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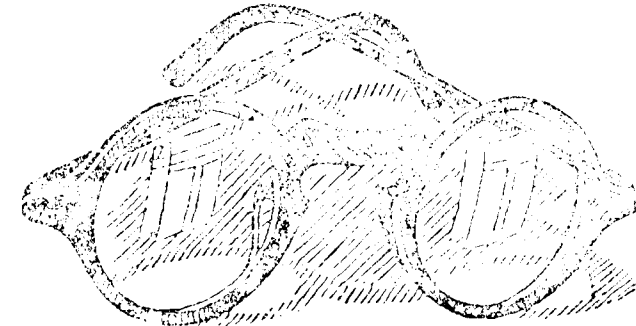
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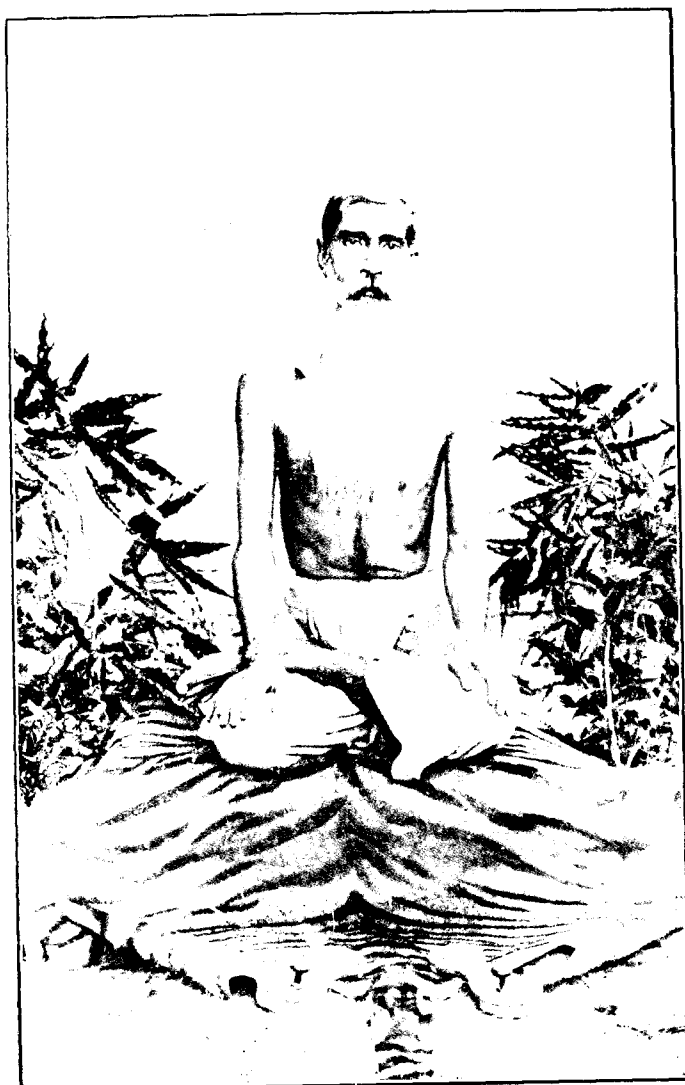
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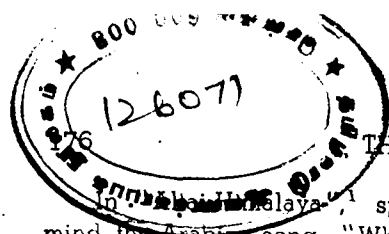
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## Legends of Asia

By NICHOLAS ROERICH

**E**VERY one who contacts the varied peoples of Asia, sincerely, in the moments of their confidence and heartiness, hears numerous legends, always benevolent, about the great Issa, about the Divine Being, about the Prophet, about the greatest Sons of Man,—each one, in his own manner, reveals that which is closest to his heart. Everyone knows that there exists a wide literature, connected with the name of Christ in Asia, not only from Nestorian sources but also in Moslem and Hindu sources. Much has been written of Christ and of Krishna; much is known of the so-called Christians of Saint Thomas. Long and beautiful are the legends and songs of Kashmir and of all Turkestan about the great Issa. The Moslems attribute the location of the sepulchre of Christ in Srinagar, and the Mazar of the Holy Virgin near Kashgar. Thus, each one in his own manner, speaks of the same thing.

Moslems tell us that they are searching through all ways to find all compilations of the legends of Christ and that they are willing to pay any price for them. Nor need I quote the numerous books, which have been often written by Christian ecclesiastics about Christ in Islam, all the Apocrypha which speak of Christ in Persia and India. In the south of India also you can hear the remarkable words of a Hindu about Christ; and Vivekananda in Bengal found for himself unforgettable expressions about this theme in Sindh, Shri Vasvani speaks to his audiences about the covenants of Christ and the Tibetan Lama considers that the covenants of Christ lie together with the sacred books in the Suburgan; and the Sard Baksha (troubadour) also glorifies Christ in the deserts; and the Prince of Karashahr amazes us with the knowledge of these flying legends. In the manifold literature, the article of Sir Lalubai Samaldas and the renowned book of Notovitch are probably composed from various legends. Of course it would be much more valuable if these fragments could be preserved, even though separately, but in their original character. The Archimandrite who wrote the commentaries for the latter book very wisely remarks this also.



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speaking of Kashmir, there came to my mind, the Arabian song, "When Christ was ascending, all who perceived him were glorified." And I cited the Kashmiri legend, "They glorify Christ in the most exalted words. He was higher than sun or moon." And thus upon a red carpet eight Moslems spontaneously glorify Christ until midnight.

I also quote there. "There have been distinct glimpses about a second visit of Christ to Egypt. But why is it incredible that after that, he could have been in India? Whoever doubts too completely that such legends about the Christ life exist in Asia, probably does not realize what an immense influence the Nestorians have had in all parts of Asia and how many so-called Apocryphal legends they spread in the most ancient times.

"Never may one discover the source of such legends. But even if they originated from ancient Nestorian Apocrypha, at present it is instructive to see the widespread and deep consideration paid to the subject. It is significant to hear a local inhabitant, a Hindu, relate how Issa preached beside a small pool near the bazaar under a great tree, which now no longer exists. In such purely physical indications you may see how seriously this subject is regarded." Farther on I pointed out how the *baksha* (troubadour) of Tourfan, with his Siyhara, upon a roan horse, glorified Issa:

"As Issa went on his wanderings, he saw a great Head. On the road lay a dead human head. Issa thought that the great head belonged to a great man. And Issa decided to do good and to resurrect this great head. And the head covered itself with skin. And the eyes filled themselves. And there grew a great body and the blood flowed. And the heart was filled. And the mighty giant rose and thanked Issa that he resurrected him for usefulness to humankind."

And in the "Heart of Asia",<sup>2</sup> there is mentioned:

"In Srinagar we first encountered the curious legend about Christ's visit to this place. Afterwards we saw how widely spread in India, in Ladak and in Central Asia, was the legend of the visit of Christ to these parts during his long absence, quoted in the Gospel. The Moslems of Srinagar told us that the crucified Christ—or, as they call Him, Issa—did not die on the cross, but only lost consciousness. The disciples took away His Body, secreted it and cured Him. Later, Issa was taken to Srinagar, where He taught the people. And there He died. The tomb of the Teacher is in the basement of a private house. It is said that an inscription exists there stating that the son of Joseph was buried there. Near the tomb, miraculous cures are said to take

1 "Altai-Himalaya", pub. F. S. Stokes Co., N. Y. 1929.

2 Heart of Asia pub. Roerich Museum Press, 1929.

place and fragrant aromas to fill the air. In this way, the people of other religions desire to have Christ among them."

One may then ask, as to what type of mentality concocts from these remarks, the legends about my discovery of some manuscript of the time of Christ. Instead of our mutual rejoicing at the broad and all-containing penetration of this great understanding of Christ the Redeemer, instead of marvelling at heart as to the immemorable and inexplicable paths by which the name of Christ soared across all deserts, people are anxious only to obscure and ascribe evil motives.

In the latest number of the Hindu magazine, "Dawn" we read: "The Temple of Shri Issa Puri, became a significant site for Hindu pilgrimages. In Puri there is a sacred temple to which the Hindus throng in multitudes. Not far away play the waves of Bengal Bay. Between the temple and the sea is a beautiful shrine dedicated to Christ. In the centre of the garden there is a small "mandir". Inside it stand a cross. And each evening the *acharya* of the "mandir" reads portions of the psalms and the New Testament. And during the day, from the neighbouring shrines the *sadhus* come and sit and talk with the members of this small ashram, dedicated to Shri Issa."

I do not know how correctly the reality is formulated but even its suggestion contains the elements of benevolence, at which one may rejoice, if his heart has not withered and seared upon the embers of wraths.

It is illuminating to meet in the most unexpected parts of Asia, Nestorian cemeteries with crosses over the graves. It is interesting to see the coins of the Khans with the images of the cross and to become acquainted with the literature of Prester John. At any rate we must be grateful even to those who invented the tale of my discovery of a manuscript, because, even by the roundabout approach of slander, it provides a possibility to call attention to those pearls of the spirit which live through the transmutation of ages.

I have already had occasion to express my belief that no benevolent person would seek to throw a stone at a Moslem singer who sang of Christ in the highest words at his disposal. Nor would he wish to deny a native legend which gathers listeners who attend with their profound heart-interest.

Science should not contain in itself the destructive. The scientist carefully gathers all chips of matter, which at some time, in some hands, will reveal new paths of the history of nations. The path of ignorant negation leads only to destruction. But honest perception is primarily constructive in substance and in the nobility of its spirit, cannot concern itself with absurd disparagements. We can verify, we can

accumulate the fragmentary sparks of the people's memory, which by its evolving legend, provides the true and all-embracing meaning which was not evident at the time.

It would be unpermissible through ignorant cowardice to conceal the benevolent legends which open the priceless recesses of the people's soul and which unite that which stupidity has separated. With true joy, I recall the opinions regarding this expressed by several Roman and Greek Catholic Priests. Naturally, too, world scientists will find in themselves the justice and conscientiousness to turn to this matter not with destructive intent but also with a just impartiality as cordial as that with which the Legends of Asia have warmed and stirred countless hearts.

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## Srimat Paramahansa Narayana Tirtha Dev.

By SRIDHAR MAJUMDAR, M.A.

