THE HINDU OUTLOOK ON LIFE

By Stanley P. Rice, I.C.S. (retd.)

An Indian calling upon the Collector of a district was asked to take a cup of tea. His answer was, "I have no objection whatever on the score of caste, but I am afraid I should offend in the manner of taking it." Of course the objection was at once overruled, and of course the tea was taken without the slightest offence to European ideas of decorum. But this shyness, though it may not be the most important factor, at least contributes towards the difficulty of establishing social relations between the two races. It is not necessary to dwell once more on the oft-repeated theme of the difference in manners and customs, of caste restrictions, and of sex relations. These things, no doubt, play a large part in the difficulty of bringing the two races into closer social intercourse, but the awkwardness which besets everyone who is brought into intimate relations with a man of another race never quite disappears. With the best will in the world and with the most genuine desire of both races to approach one another, this feeling of constraint almost always stands in the way of that camaraderie which Englishmen show to one another. Moreover, the Indian especially admires a dignified reserve, and the light badinage which is meant for affability is often mistaken for mere impertinence and sometimes for studied insult. An Indian gentleman told the writer in the course of conversation that he thought a lack of a sense of humour on the part of his countrymen was largely responsible for what estrangement there might be between the two races.

For these reasons the Englishman—and especially the English official—who attempts to analyze the outlook of the Hindus is met by the initial disability that he is only permitted so see a small part of the more intimate Indian

life. Even when caste restrictions do not forbid entrance to a house, and even when the ladies do not shut themselves up, there remains always an exaggerated politeness, an air of formality, which stands in the way of an inner knowledge of, and therefore to some extent of sympathy with, the Indian point of view. Within these limitations, however, it is still possible to examine in some detail the Hindu outlook on life, which, as we are constantly told, differs so much from what we find in the West.

The first and most obvious factor in Hindu life is religion. This is indeed a commonplace; for if there be one thing that has struck every writer on India, it is the way in which religion seems to permeate every action and to govern every hour of the day. We are amazed at the minute attention to ritual observance which accompanies even such daily necessities as washing, eating, and dressing. The ancient dramas tell of gods and heroes; the songs are largely of the kind we call sacred; and the whole mental attitude of the thinking people is influenced by religious philosophy. Many—perhaps most of us—are too apt to look upon the religion of the Hindu as a succession of ceremonial rites. To such it seems that, like the Pharisees of old, "they fast twice in the week," "they make broad their phylacteries," and they bring into daily observance every letter of the law while ignoring its spirit. It seems to them, in fact, to be a religion hardly bound up with doctrine and almost divorced from ethics. But this is a superficial and unsympathetic view. It not only ascribes to the whole Hindu population an attitude which at most only applies—if it applies at all—to a single class, but it also sees the complete religion in the outward manifestations which strike the eye. One has but to apply the test to England and to ask what impression the religion of the country would make on a foreigner ignorant of Europe and of Christianity. "Religion," he would say, judging from outward observance only, "enters very little into the life of these people. They go to church once on Sunday, as well as on a few feast

days in the year. They also have religious ceremonies connected with birth and marriage and death, but beyond this I cannot discover that they have any religion." If such a view of Christianity is preposterous, we ought at least to hesitate before we assume the Hinduism of to-day to be nothing but an artificial observance of innumerable ceremonies.

Nevertheless, as far as the limited knowledge of an Englishman goes, there seem to be two radical defects in the Hindu system. A punctilious attention to ritual down to minute details is apt to obscure the most important part of every religion. In carrying out the details of the law, the Hindu is in danger of finding that, as an able writer says, "these ritual and ceremonial observances . . . sterilize any higher spiritual life."* It may be objected that these observances are connected with caste, and that caste is essentially a social and not a religious institution; for, as the word denotes, the central aim of "caste," or, as the Indians call it, "varna" (colour), is purity of stock. But caste is now so closely bound up with religion that it is not easy to differentiate betwen them, and the orthodox Hindu is—outwardly, at any rate—the man who rigidly observes not only the ritual of his creed, but also the customs of his caste. The writer once asked an intelligent Brahmin why, if the religion takes so little account of the body, and if all material things are really only Maya, or illusion, there should be so much fuss about eating and drinking. The answer might have been that this was a misconception of caste, which is not religious, but social, and that intercommunion with others would gradually tend to impurity of stock. But what the Brahmin actually said was this: "The soul is the inhabitant of the body; therefore, what nourishes the body nourishes also the soul, and since the soul must be kept free from contamination, it is necessary to keep strict watch against the contamination of the body, which would lead to the defilement

* Sir V. Chirol, "Indian Unrest."

of the soul." The answer may not satisfy the purely practical mind, but it is conceived in characteristically Hindu terms, and it serves to show how caste is interwoven with religious ideas in the Hindu mind.

But if we protest against the exaggeration of ritual ceremony we must avoid falling into extremes. For the incidents of daily routine serve to keep the spiritual life prominently before the eyes of the Hindu; as a Christian writer has pointed out, Protestantism is inclined to "depreciate forms and ceremonies, the use and value of rites and sacraments," which are "neither dead forms nor illogical accretions upon a religion otherwise spiritual." The marriage of a daughter is not a mere matter of worldly advantage or convenience; it is a religious obligation. The birth of a son is a cause of rejoicing as the fulfilment of a religious necessity, and the failure to produce an heir is little short of a calamity.

