legislation, territorial aggrandizement, etc., have flourished as rank and luxuriant on European soil as on Asian.

In the thirteenth century Dante complained of the disunion and political corruption in Italy:

"Ah, slavish Italy! thou inn of grief!  
 Vessel without a pilot in loud storm!  
 Lady no longer of fair provinces,  
 But brothel-house impure! \* \* \*

While now thy living ones  
 In thee abide not without war; and one  
 Malicious gnaws another; ay, of those  
 Whom the same wall and the same moat contains.  
 Seek, wretched one! around thy seacoasts wide;  
 Then homeward to thy bosom turn; and mark,  
 If any part of thee sweet peace enjoy."

—Cary's trans.

This was the complaint of Machiavelli also in the sixteenth century.

This picture of Italy has really been the norm of political and international life in the Occident. In what respects, then, are the civic sense and political genius of the Western races superior to those of the Hindus, Chinese, and Mohammedans?