“ALL is *Bhagavan* (the Supreme-Self)—all is *Bhagavan*—all is *Bhagavan*”,—with these last words on his lips Srimat Paramahansa Narayana Tirtha Dev of the Inana-Sadhana-Matha, Madaripur, Bengal, attained *Brahma-nirvana* on the 17th June, 1935.

The great saint was born at a small village in the district of Faridpur. In his childhood he would often steal away from home and remain absorbed in some secluded spot for hours together, in the contemplation of the deeper problems of life. The members of the family would often feel much worried to find him out of the seclusion and, more so, to make him descend from the ecstatic mood into which he would often transport himself.

The saint once said to a disciple of his, in giving a sketch of his life of religious discipline:

“When I was barely fifteen years old, I practised hard for several years with the mystic term (*Mantram*) with which I was initiated, but not being satisfied with that, I left home at the age of twenty-two. I then roamed about from place to place in quest of truth, but I could find no one to help me in that line. The persons, I approached wanted money—all of them. I thought, the knowledge which had to be got in return for money was no knowledge at all,—he who had realised the truth must be above wants. At last I went to Puri and heard of Gangadhar Swami there. At the very sight of him it flashed upon my mind that he was really a knower of the Truth. When I placed before him my prayer for a knowledge of the Truth, he initiated me and ordered me, a few days later, to return home, saying that by the force of what he had imparted to me my life's dream would be fulfilled. While bidding good bye to him I was advised to follow these three injunctions, viz. (i) Do not go to any other *Sadhu* (a religious man); be yourself a *Sadhu* and hundreds and thousands of *Sadhus* will be at your beck and call (ii) Forsake none of your own accord, but if others forsake you, let them do so; and (iii) If you can give up all your desires, it does not matter whether you are living in a two or three storied building, you are nevertheless a *Tyagi*, a *Sanyasi* (one who has forsaken everything). But if you have desires, you are still a man of the world even if you are living in the forest.’ I received the orders of the Swamiji no doubt but I thought that I might never again meet the Swamiji in my life-time; so before I left I must test whether I was carrying home glass or gold. I spent three months in a solitary cave near Puri. During this period I experienced certain things so divinely mysterious in their character, that my faith in the working of an unseen Divine Hand, especially in the Superhuman Power of the Swamiji, my spiritual master, became firmly established. I then returned home and entered into the world at the earnest solicitations

of my mother, but I kept up for all time the practice of remembering my spiritual master and the mystic term (*Mantram*) which he had imparted to me. Full seventeen years were thus spent and my condition now became such that I felt an intense desire, a great unrest for the realization of the Self. At times I began to practise the mystic term daily even for twenty-two to twenty-three hours. At last for about fifteen days I kept up the practice almost for all time. I was then in a very critical condition, hovering between life and death. I was determined that, life or death, I should try my last. While thus struggling between life and death, the Power awoke in me and I felt that I was one with the all-pervading Spirit *Brahman*. After the lapse of several years I felt an intense longing to see my master. I wrote to a brother-disciple at Puri to learn whether Swamiji was still alive, so that I might pay a visit to him. He wrote in reply to say that the Swamiji had expired some two years back,—the very day on which the Power awoke in me. It was a strange coincidence indeed."

The Saint received but scant education in the vernacular. He somehow got through the U. P. examination and read upto the M. V. standard, but did not qualify himself for the examination. Though thus uneducated in the modern sense of the term, he has been the educator of many of our brilliant University men and Government officials with high academic career. His exposition of the intricate passages and problems of the Vedanta was so unique in its simplicity that it brought his interlocutors for the time being face to face with the Ultimate Truth. One of his disciples—a Professor of the Vedanta Philosophy of great European fame—was once so charmed with his novel exposition of a certain couplet of the Gita that he went so far as to exclaim in a fit of emotion that the great Saint was *Bhagavan* himself, as no other commentator had explained the thing so brilliantly. In the exposition of the Vedanta he aimed only at the truths enshrined therein, caring little for the linguistic gymnastics in which the Scholars take so much delightful interest.

This great Saint combined in himself the greatest *Yogic* powers with the highest Philosophical wisdom. With him, however, the practice of *Yoga* was only a means to an end, the end being the attainment of *Jnanam* (knowledge of the Self), which alone according to the Saint, could give men eternal rest from the rounds of births and deaths. "Meditation, holding of the mind to some particular object and such other *Yoga*-practices are nothing", the Saint would often say, "or they are of little importance. What is wanted is a thorough transformation of the nature (*Prakrti*) and you get everything. What is religious practice but this transformation of nature? Transform your nature and the door of the knowledge of the Universe shall open unto you of itself. What is the harm if you do not attain the state of *Samadhi*? When the nature has been thoroughly transformed, then and then alone are attained perfect knowledge, full bliss and eternal freedom. In the Gita, you know, this fact has over and over again been emphasised". And by the transformation of nature he meant a thorough change of

the *Samskara* (or ideas with which we are born in the domain of nescience) for the birth, growth and establishment of the One Supreme Idea that all is Brahman or the Supreme self.

The *Yoga*, which the great Saint practised and which he imparted to his disciples, is the *Siddha-Mahayoga*, which combines in itself all the four *Yogas*, viz: (i) *Mantra-Yoga*, (ii) *Hathayoga*, (iii) *Laya-yoga* and (iv) *Raja-yoga*. The processes of *Yoga*, practised and preached in modern times, in this country and abroad, are not favourably looked upon because of their artificial and occultist nature. But this *Siddha-Mahayoga*, taught by the great Saint, is unique, although its origin can be traced to the Upanishads. This is a simple natural process gradually and unmistakably leading to the Highest knowledge. The moment one is initiated into this *Maha-yoga* one feels its divine force within and it takes the *Sadhaka* (the initiated one) according to his individual *Sanskaras* gradually through higher and higher visions of life, attended with greater and greater bliss (past impressions) and ultimately takes him back to his own Self as Existence-Consciousness-and-Bliss-absolute; and all this is done most naturally and automatically. The eight-fold paths of the *Yoga*-Philosophy are trodden over i. e. all the signs of *Yoga* as taught in the *Yoga* Philosophy, become manifest in the *Sadhaka* most naturally without the least exertion on his part.

At the very touch, sight or will of a Saint, who has attained perfection in this *Maha-Yoga*, it begins to work in one of the three bodies of the *Sadhaks*, viz: *Sthula* (gross) *Suksma* (subtle or mental) and *Karana* (causal). In these days of stern materialism this *Maha-Yoga* begins to work generally with the gross body. It then re-fashions the gross body so as to make it fit for higher and higher visions of life, which would otherwise be wholly impossible. The work of this *Maha-yoga* then begins direct in the causal body and the *Sadhak* is then taken, in a state of *Samadhi*, automatically back to his own Self, in spite of thousands of latent desires still remaining unsatisfied in him. Thus the true import of the world-evolution, which is the realisation of the Self as Existence-Consciousness-and-Bliss-absolute is revealed to him. The work of this *Maha-yoga* then begins in the subtle or mental body and solves for the *Sadhaka* all the knotty problems regarding the individual Self (*Jiva*), the Universe (*Jagat*) and the Supreme Self (*Brahman*), which seemed to him quite unsolvable, and gives him rest in the bliss of perfect knowledge or omniscience.

"It is only by giving up all the desires of the heart" so holds the *Sruti*, "that one can attain a knowledge of the Self and be eternally established therein." But this giving up of all the desires is very hard nay almost impossible. The *Siddha Mahayoga* is the only process, which makes it quite easy for the *Sadhaka* to give up all his desires and thus have eternal rest in the Supreme Self. The bliss that he enjoys in the state of *Samadhi* is the bliss of being in tune with the

Infinite, and once he has tested this bliss of Infinitude, desires for the enjoyment of lesser bliss in the finite objects of senses lose their intensity and ultimately disappear, as every body is for higher and higher bliss, which finds its culmination only in being in tune with the Supreme Self that is Infinite.

"There are a thousand and one rivers, rivulets, canals and other outlets to the ocean," said the great Saint, "but when they reach the ocean, they become all absorbed in it. One may reach the Supreme Self through emotion, the path of *Bhakti* or Love. But it is only by a knowledge of the Supreme Self both in its relation to the Universe of names and forms and in its non relational Absoluteness that one can be eternally free from rounds of births and deaths. This is the path of *Jnanam* or knowledge. I find fault with no other paths or methods of religious practice, but the excellence of the path which I have chalked out for you all lies in this that this path takes the *Sadhaka* through whatever nature he may possess and whatever circumstances he may be in, to the desired goal and that most naturally. No one has to give up anything forcibly. If the *Sadhaka* only keeps up the practice with full faith in his Spiritual guide, this will help him gradually to give up all his desires and thus have eternal rest in the Bliss of Perfect knowledge".

This great Saint has left behind him a number of disciples, scattered all over the country, some of whom, with the permission of the Saint in his life-time, initiated people in the *Siddha Mahayoga* and are now doing the same, but like the Saint these disciples of his are also wholly against making it public. "This Mahayoga" held the Saint "is for the chosen few and is meant for kings and emperors," though in actual practice he would break the rule for himself and impart this Mahayoga to every earnest aspirant after knowledge of the Self, whatever might be his caste, creed, race or nationality.

"If we must admit caste", said the great Saint, "there is only one and that is the whole human race, or there are two, the male sex and the female sex. The Hindus, the Moslems, the Christians,—they are all men; only their manners and customs are different according to the differences in their political and social evolutions, demanded by the peculiar positions of the localities to which they happen to belong. In every individual there is the play of the same Divine Power, which requires only to be awakened so that he or she may attain *Rsitwa* or Seerhood, irrespective of caste, creed, race or nationality."

Though a *Sanyasin* in the strict sense of the term, this great Saint preferred living the life of a *Rsi* or ascetic house-holder, maintaining a large family, consisting of his wife, a daughter, a son-in-law, and a grand-daughter—all disciples of his—and a large number of disciples, both lay and spiritual. And in the maintenance of this big family he resigned himself completely to the Lord and never sought help from any mortal being. The great saint once said to a disciple of his:

"I have given my serious thoughts over the matter and here are my conclusions: It is true that one may forsake the world and live in the

forest, but so long as the gross body is there, one must procure at least some roots and fruits for its maintenance and build a hut to live in. Again, at the sight of the domestic life of the birds and the beasts one's senses may be agitated and through the recollections of his friend and relations of the world, which one has forsaken, one may again be caught in the spell of *Maya* (nescience). So I have not forsaken the world but remained in it. And what has been the harm? Here, in the world, I have not to undergo the least trouble for the up-keep of the gross body. I have not followed the path of forsaking all, but of making all my own. If I were concerned only with this Asrama—this little family, that would be very wrong indeed. But wherever I go now, there are my fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters and other sweet relations of the world. When I leave the Asrama there is no more the thought of it in my mind; wherever I go, there is my hearth and home and I am wholly with my relations there. "No one likes to live alone", so when the Universal Mind realised Himself as the Supreme-Self, one-without-a-second, He began the creation of the Universe in order to enjoy Himself with the many. I am also creating spiritual sons and daughters and enjoying myself in and through them".

A worthy disciple of his whom the Saint took great care to train up after his own ideal, is now in charge of the Matha and lives upto the ideal set forth by him. Like some other disciple of this great Saint this disciple of his is initiating people in the *Siddha-Mahayoga* with wonderful success.

"In the coming order of things" held the Saint, "there shall be no place for *Sannyasa*. To realise the Self through the householder's life—this shall be the grand ideal of the future of the world. It is not by giving up all, but by realising the Self in all that one has to attain the object of the world-evolution and be free. The path is not through negation of the Universe to the affirmation of the Supreme Self, but through affirmation of the Supreme Self to the merging of the Universe in the Supreme Self. The mission, this time, is educational and not religious. Spread education in the name of the Highest Truth, enshrined in the Upanishads and religions will grow of themselves on the sure foundation of the Highest Truth."

While allowing full freedom to his disciples in matters spiritual, the great Saint would ask them all to keep strictly to the injunctions of the *Sastras* (Scriptures) in the discharge of their duties of the world, "To refrain from work not sanctioned by the Scriptures", held the great Saint, "is the very nature of a *Jnanin* or knower of the Self". The monistic vision, in which the Universe of names and forms is merged in one-conscious—and Blissful Existence, is, in the opinion of the Saint, the natural outcome and highest consummation of a life, moulded in strict conformity to the injunctions of the *Sastras*; and by the *Sastras* he meant only the *Upanishads*, the *Gita*, the *Yoga-Vasista* and such other works bearing directly upon the intuitions of the *Rsis* of the world, both ancient and modern, together with treatises on the rules of conduct based on the above.

Besides the teachings, quoted above, here are a few more of the teachings of the Saint which will show his Mission and the new lights he has thrown on the intricate problems of Religion and Philosophy.

1. "Look here, my boy, everyone wants to know *Atman* (the Self), *Brahman* (the Supreme Self), *Iswara* (the Greater of the Universe) and many such other things. But one seldom troubles oneself with the question 'Who am I?' And why should he bother? Every one thinks that he is already known to himself. He thinks himself as the whole body from head to foot; and he is satisfied with this body idea of his self. But my boy, if there is anything to be known that is this 'I'. This 'I' is the cause of the creation, preservation and dissolution of the Universe. So if this 'I' is known, everything else of the Universe is known and if it is not known, nothing is known. Now let us see what this 'I' is. 'Who am I?' 'I am the Supreme Self'. 'Who art thou?' 'Thou art the Supreme Self'. 'Who is he?' 'He is the Supreme Self.' The Supreme Self is thus all the persons first, second and third, and these divisions of persons are only for the convenience of our practical life. 'I', in fact, am not, nor art thou nor is he; only the Supreme Self exists and that Supreme Self is Existence-Consciousness and Bliss-absolute.

2. "Don't try to concentrate your mind upon a particular object. The mind is a very rebellious subject. I experienced it in my own life of spiritual practice that the mind could not be made to hold to a particular object for a long time. And nothing whatsoever is to be gained by such holding of the mind. When the knowledge of *Brahman* (the all-pervading Supreme-Self) is the only object, we have in view, and when all this is verily the Supreme Self, it will only be creating obstacles in the way if you keep your mind fixed to a particular object in suppression of the other objects for the time being. Realise the Supreme Self through whatever you perceive either external or internal, in the four States of your consciousness. When I am in the fourth or non-objective State of consciousness, the whole Universe becomes merged in me, and when I come down from that State evolves forth the Universe of names and forms along with it. When a person has realised this—that the whole Universe thus evolves out of and dissolves in him, he is then said to have realised the Supreme Self as consciousness (*Chit*). If you subtract a hair from the Supreme Self, your realisation of the Supreme Self will be less by the hair and that will be no realisation of the Supreme Self that is all-pervading. Whatever appears as an object in spatial relations must be covered with the Supreme Self, i.e. it must be realised as the extra-spatial, all-pervading supreme-self. If you keep your mind fixed to a particular object, that will serve you no useful purpose; that will only lead to an inert state and you will become useless for all practical purposes. The object, we have in view, is the realisation of the Supreme-Self and this Supreme-self is to be realised by establishing the 'I' in every object. When this has been done—when the 'I' or *Chit* has been realised in all the objects, the realisation of the Supreme-Self has been attained".

3. "The Mission, with which I have come this time will require some time to be fulfilled. My health is breaking down; so if I can, before I leave, train some of you up in the Mission, my work ends here. Be you all fit and carry on my Mission in the name of Philosophy and Truth. Have nothing to do with religions. Lay the foundation of Philosophy and Truth and religions will grow of themselves on the sure foundation of it. The days for figuring oneself as a pious man under the ochre garb of a *Sannyasi* are gone. What the world wants today is the Truth and it is only Philosophy that can give the Truth. So you all attain seerhood and become practical philosophers".

4. "You cannot expect in this age, that pleaders, advocates, bar-at-laws, Judges, Magistrates, Professors and such others, educated in modern lines, should take the ochre garb (and go to the forest in quest of God. So the mission this time is to help man to realise the Supreme Truth by keeping at home. The Gita shall be the Scripture of this age and the '*Vidya*' with which I am initiating you is the 'King of Vidyas' (*Raja Vidya* of the Gita,) which is the most natural, hence simplest process of realising the Truth and can be practised at home".

5. "Sentimentalism had never a place in me. Where there is sentimentalism there is the truth blurred and where there is reason there is the truth revealed. Whatever you take you should take with proper reason, unruffled by sentimentalism. Have no place for sentimentalism in your mind. If you have to walk you must walk with the knowledge of the path to be walked over: what is the use of walking like a blind man? Sentimentalism makes a man blind. Of the five spiritual relations of the mind I have accorded the highest place to that of peace (*Santa rasi*). Though from the stand point of religious emotionalism it is the lowest, to a knower of the Truth it presents the highest, consummation of his spiritual relation. I have adopted this peaceful state of the mind and it is now all calm, all peace, all bliss".

6. "You think, and the peaceful state of your Conscious-Self is lost; you cease thinking, and it is attained. The longer you remain in the state of non-thinking, the more you enjoy the bliss of being in tune with the Supreme-Self that is Infinite. He, who is to be obtained only by non-thinking or by the cessation of all thoughts, requires nothing else to get him.

Supreme Self is everywhere; what do you say of realising Him? Only cease thinking, thinking even of the Supreme Self, and the Supreme Self will be revealed here, there, everywhere. So long as desires are there, this state of non-thinking cannot be attained. The more you give up your desires, the more is the bliss of non-thinking you enjoy. This Bliss is the Supreme Self.

7. "Only the Supreme Self exists. He is pure non-objective consciousness and there is nothing outside him to be known. Why and how is there the Universe then? The fact is,—so long as the individual Self, who is by his very nature consciousness pure, thinks that he is the body, the Universe is there and can never be got rid of. But the moment this body-idea is lost, the individual Self becomes free, free as the Supreme Self, even if the perception of the world still continues. When all this is verily the Supreme Self; time, space, work, name and form etc. are not without Him. So by realising the Supreme Self,—that is, pure consciousness, in everything one has to be established in one's Supreme Self. During the dissolution of the Universe all these names and forms, time, space and work remained merged in the Supreme Self; otherwise, whence did they evolve in the new creation? When they have evolved out of the Supreme Self, they are no other than the Supreme Self. So do thou always and in every state try to realise the Supreme Self everywhere. The mind also is the Supreme Self, so wherever the mind goes, establish the Supreme Self there. When you thus realise the Self always and everywhere, for want of a second something you attain eternal rest in the Bliss of the Supreme Self, that is one-without-a-second. It will not do to deny the Universe of names and forms. How can you negate what is affirmed by direct perception? The Universe is there, how can you say that it is not? But then,

*Suchi.* (Startled) What do you mean?

*Gauranga.* (In a choked-up tone) There is a feeling in me which is beyond expression. Sound my heart, you may know what it is. But don't force me to explain it; my words are too few, too feeble.

*Suchi.* (Aside) Ah! Ah! The poor man! I know the storm in his breast.

(The roar of a thunder above; The sky is swept over by dark clouds.)

Am I to see him in such a plight?

*Gauranga.* (Hesitates awhile and then seems determined) *Suchi!*

*Suchi.* Brother, *Suchi* is ever your sister.

*Gauranga.* (Desperately) *Suchi*, how can you speak like that?

*Suchi.* (Seriously) Why not? Is she so unworthy?

*Gauranga.* Not that.

*Suchi.* What else, then?

*Gauranga.* Oh! A terrible question! I can't answer it.

*Suchi.* Why not practise what you preach?

*Gauranga.* I think I do.

*Suchi.* But now you are almost killing me—and where is the 'ahimsa' that you preach?

*Gauranga.* I am not a monster, believe me.

*Suchi.* Of course, the brother of sweet *Suchi* can never be a monster, can he? But don't you admit that words are more killing than swords? (The rumble of thunder and the dazzle of lightning).

*Gauranga.* It will rain in torrents. Let's go back to the 'Vihar'.

*Suchi.* Yes, our brothers and sisters will be waiting for us. But don't dub the clouds as boisterous. They are only suffering from birth-pangs.

*Gauranga.* Then hasten, let's move.

*Suchi.* Have you finished your prayers?

*Gauranga.* No.

*Suchi.* Why? It is getting late.

*Gauranga.* No. My heart is not pure. Prayers will be an affront to the Gods when the heart is full of lust.

*Suchi.* What's it, brother? You can't speak so again.

*Gauranga.* 'Sweet *Suchi's* brother!' Who is he? For my part, I have never treated her as a sister! No, never! Always something more, dearest! Sweetheart! (picks up a lily) *Suchi*, smile and this will open its heart to you.

*Suchi.* You are mad.

*Gauranga.* I know what I am speaking now. Is this madness? *Suchi*, I have always loved you. It breaks me to speak it out. Ah! Your heart is a diamond! *Suchi*, why should I love you at all? It is just like asking, 'why does the *koel* sing?' Or 'why does the storm howl?' And I have no answer to such questions. *Suchi*, let me love you, don't ask me why. Don't try to stem the tide, it will wash you away. Simply leave it to itself, it will swell to the highest heights, and you can dance on its crest, like lightning on the breast of the cloud. But then, don't look down, you may fall... *Suchi!* *Suchi!* Who am I? Where am I? Am I not the ideal of your love? Do I not live in the inmost depths of your heart? Speak on, *Suchi*.

(Kneels before her: but, at once, she raises him and touches his hands with her eyes.)

*Suchi.* Have you ever seen a flower in full bloom?

*Gauranga.* Yes, often.

*Suchi.* How do you feel when you see such things?

*Gauranga.* I desire to possess them. Otherwise what is beauty for? To enjoy or to throw away untouched?

*Suchi.* The flower breaks and withers, when heedless wind rushes at it; the winged fairy of lightning flickers, and, in a twinkling, flies away into the womb of void; the gorgeous tints of the rainbow get lost in the white of the sky, and yet you pursue these things, these shadowy illusions, taking them for reality!

*Gauranga.* No use asking man why he is human. *Suchi*, I love you; you are my soul, and I, a mere body. A soul without body is a ghost, a body without soul, a corpse; that state is a hideous nightmare! Even dogs spurn such bones, even worms avoid such graves!

*Suchi.* Brother, man can be sometimes better than worms and dogs. Perhaps he can even reach the heights of gods! If he has no high ideals in life, if he leads an aimless existence, he would not be different from the beast. No. He must have something unique, sublimely unique! Only that entitles him to move in God's company.

*Gauranga.* *Suchi*, these are not words of cheer.

*Suchi.* Are you not a Bhikku? Do you allow yourself to be swayed by passions? Note God's hand in the things around you and your life will flow like a lyric. When the heart is so chastised, the true message of love comes of its own accord.

(*Gauranga* is motionless, perhaps lost in thought. Just then, the moon peeps through a veil of cloud.)

*Suchi.* Suppose I were ugly; you would have been unaffected? Is the spirit within an empty phantom, after all? Brother, if we fail to apprehend the beauty of it, we are imbeciles and there is no hope for

us. Is it not weakness to be carried away by the gaudy shroud of a lifeless soul? The beauty of the body gets blurred, the flesh of the muscle loosened, and the twinkle in the eye bleared. Therefore, brother, guard yourself against the outside of things. Now tell me: What does the breeze whisper?

*Gauranga.* The message of peace!

*Suchi.* What does the ocean roar?

*Gauranga.* The frenzy of agony!

*Suchi.* What does the streamlet sing?

*Gauranga.* The rhythm of life!

*Suchi.* And now march on. Life is a race! March on! Let not worms of despair eat away your manliness. Do not be scared away by the initial rebuffs. Welcome obstacles as opportunities. Know that the pure, serene bosom of the ocean lies far beneath the wild waves, the bliss of eternity far behind the fleeting moments!

*Gauranga.* Where is Nature's soul? I must bow to it.

*Suchi.* Bow to it. It is in the temple of your own heart.

(*Gauranga* involuntarily chants the evening prayer. The sky is already perfectly clear, like a repentant sinner; not even a patch of cloud can be seen; the moon reigns supreme all over. *Gauranga* has recovered, feeling reborn, as it were.

They look up and then towards the 'Vihar'. With hearts uplifted and souls awakened, they move slowly away.)

## The Infection of Art.

By A. HARIHARAN, B. A.

**I**T seems that Tolstoy was the first who used the word infection along with art. In his long treatise on art (*What is Art?*) we find frequent references to this infection of works of art. He says that "the stronger the infection the better the art." We may almost say that Tolstoy has advanced an "Infection Theory" of art.

Every work of art must have that power—the power to infect. How does a work of art come into being? When an artist feels something strongly, there is an urge in him to communicate his feelings to others. He wants his joys to be shared by others, he wants his sorrows to be shared. A work of art comes into being when the artist transmits his feelings to others with the intention of infecting them.

The artist as well as those who appreciate works of art must have a wide sympathy. They must be, so to say, "official receivers" for all the feelings in the world. They must have the capacity to merge with other souls; or, as Mr. Chamberlain once remarked in the Commons, "a fluid mind" which can assume any form and all forms. The first requisite of artistic appreciation is the possession of that "simple feeling familiar to the plainest man, and even to a child, that sense of infection with another's feelings—compelling us to rejoice in another's gladness, to sorrow at another's grief, and to mingle souls with another—which is the very essence of art."

So on the side of the artist there must be the capacity to get infected and to infect others; in the case of others, the passive worshippers of art, the capacity to get infected. But the susceptibility to infection varies from man to man.

On first reading *Othello* what impressed me most was the tragedy that overtook lovely Desdemona. Her charms, her innocence, her fidelity, these should have resisted the onslaught of tragedy. But they fail; and it is their failure that fills us with gloom and sorrow.

To some others the villainy of Iago may be more impressive. In the place of love or sympathy for Desdemona they may be entertaining hatred for Iago. But Shakespeare wants us to share his hatred for Iago, sympathy for *Othello* and love for Desdemona.

But where is Shakespeare himself? While reading *Othello*, unless we are told that we are studying the Elizabethan dramatist, unless we are reminded that we are preparing for an examination, we forget Shakespeare. The artist voluntarily recedes into the background. It is the work of Art that captures our imagination. The artist has entrance

only to our intellect. Infection being purely a reaction on emotions, a work of art must possess us *in entirety*.

Hence we forget Shakespeare, the creator of Othello; and the dramatist in his turn would have forgotten himself and identified himself with the characters he was delineating. We admire the chivalry and courage of Othello, we admire the innocent blossom of paradise—Desdemona, we hate the villainous Iago. We overlook the greatness of Shakespeare, the dramatist who gave life and personality to these men and women and we forget ourselves.

Augustine Birrell also must have had this infection of art in mind when he wrote that "self-forgetfulness is of the essence of enjoyment, and the author who would confer pleasure must possess the art, or know the trick, of destroying for the time the reader's personality."

So in the "process" of appreciating a work of art, we not only forget ourselves, but also forget the individual artist, and find pleasure in identifying ourselves with the characters created by the artist. The readiness with which the human mind, rather the heart, reacts, that is to say the degree of susceptibility, varies. The very constitution of individuals may have something to do with this. Some are very emotional, whose mental balance is unhinged the moment they perceive a change in the environment, however slight it may be. There are others of a firmer mould whom changes cannot change.

Still is there not something universally true even in these reactions? For example, Shakespeare wants us to hate Iago and sympathise with the Moor and his comely bride. Will it be artistic appreciation if one begins to love Iago, adore his villainy? Priestly is cynical when he says, "Nevertheless it is true that certain types of character very clearly aroused his (Shakespeare's) dislike; and it is also true to say that these are the very types of character that appear to have some fascination for our world. In short, his villains are rapidly becoming our heroes."

In spite of his cynicism the world has not considerably or even appreciably changed with regard to the general likes and dislikes. Even a villain poses as a good man.

Although the degree of susceptibility to infection may vary, it is wrong to think that only some have the capacity to appreciate works of art. We hear that in the medieval age art was aristocratic, meaning thereby that only the leisured class took to the study and cultivation of the arts. Study of art and appreciation of works of art are different and the non-aristocratic classes should not be denied the capacity to get infected by works of art. Because people of the lower ranks have no leisure to study works of art, it does not follow that they are infection-proof. The peasant is infected by the advent of the monsoons,

even as Kalidasa was infected by the first patch of black clouds that adorned the fringes of the firmament. Shelley wrote,

"And my spirit which so long  
Darkened this swift stream of song—  
Impenetrated lie  
By the glory of the sky."

So does the spirit of the farm labourer. It is futile to argue that the "average man" is proof against artistic infection. Hence the attempt of some "realists" to make art popular may seem ridiculous. Is there really anything wrong with art? If we accept the theory of Tolstoy that "the stronger the infection the better the art," there is no question of art being in the wrong. If you want the people to appreciate works of art, to study art, well, give them leisure. But don't set about revising the concept of art.

### Airy Bell.

The golden gleaming net of fire,  
The diamond of going higher.  
Rising above all human worth,  
By reason of a transcendent birth.  
The Lord of all the Future born  
Beneath the mountains of the dawn,  
Then towering like that Image planned  
With noble grandeur in the Land  
That has a crown of lasting snow,  
'Tis there that we shall surely go,  
Amid white fires and distant peaks,  
And all the past that clearly speaks  
Of this eventual citadel  
Whence sounds the spirit's airy bell.

Barnett D. Conlan.

## Meditation on OM

By SWAMI SIVANANDA

"Aharamudaleshtellam Adhi  
Bhagavan Mudhetre Uladhu."

(Tirukkural).

**J**UST as A is the beginning of all alphabets, so also Bhagavan is the beginning (source) for the world.

A, U, M are the life of all articulate words. A and U, when connected together, coalesce into O. Therefore the right way to write OM is A, U, M. "A" of the sacred syllable AUM is a symbol of Virat aspect (gross manifestation); "U" of the Hiranyagarbha (or Karya Brahman, subtle manifestation) and "M" of the Iswara aspect (or Karana Brahman—unmanifested state) of Brahman. OM is called Sat Nam or (EK) OM Kara by the Sikhs, Jehovah by the Jews, Allah Hoo by the Muslims, Ahurmazda by Zoroastrians, Hanovn by the Persians, Elohem by the Christians, Tao by Chinese and Monad by Greeks. OM is called Pranava because it runs through Prana or breath and pervades life.

The life of all words is vowels. A vowel is that which shines by itself. It can be pronounced by itself. A consonant is that which cannot be pronounced without the help of a vowel placed either before or after it. What the soul is to the body, that is vowel to the consonant. A and U are the parents of all other vowels in Sanskrit. Sanskrit possesses a larger number of vowels than any other language in the world. All the letters of the alphabets of all languages are contained in this mysterious, sacred mono-syllable OM (AUM). Therefore it is quite proper to regard OM as the symbol or name of Brahman.

OM or the real Atman is the substratum for all sounds, languages, this universe, body, mind, *prana* and senses and the Karana Sarira and the five sheaths. OM is the substratum or the underlying reality in which all objects appear as waves in the ocean. The waves are mere appearances. So also the forms are mere appearances. The forms are unreal in the sense that they are only relatively real, that they are changing and impermanent. This is the meaning of Asat or Mithya. The ocean is real. So also OM or Brahman is real.

OM represents the canvas or the background. The forms of this universe represent the pictures in the canvas. The canvas is real, but the pictures in the canvas are unreal because fire in the canvas cannot burn your fingers, the knife in the canvas cannot cut your fingers, the tiger in the canvas cannot bite you. Even so Om or Brahman is the only solid reality. The names and forms are unreal like the pictures in the canvas.

Why is OM taken as the symbol of Brahman? Can we not have any other word besides OM to represent Brahman or the solid Reality or living Truth? OM is a mysterious, sacred syllable. Chant OM for one hour. Chant any other word also for one hour. You will yourself feel the difference. There is a real connection between OM, the symbol, and Brahman the thing signified by the symbol OM. Thought and word are inseparable. OM and Brahman are inseparable. When you think of the name of your son Govind, the name will bring to your memory the image of your son; when you think of the image of your son, the image will bring to your memory his name. Even so when the symbol OM is pronounced it will bring to your memory Brahman, the thing signified. There is an intimate relationship between the symbol and the thing signified.

Rishis and sages of yore who attained self-realisation have experienced the mysterious effects of the repetition or chanting of OM. Having made long researches and experiments on OM and its vibrations, they have meditated on OM for a considerable period and then they have given to the world OM as the right symbol of Brahman. This is not a hocus pocus work or a juggler's trick. This is authoritative assertion of the seers (Aptha Vakyam). OM served as a beacon-light for them when they sailed in the turbulent waters of this ocean of Samsara. Through OM they ascended safely to the summit of the hill of Nirvikalpa Samadhi or knowledge of Self or Brahma Gnana. You may rely on their teachings.

Just as the President represents the voice of the people of a country, so also OM represents the voice of all names of God because OM is the substratum or matrix for all sounds or names. In OM all names are included. OM is the ocean into which all rivers of sounds or names or words flow.

OM is the common symbol. It will represent all symbols of God, all symbols of all religions, all cults and schools. Just as a large-hearted spiritual man is of catholic and liberal nature without prejudice of any sort, represents all and becomes the Supreme head of a conference of world religions, so also the common symbol OM, the basis of all sounds and all languages, represents all names and becomes the head of all names of God.

All Mantras begin with OM. All the Upanishads begin with OM. All religious ideas are centred in OM. The breath sings always OM, the song of infinity and Immortality. Thought of OM elevates the minds of all: the Christians, the Hebrews and their prayers with 'Amen'—modification of OM. The Muslims end their prayers with Ahmeen, also modification of OM. The Mandukya Upanishad, Mundaka-Upanishad, Chandogya Upanishad, Prasnopanishad, Kathopanishad, Gita and Brahma Sutras sing the glory of OM. Even some Americans and Europeans meditate on OM now. They have realised

the importance of OM. OM is your very life, your very breath. OM is the life of the Vedas. OM is the life of all mantras. OM is everything. OM is also a common mantra, the common property of all.

Meditate on OM as silence, an embodiment of peace or *Santi*. This is abstract or subtle meditation (*Sukshma Dhyana*). Meditate on OM with the feeling "I am an embodiment of silence or Peace or *Santi*." This is Vedantic Nirguna Meditation. Meditate on OM as an embodiment of bliss or Ananda. This is also abstract meditation. Meditate on OM with Bhav or feeling, "I am an embodiment of bliss or Ananda." This is also Vedantic Nirguna Meditation or Ahamgra Upasana. Do you see clearly the difference now between the two forms of meditation? The first kind of meditation will prepare you for the practice of the second kind of meditation.

OM is your best companion in life because it gives you Immortality and eternal bliss. OM is your Sad-guru. OM is your guide or preceptor. Therefore keep company or constant *sai-sangh* with OM, by practising *japa* of OM, chanting of OM, *smaran* of OM, *chintan* of OM, *manana* of OM, *Vichara* of OM, meditation of OM. *Japa* of OM is constant repetition of OM either verbally, mentally or in a humming manner. Chanting of OM is loud repetition of OM and taking the breath and vibrations from the Muladhara to Sahasrara. *Smara*na of OM is remembrance of OM. *Chintan* of OM is thinking of OM. *Manana* is reflection of OM. *Vichara* of OM is enquiry into the nature of Brahman. The feeling "I am all pervading Brahman," while meditating should go deep into the very core of your heart. Every cell, every pore of your body, every atom, every molecule, every nerve, every fibre, every drop of blood, every artery, every vein, should powerfully vibrate or pulsate with this sacred, soul-elevating, sublime feeling. Feel when you chant, meditate on or sing OM that you are one with the Supreme Self. Transcend the world of names and forms and identify yourself with the all-pervading pure consciousness. When you chant, sing or meditate on OM, melt the mind in the Immortal Self and feel that you are the Light of lights, the Lord of lords, Emperor of emperors, King of kings, the soul of souls, the self of all selves, the Immortal Brahman of the Upanishads.

O spotless Vivek! O taintless Prakash! O deathless Amara! Thou art OM. Thou art Divinity of Divinities, Deva of Devas. Maya is thine illusive power. Thou art the Lord of Maya. All nature will pay tribute to thee when thou rest in OM or Brahman. The Himalayas, the sun, moon and stars, the vast sky and the ocean, proclaim thy ineffable glory. All mighty rivers, the manifold forms, the various kinds of beautiful flowers—all declare Thy splendour and brilliance. Rest in OM. Live in OM. Merge in OM. Become that OM. OM is thy sweet Immortal abode or original home of indescribable effulgence.

## The 100 Best Books.

By Dr. K. R. SRINIVASA IYENGAR, M. A., D. Litt.

EVERYBODY knows that books are multiplying at an alarming rate. In England alone about 15000 new books are published every year. Libraries like the British Museum or the Bodleian contain no more than a fraction of the books actually in existence. Reading all the books now available is clearly impossible. What, then, must one do?

One may read desultorily, dipping into books as they come handy, swallowing poetry, fiction, history, polemics and philosophy haphazard. This is what most of us do.

Or one might put into practice the "cream theory"—in other words, make a list of the "best" books, and then read them according to a stringent schedule. This is what many of us wish to do, but humanity usually gets the better of our "Planned Reading" and we relapse into our easy-going ways. All the same, the making of a list of "100 best books" is an adventurous occupation.

The difficulty with the "100 best books" is that no two people would choose the same items. A personal list can have no relevance to others. For instance, a mere scholar's list of "100 best books" will be very different from the list prepared by a Postal clerk or a Military strategist. Further, there is the question of language: all the "best" books are not available in any one language. The whole of Racine is not to be had in English and *Buddenbrooks* has not yet been translated efficiently into Marathi or Tamil. Authors like Racine lose their flavour, when translated into English just as Shelley, for instance, defies the Tamil translator's art. Moreover, the "100 best books" of to-day will require modification, even at my own hands, in the course of a decade or two. Lastly, the question arises if by "book" we mean a single printed volume or a single literary work; it is, perhaps, more convenient to make a list of printed volumes now available than of individual works of literature.

In my list of "100 best books," reference is made only to books published in English or to English renderings of other world masterpieces. Many more specimens of Indian literature should be included if competent English renderings were available; in any case, the list could be extended indefinitely according to the reader's predilections.

Firstly, there are the classics that would normally get into anybody's list of "100 best books." Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes are available in English in four or five volumes; also in two volumes entitled, *Complete Greek Drama*. Homer's *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* can be had in one or two volumes, in the English translation by Lang, Leaf, Myers and Butcher. Jowett's

version of Plato's Dialogues is obtainable in five volumes, or in only two volumes in the American edition. Horace's Poetical Works, Virgil's *Aeneid*, Meditations of Marcus Aurelius, Plutarch's Lives, Confessions of St. Augustine, Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, Moliere's Plays, all these can be had in cheap and handy editions. Romesh Dutt's *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, Binyon's *Sakuntala*, and *Hindu Scriptures* (Everyman's Edition) will introduce the reader to the treasures of Sanskrit literature. Palmer's *Koran* also selects itself. *Jade Mountain* by Wytter Bynner is a suitable introduction to Chinese poetry while Miyamori's *Anthology of Haikus* is a valuable collection of miniature Japanese poems.

Next comes a group of "Outlines", indispensable to all those who wish to have a bird's eye view of the various departments of man's cultural heritage. Many of these "Guides" and "Outlines" are written for the layman and hence they could be safely recommended to the "common reader." Drinkwater's *Outline of Literature* and Orpen's *Outline of Art* are hot favourites with the public; so are Well's trilogy, *Outline of History*, *Science of Life* (in collaboration with G. P. Wells and Julian Huxley) and *Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind*. Will Durant's *Story of Civilization* and Jawaharlal Nehru's *Glimpses of World History* give more importance to the East than Well's *Outline*. Joad's *Guide to Philosophy* and *Guide to the Philosophy of Morals and Politics* are also useful summaries, and deserve a place on one's book-shelves. Hogben's *Mathematics for the Million* and *Science for the Million* are fascinating to read. Shaw's *Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism*, of course, should be read sooner or later. Laski's *Grammar of Politics*, Frazer's *The Golden Bough* and Rose's *Outline of Modern Knowledge* are rather for the more intellectual sort of reader; but they should be listed in the "100 best books." In Carter and Bretnall's *Man the World Over* we have perhaps the most entertaining and informative Geographical work now available.

In a list of books published in the English language, English literature is bound to claim a dominant place. Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Shelley, and Wordsworth can be had in omnibus volumes. The complete plays of Marlowe, Congreve, Sheridan, Bernard Shaw, J. M. Barrie, Galsworthy and J. M. Synge may also be included in our list. The best of Eugene O'Neill's plays is to be had in an omnibus volume. *The Dynasts* may also be added, as a tour-de-force of modern poetic drama. Bacon's *Essays*, Hazlitt's *Collected Essays* (Nonesuch Edition), and Lamb's *Essays of Elia* as also Ruskin's *Unto the Last* and Burke's *Speeches on America* may be confidently chosen from the colossal quantity of English prose. Tagore's *Poems and Plays* and Housman's *The Bible designed to be read as Literature* would be treasures to all Indian students of English literature. Nor are people likely to object to the choice of Q's *Oxford Book of English Verse*.

Continental literature cannot be ignored either. Fortunately for us, reliable and readable English renderings of many continental masterpieces are available. The best plays of Henrik Ibsen can be had either in the Blue Ribbon or Modern Giants series. The best of Pirandello's plays can be had in two volumes. Strindberg's *The Father* and *The Dance of Death*, along with his other plays, are being issued by the Anglo-Swedish Foundation. Chekov's Plays are to be had in the Everyman's Edition. Goethe's *Faust* and Schiller's *William Tell*, Montaigne's *Essays*, Dumas's *Monte Cristo*, Hugo's *Les Misérables*, Stendhal's *Scarlet and Black* and Anatole France's *Thais* can all be had in a variety of suitable editions. Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, *Anna Karenina* and *Resurrection*; Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*; Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov*, *The Idiot*, *Crime and Punishment*, and *The Possessed*; Gogol's *Dead Souls*; Goncharov's *Oblomov*; all these great Russian novels deserve to be read reverently. Many of these have been translated by Constance Garnett and one scarcely notices that they are mere translations. Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks* and *The Magic Mountain* also deserve inclusion in our list.

Choosing novels from English Literature is comparatively a more difficult task. A tentative choice would be; Fielding's *Tom Jones*, Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (or preferably the whole of Austen in an omnibus volume), Scott's *The Heart of Midlothian*, Dickens's *The Pickwick Papers*, Thackeray's *Esmond*, Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Meredith's *The Egoist*, Samuel Butler's *Erewhon*, Bennett's *The Old Wives' Tale*, Galsworthy's *The Forsyte Saga*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, Forster's *A Passage to India*, Conrad's *Jord Jim*, Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* and D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*. Detective fiction may be represented by Gaboriau's *Lecoq the Detective*, Wilkie Collins's *Moonstone*, Poe's *Tales of Mystery and Imagination*, the inevitable Sherlock Holmes stories and perhaps the Father Brown stories as well. Mr. Bentley's *Trants' Last Case* and Mr. Hichens's *The Paradine Case* may also be added to our list.

History may be represented by Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* and Carlyle's *French Revolution*; Biography by Boswell's *Johnson* and Strachey's *Queen Victoria*; Autobiography by Cellini's and Jawaharlal Nehru's and also by Mahatma Gandhi's *My Experiments with Truth*.

With at least these many books around one, may not one feel all history, all the vicissitudes of human civilization, unfolding before one vividly—giving one delight for the present and throwing light into the recesses of the past! One might well repeat the words of Alexander Smith: "Books are the true Elysian fields where the spirits of the dead converse, and into these fields a mortal may venture unappalled. What king's court can boast such company? What school of philosophy such wisdom?.....I am a sovereign in my library."

## Friendship.

By Dr. ERNEST J. STEVENS, A. M., M. Sc., Ph. D., D. Sc.

**F**RIENDSHIP is not only the *prana* breath of the angels, but is the great healer, nourisher, balancer as well as the gentle, continuous thriller of the human soul.

In youth every smiling acquaintance is too oft hailed as a Friend; then as one grows and the real nature of Friendship is understood, fewer and fewer of the smiling creatures wear the golden application of Friend, "*My Friend*".

If man and woman, after reaching the one-quarter to one half of their eighty-five to one hundred years of schooling on this earth, have several truly tested and loyal friends, they are indeed fortunate and with even one of these most devoted precious pearls of great worth may count themselves rich beyond expression.

There is no passion or treasure, more sacred, holy and sweetly bountiful and more ennobling, not even love devoid of devotion and loyalty, than Friendship. Friendship, exchanges a friendly spirit to kindred souls and a radiance to all animate things.

Do not try and "make a Friend"; this is utterly impossible and a foolish loss of time. Friendship is discovered and it then may be brought forth from the gold mine of the spiritual mountain, within where the Friend lives. Friendship may, through sympathy and practical understanding, be cultivated and strengthened as we progress in this and future incarnations. We may thus be both visibly and invisibly, audibly and silently, and substantially benefitted by this divine human plant, that brings forth the fragrant flower of sentiment and the fruit of spiritual joy, peace and contentment.

How lovely these words sound..... "*My Friend, My Pal, My Other Self*".

Friendship becomes a part of your soul and the Friend belongs to your spirit. In fact, it is a blending process, you and yours, always impressing and expressing that living, loving and lasting spiritual like self of you. Even when the body or temple of your Friend is far away, or in the air, or water, or "asleep", so to speak, in the ground, the Friend and Friendship is nearer than one's own flesh to its counterpart.

Friendship of the spirit cannot die. No man or angel can cut it asunder and God would not, for God is our universal Friend and Protector. Praise His Friendship for ever and ever.

The years will come and the years will go, but the Friendship lasts for ever. Birthdays may come and birthdays may go, but the

spirit lasts for ever. Friendship, like your real self, needs no birthday reminders, for they are birthless, deathless and fathomless.

Friendship is a fragrant blossom of the Soul. Its roots lie deep, and like the Rose, the Lily and the Lotus, it is surcharged with sentiment and delicate with fragrance.

Absence and tenderness are dews that water its memory and silence cherishes it as the balmy breeze of the Southland. Its companions are colour, tones, music, children and flowers. How sad is the soul when it is sad from lack of Soul Friendship? It is the spiritual life blood of true happiness. It is not a component of sentiment, ideals, ideas and thought stuff, and does it not include inspiration, feeling and aspiration? Friendship is polarisation and salutation of soul to soul. It is the God-like and God-life within us.

Friendship's keynote is a twin keynote of Love and Service, and remember always that Service is the rent we owe Nature for the space we occupy to live, love and last. Therefore, if you are looking for friends, *love to serve and serve to love.*

Be a Friend and you will find a Friend and while looking reach up and look high as high as Heaven itself, and you will find on ariel wings of Love angelic friends and look in the fine and deep natures a Heaven and a God within.

There are grand ships of State and of Nation,  
There are winged ships that trail the blue sea;  
But the grandest of ships in creation,  
Is the Friendship within you and me.

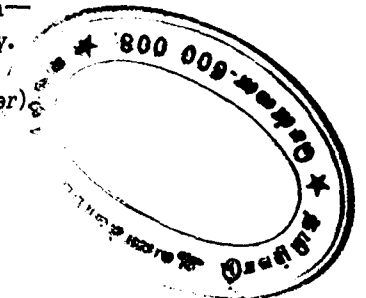
There are great ships that flow through the ocean,  
There are great ships that fly through the air;  
But the greatest of ships, to my notion,  
Is the Friendship of a true and loving pair.

There are kinships of blood and mating,  
There are kin that seem strangers to me;  
But the dearest of Kinships and mating,  
Is the God-like of souls pure and free.

There are strong ships of freight, now in motion,  
There are soul-ships on lake, sea and Bay;  
But the mightiest ship in life's ocean—  
Heaven's Friendship to pilot the way.

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## Seven Sails.

When Dawn from under  
The Seven Seas came,  
The Seven Stars danced  
Like a silver flame.

And the East and West  
Went with them for He,  
The Buddha, slowly  
Arose on the Sea.

In a golden haze  
And a quivering fire,  
Where Seven Stars danced  
To an unseen choir.

Till silver and gold  
Were woven in one,  
And the deep dawn shook  
To the undertone.

Then Seven Sails sprang  
Like birds into flight,  
Their golden plumes  
Blown on to the night :

And afar fine notes  
As of harp strings rang  
Through chords of gold,  
And the whole Sea sang.

" Where Seven Stars rise,  
There Seven Sails flee,  
Seven Stars one Wind  
Seven Sails one Sea."

*Barnett D. Conlan.*

## Kovalam.

By TAMPY, K. P. PADMANABHAN, B. A.



THE most alluring beauty spot which lies nearest to Trivandrum is Kovalam situated in a sea-side village nestling amidst dense palm groves. Ten miles to the South of Trivandrum is Kovalam, the popular week-end resort and sanatorium, remarkable for its sylvan surroundings, its native beauty and its placid calm. Kovalam is a pretty hamlet consisting of a number of thatched cottages scattered over a vast area on the shores of the sea, and hiding as it were in the midst of luxuriant tropical vegetation. The shimmering sea, and the picturesque rocky cliff lend rare enchantment to this region. With a landscape pre-eminent for beauty and romantic charm, richly blessed with fragrant hilly pastures and delightful hills, Kovalam is the favoured goal of tourists and sojourners in summer. Kovalam offers a wealth of attractions and experiences to the visitor who is seized with curiosity and longing to examine the contrasts of landscape presented by this beauty spot. Few spots on earth are better calculated to give an idea of Nature's infinite grandeur.

Kovalam is a beautiful piece of low level land terminating in a cape higher than the contiguous coast and is comprised of two promontories in between which is a sheltered bay. There is a very small village port with a lovely bay which affords tolerably safe landing in fine season. On the southern boundary of the bay is the picturesque rocky cliff full of black rocks of varying size and diverse shape piled one over the other in wild and chaotic disorder. The cliff is austere, imposing and magnificent. A view from the crest of this cliff offers one of the finest sea views in the world.

Beneath the rock cliff, a little above the water level are five deep sea coves into which sea water dashes with terrible fury. This region is slippery and dangerous. It is certainly a matter for adventure to go round the precipitous cliff and have a look at these grottos. Legend enlightens us that the five sea coves are linked with all the famous *theerthams* in India.

At Kovalam there is a mysterious cave around which time has woven many interesting legends. This wonderful cave is in common parlance called "*Udayar Vazhy*". A furlong to the interior of the picturesque rocky cliff is a precipitous and narrow pass. The cave is at the farthest end of this pass. Weird sounds are caused when sea water rushes into this deep and dangerous cave. It is not possible to see clearly water rushing in, for the mouth of the cave is partially hidden by a huge globe like stone towering 6 feet above the sea level. It is said that if this black rock is blasted away the interior of the cave

would be fully visible. To the right of the narrow pass visitors could stand and look round. The left side presents the appearance of a small forest. To obtain the best possible view of this strange cave one should embark either a catamaran or canoe and take a position facing the cave. Of course, this is a difficult and irksome task full of thrill. The interior of the cave is broad. The figure of a person seems to occupy the centre of the cave. When the rays of the setting sun reflect inside the cave, two eyes of flame are noticed there. One hears the noise of the sea water flowing into the recesses of the cave. The sea water, however, does not flow back into the ocean. Legend avers that this awe-inspiring cave has its terminus at the foot of the *Mookunni Malai*, a small mountain range about 20 miles to the interior. Aged people who inhabit the coast say that terrible sounds emanate from the cave before the out-break of the monsoon. It is believed that such sounds indicate an imminent monsoon.

Legend says that many many years ago when Kovalam was occupied by *Pandarams*, a section of the Saivites, one of their priests or *Udayars* as they were called, used to observe penance inside this cave. The *Udayar* who was a saint was in the habit of praying inside the cave for days together at a stretch without coming out or partaking of food. At last, he informed his disciples that he had determined to take up his permanent abode inside the cave and commanded them to close the mouth of the cave. The dutiful disciples rolled down a huge stone to cover the mouth of the cave but the stone failed to serve the purpose. The *Udayar* did not again make his appearance outside the cave. Religious belief asserts that in places where such saints attain *Samadhi* (cast off their mortal coil) *Siva Linghams* (Stones consecrated as God Siva) occur. It may be that the figure which appears to occupy the interior of the cave is either a *Siva Lingham* or the body of the *Udayar* himself.

Another interesting sight is the balancing rock on the southern side. There, a huge-oval shaped black rock of ominous appearance, rests upon another equally huge rock maintaining a sort of precarious balance. When the gales blow, the balancing rock swings gently and this sight is awe inspiring. This place though fraught with danger affords ample scope for the experienced and daring rock climber to enjoy a bit of strenuous rock climbing. To the eastern side there is a huge black rock which resembles a big elephant in crouching posture. This rock in common parlance is called *Anappara* (Elephant rock). Tradition and legend aver that many many years ago an elephant which had set its foot on the particular spot (where the rock now stands) was all of a sudden transformed into a rock and there the unfortunate beast stands as stone even to this day!

The fresh, cool and dry air, the whispering breezes, the insectless nights, the picturesque natural scenery, these afford the tourist

unlimited joy and relaxation. The sun here is hot during days in the hot season, it is true, but the salubrious sea breeze renders the climate delightfully charming. In the mornings, evenings and particularly during the nights, Kovalam is cool and pleasant. Kovalam has one of the finest bathing beaches in the world.

There is perhaps nothing more enchanting to the nature lover than to gaze into the horizon when the sun is setting. To do so on a summer evening at the Kovalam beach is to witness an indescribable picture of beauty, majesty and charm. What wonderful colours for the artist's brush this bewitching scene conjures up? The luminous glories of colour that creep into the sky are simply enthralling. The glorious arch overhead, of a deeper blue than the sky ever was, is lavishly embellished with patches of sheeny clouds tinged with the deepest and softest hues of infinite variety. The clouds themselves are of all shapes changing every moment, both in form and decoration through the varied effects of light and shade. On all sides as far as the eye could reach is the blue ocean, the sheltering palms lining the coast, the luxuriant herbage and the sparkling white sands. The bright sun shows his broad and crimson disc through an aperture of the light clouds and the abundant glories which fall torrent in divergent pencil rays render the place lovely and romantic beyond description. The setting sun leaves behind a whirl of pink opal where the clouds jostle against each other. To the east the sky is topaz, lemon and turquoise while the sea assumes myriad tints and the palms are dark green. The glassy casements of the P. W. D. Camp Shed which stands silhouetted against a flaming sky blaze in the crimson light due to the magic of the vanishing Sun God. Birds chirp and dash fast to their nests. Fishing boats are launched into the ocean by the daring fisherfolk. All is quiet and mysteriously solemn. To sit on the Kovalam beach and watch this gorgeous natural phenomenon is to witness and enjoy one of the most colourful and thrilling sights of the earth. The sands themselves glitter and sparkle in the fading red light of the setting sun and there is a glorious shimmer on the surface of the rolling sea. The tiny lamps burning in the hovels of the fishermen give forth a reddish yellow light and add to the charm of the scene. To stand on the rocky cliff and see the fiery red ball of the setting sun leaving multi-coloured luminous streaks on the horizon as it sinks into the sea, is a thrilling sight, clothed with a halo of mystery. Look down into the boiling ocean. The waters of the turbulent sea dash into the grottos with tremendous fury shooting up powerful spray which mildly hits you on your face. "*The Perfection of the Beautiful*" unfolds itself to the gaze of the visitor at this lovely spot and he feels enraptured and transported to a paradise on earth.

Kovalam is an incomparably charming paradise for camping, picnic, hiking, sea bathing, angling, yachting, surf-riding, canoeing,

and recouping health and vigour. Come, see Nature's pranks and her splendour at Kovalam. The beach gleams. The pretty rocky cliff on one side of the Kovalam beach rises in delicate curves, imposing and lovely. Thirty and more feet above the visitor's head the feathery leaves of the cocoanut palms wave gracefully. They have no community of action, but blow this way and that at their pleasure only protesting unanimously if the breeze annoys them with full-volumed force. When the air is calm the palms converse with graceful gestures beckoning with suavest invitation. Warm breeze, gentle and invigorating, caresses the entire area. Colour and light enliven the landscape. Richly coloured and liquid sunshine characteristic of the tropics, render the landscape lovely and smart. The sun shines as if there was gay laughter in the blue eyes of heaven and squanders millions of diamonds on the blue-green waves that sing the elusive song of the deep-voiced waters. Here beauty is everywhere. Beauty lives in hill and dale, sea and river, nature and art, land and ocean, all joined together in the imperishability of the sublime. The eye and heart open themselves into beauty and absorb its fullest splendour in this beauty spot. Here is the fertile soil in which legend flourishes and beauty holds commanding sway. Its picturesque shore line and magnificent sea front, its smart and exhilarating surf always iridescent, its long beach of gleaming and immaculately clean sands, its bracing breezes, its bountiful sunshine, its sanatorium, all these splendid attractions of Kovalam invest the region with a superb charm. Life at Kovalam is essentially comfortable, homely, pleasant, active and re-creative, and what is more, life there is cheap.

On clear mornings and evenings when the sun shines, when the picturesque rocky cliff and the emerald green meadows close to the shore are clothed in majestic splendour, the tourist should hike along the contiguous coast and then will he behold a magnificent sight. Land and sea seem to merge into one another till he hardly knows where the earth ends and the waters begin. A riotous carnival of colours greets his vision. The horizon glitters. The rugged coast line is superb, imposing.

See Kovalam at dusk when the heat no longer reflects off the mounting sand, when the cool ozone-bearing night breeze is beginning to hiss across the palm-fringed shores with lovely sand dunes, when the tide booms against the shores throwing up spray and the sea takes an unearthly glow.

## The Hindu Dance.

By ANNABEL LEARNED

**T**HE very idea of dancing has in India a special splendor. The casual writer speaks of "dancing dust", another of the "dancing heat" that shimmers over the land. "The Supreme Intelligence dances in the soul", says the sacred book. Dawn is called a dancer adorning herself, and in the legends gods are seen dancing. From earliest times this has been to the Indian mind a natural image through which to feel the energy and wonder of creation. Thus Shiva, who embodies the vital forces of existence, is greeted as the Actor-Dancer:

*The movement of whose body is the world, whose speech the sum of all language,*

*Whose jewels are the moon and the stars--to that pure Shiva I bow!*

For Shiva sets forth through many aspects, benign or terrible, the dance of the universe and of life: creating, sustaining and destroying from age to age.

As the divine dance beats out the rhythm of existence, in turn the classic dance of India shows the activity of divine figures and epic heroes, or expounds an emotional theme. It is an error to think of this ancient and beautiful art as mere entertainment. Like the old miracle-players and the troubadours, dancers of India have been through centuries the voice of a culture and a spirit, whether in courts of kings or countless villages. Theirs is the telling of a tradition, the vision of inner forces, and the poetic evoking of life.

**Hindu Gesture.** It is an art closely related to the drama. Indeed one use of it is in the classical spoken drama, where it gives a gesture-portrayal of action and mood. This is the oldest dramatic tradition—combined dancing and acting. The dance proper, the classical *nritya* which we see, is itself a flowing pantomime in which "a story is told, or events alluded to, by means of formal gestures presented in a rhythmic sequence," accompanied by music or singing.

Here gesture has become a highly cultivated, explicit and eloquent language, in which meaning is conveyed by every movement of head or hands. In the *Mirror of Gesture*, translated by Dr. Coomaraswamy, the line of its development appears. Each "Hand" has its traditional name and origin, according to the suggestive position of the fingers. There are the peacock hand, the half-moon hand; the lotus, arrow, spire and swan-feather hands and many others. One comes "from

the Goddess of Speech when she bestowed a rosary<sup>24</sup>; another "from the desire of Shiva for ornaments, of which the moon is one".

**The Mudras.** Each has a multitude of meanings, depending on the way it is moved or held. These attitudes are called *mudras*. The "flag" hand, for instance, of itself is flat, with fingers held straight and close together, thumb along the side of the hand. With a stroke of the arm it indicates cutting; held straight up, a wall; under the bent head, sleep; with undulating horizontal movement, the sea. It may also mean; cloud, forbidden things, bosom, height, horses, wind, walking, graciousness, silence, etc.

While the *mudras* show exact meaning, emotion is chiefly expressed by head and eyes. In the delightful detail of the Sanskrit may be discerned a keen emphasis of the shades of expression. One reads of "Glances":

*Saci*: looking persistently out of the corner of the eye. Usage: secret purpose.

*Lajjita*: the upper lid dropped, the pupil also lowered bashfully, the lashes meeting; this glance is used modestly.

*Vira* (heroic): radiant, direct, open, rather majestic, self-controlled, the pupils at rest. Usage: the heroic.

A side-to-side swaying motion of the head is also characteristic of Indian dancing. Some of the traditional meanings are: beginning of affection, making trial, saying "well done!", recollection, badinage, sympathetic affection.

Of Hands, Glances, movements of the Head, and even Brows, the variations are endless. Whether in things, actions, or blended emotional sequences, the Indian dancer—like the poet with his gift of speech—has a world at his command, and composes not only in form and motion but in meanings.

**Background of Gesture-art.** To understand the naturalness and beauty of this art one must realise its age-old background in Indian life. Frescoes at Ajanta and elsewhere, Rajput painting, religious sculpture of every period, all record speaking attitudes of the most consummate grace. When a king renounces his throne, his perturbed general is depicted with facial distress, and also a very natural-looking *mudra* that means disturbance of mind.

There are gestures for inquiry, discussion, fright, reverence, greeting, and many other reactions and situations, all quite natural. The Buddha shows a teaching-*mudra* which, but for its exquisite formality, might be used by anyone in explaining a point.

**Many-armed Hindu Gods.** Hence also the many arms of Hindu holy figures, each indicating a spiritual idea—a poetic convention no more anatomically startling, after all, than angels' wings. In Shiva

sculpture especially, many gestures that flow into each other in the dance are caught in perpetual living attitudes. And still today, in ordinary life, two flag hands joined are the Hindu salutation (*pranam*).

Far from being a dusty language of archaic symbols, Hindu gesture is a vigorous idiom, derived from genuine impulses of expression to which it has given form and continuity.

**Dance Rhythms.** The movement of the dance also has its tradition from earliest times; 108 coordinations of gesture and feet are sculptured in small dancing figures on the walls of the ancient Shiva temple at Chidambaram. They are described in the *Natyasastra*, early writings, where they are related in larger units of movement and rhythm, of variety to astound the most versatile modern master of ballet. And here may be noted two very old modes of rhythm, or types of dance: the *tandava*, "violent," for big dramatic subjects of cosmic activity, and the *laysa*, lyric and sweeter in tone.

Hindu dancers are themselves perfect rhythmic instruments, employed in an integration of movement in which every nerve and muscle plays a harmonious part. Lesser motion subtly varies the larger: turn of the arm, change of balance, rhythm of the feet beautifully measured, broadened, withheld.

**Hindu Gods and Epic Heroes.** There is a saying, "What is not found in the *Mahabharata* is not to be found in India". Many dance themes have their source in this Indian epic, which is the longest poem in the world. Here are epic wars with their rolling sense of destiny; here is romance and exaltation. Myths of the gods. Miracles. Stories of life: moral teaching, love, heroism. A wealth of stirring imagery. Proverbs innumerable and in the midst of all, inspired philosophical discourse. The *Mahabharata* is not a poem, but a civilization. Interwoven with the tales of dynastic wars is the Dante-like unfolding of a spiritual ideal.

All great religions ascribe the flow of external life to an unaltering life-source, the Eternal: called by Hindus the Brahman. This divine Self, like the I AM of Christian and Jewish faith, is thought of as immanent in the universe and in the hearts of men. To the individual it is said, "The sheath and dwelling-place of Brahman art thou."

**The Trinity.** But of the phases of outward life Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva are old symbolic figures. They are the Hindu Trinity, embodying the great principles of existence: creation, preservation and dissolution—the dissolution that is ever a part of new creation, as a flower dies, giving birth to fruit.

These figures are not fixed and rigid, but rich with the mythological variations of thousands of years. Each has its legends, and

Vishnu and Shiva in particular have had their special sects and worship. For taken separately each became a name for all aspects of Deity, thus involving on occasion the deeper sense of the Brahman. In limited or in larger sense, however, all three are one; names or symbolic aspects of the same life-force.

There are many brilliant beings of ancient legend: shining Indra, king of the gods; warring Kartikeyya; the Gandhervas and Apsaras, heavenly musicians and dancers. But in the Trinity, especially Vishnu and Shiva, earliest nature myths have blended with thoughtful religion and philosophy in figures of great power.

*Shiva.* Shiva is shown dancing, for the universe is made of motion and flux. "Our Lord is the Dancer, who, like the heat latent in firewood, diffuses his power in mind and matter and makes them dance in their turn." In sculpture he carries fire because he is the destroyer, dissolution of form and creatures.

He is the life-process in its many phases, a glowing figure of the laws of the universe. Scenes and themes are associated with his dance. But all his dances, it is said take place also in the heart: deathly and terrible to burn it clear illusion; and after this the wondrous dance of deep insight.

Shiva is also the tireless ascetic and the great teacher. Legend tells many tales of him. When the heavenly Ganges descends to earth he offers his head to break the fall of her waters, and to curb her petulance keeps her wandering for years among the tangles of his hair—image derived perhaps from the forests of the Himalayas.

*Parvati.* Shiva's dual nature as creator is expressed in his consort, his "otherself," Parvati, who represents energy—also womanhood and devotion. For the masculine and feminine principles are not narrowly limited in Hindu thought. As the inseparable elements of form and energy they are present at the whirling birth of worlds, and in everything from the tiny cell to the star.

*Vishnu.* Vishnu is best known through his *avatars* or incarnations. It is an ancient Hindu belief that Deity comes to dwell from time to time in the midst of His creatures. Of these embodiments Rama, the great king, and Krishna are most famous—the former is hero of a separate epic, the *Ramayana*.

*Arjuna.* Arjuna, hero of the Bharata wars, is described at the tournament of kings as "clad in golden armour, like to a glorious evening cloud." His feats combine the warlike strength of an Achilles with the shooting skill of a Robin Hood. Indian epic warriors are masters of the bow; other weapons of long standing are the mace, discus, battle-axe and Indian club, as well as lance and sword. They ride to battle in chariots, and follow a code of honour as elaborate and scrupulous as that of King Arthur's knights.

*Krishna.* It is to Arjuna, the foredestined perfect warrior, that Krishna makes his revelation of divinity, much as Sir Galahad or Parsifal attain the Holy Grail.

This takes place in a tragic moment on the battle field in a passage, the *Bhagavad Gita*, often called the *New Testament* of India. Here amid grave ethical teaching Krishna expounds the nature of all-pervading Deity, of which he is the traditional incarnation.

"I am the source of all, from Me the universe comes forth; the Awakened, thinking thus, love Me, following after love.—I am the sweet scent in the earth, I am the glow in fire; life am I in all beings, and fervor in men of fervor.—I am all-consuming Death; I am the birth of things that shall be:—I am honour, grace, voice, among things feminine; and memory, wisdom, firmness, patience. Whatever being is gracious or powerful, thou shalt recognize that as sprung from a fragment of my fire."

As a youth Krishna is the great Hindu figure of love, living among simple cowherds on the banks of the Jumna. His flute calls to the soul, and in the legend the milkmaids of Brindaban, symbols of mankind, abandon everything to be drawn into the circle of his dance. In Rajput painting this traditional dance theme frequently recurs. In sculpture also Krishna is shown in symbolic posture with ankles crossed, and holding a flute.

The dance is not only an art, therefore, but the passion play of India, full of the spirit of insight. Hindus, cultivated or simple, know the epics almost by heart, for the humblest peasant hears them read aloud by village readers. They form an education irrespective of book-learning, in the range and pith of human experience. Dance and drama, reflecting their familiar figures, bring home intuitions of life at once significant of their audience, whatever the level of presentation. Interspersed with epic subjects of the dance are erotic themes, kin to the embroidered love-songs of the troubadours.

In India the arts have always been valued for their spiritual significance, and supported as a matter of ancient social, indeed, sacred duty: dance, drama, poetry and music being made popularly available at festivals and other occasions, as well as the object of cultivated gatherings. With the impact of commercial civilization the dance, as other arts, suffered greatly. The fine old *nautch* became a synonym, especially in cities, for disreputable amusement. It is now rapidly recovering its high function, one in which kings and queens have excelled. This was never frivolous, and meant much more than physical grace. Requirements for a dancer traditionally include knowledge of the classics and of other arts, wit, good birth, and virtues of mind as well as body.

**The Hindu idea of art:** Art to the Hindu, whether dance, drama, music or any other, is based on the idea of a quality and its realization. In fact, the necessary quality is the realization. *Rasa*, or "flavour", which all high art must have, means exactly that concentrated essence of artistic experience which makes it significant not to the mind alone, but to the inner spirit.

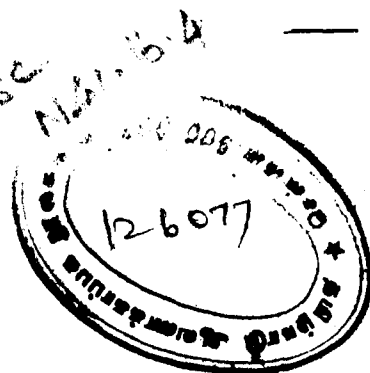
One might call it mood, yet it is something more. In *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, one feels keenly the passing lyric moment, or fear of disaster. But the *rasa* or "flavor" is the whole deepened sense of young tragic love in which the on-looker becomes suspended and which he carries away.

And these Hindu dances are rhythmic dramas, as it were, of the flavor of experience, kindled to heroic proportions in a divine figure or poetic mood. Many such flavors we feel fleetingly within ourselves, but in daily life they are lost, dispersed and distracted. In great art the pure experience is given back to us.

The word *rasa* is often used for those specific veins of emotion in which the human spirit moves, and finds realization. Dramatic theorists have analysed them as anywhere from four to ten, and their derivatives. The usual nine are those we see danced by Shiva and Parvathi in competition. They may be delicately blended, and need not be over serious. But the portrayal must be universalized, not an experience or fancy of performers. The performer merely serves as vehicle for all the race feels in that experience. *Rasa* is that final awareness, within mood, in which the centre of one's being is touched. This indeed is flavor to the soul, a drinking at deep springs where taste and freshness are.

**Art is Impersonal:** Therefore art to the Hindu is selfless, impersonal, detached. The artist submerges himself in order to evoke something of universal quality, unmarred by his own peculiar traits. Correspondingly, its true enjoyment is not chiefly connoisseurship, and not at all an aroused emotion; but "timeless delight", said to be akin to the bliss of Brahman.

—Inner Culture.



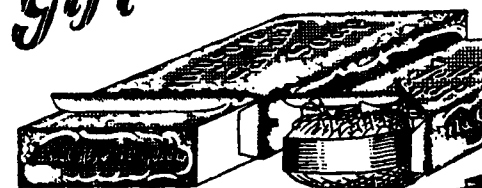
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