Secondly, one is tempted to notice a great dearth of spiritual teaching. The temple priest is busy with the orthodox performance of rites and ceremonies, and too often he fails to be "an ensample of godly life." The dancing girl, a name now synonymous with one of less innocent import, is often the common property of all men, and it cannot be denied that the practice has left an impression of immorality which reacts upon the whole view of religion. The guru, or spiritual adviser, who commands great respect, especially from the women, is not unfrequently an ignorant man, learned only in Sanskrit formulas which he cannot interpret, and conversant only with the minute observances of ritual which he endeavours to enforce. He speaks not as "one having authority," but "as one of the Scribes." Consequently, when the aforesaid Brahmin was pressed in argument, he said, "We do these things because our guru tells us to do them," and he then had to admit that the guru himself did not know the reason why. It has been said that our Western doctrine of religious neutrality has been pushed too far, that our educational system ignores

religion too completely, and that in a country where religion is the dominant factor we ought to provide religious instruction. Such a view may or may not be correct in the present conditions of India, but surely if the Hindu gurus really knew their business and were really the spiritual pastors and masters which they profess to be, the secularization of State schools would be a matter of smaller importance.

It will be observed that the main defect above alleged is the failure on the part of the professed spiritual advisers to inculcate any definite system of ethics. The material is ready to hand, for the sacred books of the Hindus contain many ideas as lofty as those of the Christian Scriptures, and there is many a man who treasures these sacred sayings, repeats them, and lives by them as a true Christian may be said to try to live by the Gospel. The Bhagavat Gita, for instance, teaches man to—

> "Find full reward
> Of doing right in right! Let right deeds be
> The motive, not the fruit which comes of them."

And again, speaking of the dignity of labour:

> "He who with strong body serving mind
> Gives up his mortal powers to worthy work,
> Not seeking gain. . . . Such an one
> Is honourable. Do thine allotted task!
> Work is more excellent than idleness;
> The body's life proceeds not, lacking work."

But while these sentiments are familiar to the few, they are for the most part unknown to the mass of the common folk. To them religion means little beyond the annual round of rites, ceremonies, and festivals. Are the boons they ask of the gods the "pure heart" or the "right judgment," and not rather a son, plenteous crops, or increase of cattle? They have, no doubt, an instinctive ethical code of their own which tells them it is wrong to steal, to murder, or to commit adultery; nor can we condemn them out of hand if they do not place on certain virtues the value at which we appraise them, for, as Lecky tells us, different races and different ages have held different ideas about the

relative values of the virtues. But such an ethical code can hardly be identified with religion; it is instinctive or traditional.

If this state of things appears rather chaotic, the doctrine of Karma comes to the rescue. It is often said that while Christianity is individualistic, the Hindu religion destroys individuality; and this statement seems to be inspired by the doctrine of the Immanence of the Deity and of the ultimate absorption of the individual into the Divine Essence. But in one respect at least the Hindu religion is as individualistic as the Christian. If, on the one hand, we are told that—

> "All's then God!
> The sacrifice is Brahm, the ghee and grain
> Are Brahm, the fire is Brahm, the flesh it eats
> Is Brahm, and unto Brahm attaineth he
> Who in such office meditates on Brahm";

we are also told that—

> "When one,
> Abandoning desires which shake the mind,
> Finds in his soul full comfort for his soul,
> He hath attained the Yog."
>
> "Such an one
> Is Muni, is the Sage, the true Recluse."

And the doctrine of Karma deals with the individual. It is both prospective and retrospective; in the present life a man is atoning for past sins; the very fact that he exists as a man is both the witness to, and the measure of, his imperfections in a past state; while his actions in his present incarnation will determine his future fate; for a good Sudra may pass into a higher period of probation as a Brahmin, while a wicked Brahmin may have to inhabit the body of some lower animal. This is a doctrine which is very generally held and is essentially religious. It is, in fact, analogous to, and perhaps, in that it provides a more graduated scale, better conceived than, the Christian doctrine of future rewards and punishment. It has its value, though the conception may not be ethically as lofty as that which teaches us, "because right is right, to follow right."

While, therefore, it would be wrong to say that the Hindu religion consists entirely of rites and ceremonies, it is generally of these that we are thinking, and not of the esoteric ideas, when we say that religion is the dominant factor of Hindu life. A kind of religious sanction is conferred upon the most trivial incidents of everyday life; even the railway engine on a new line becomes deified, at least for the time being, and receives its due share of offerings. A wedding is fixed, not to suit the convenience of the parties, but in accordance with astrological advice; a husband must be chosen for a marriageable girl within a given period under pain of divine displeasure, and these things cannot be subordinated to mere social or material necessities; it is the latter which must give way. The necessity for a religious sanction was very clearly seen during the time of the "Unrest"; for whether the authors of the more violent pamphlets fell naturally into that mode of thought, or whether they adopted religious imagery to catch the popular ear, the favourite picture of India was that of the Divine Mother bound, bleeding, and tortured by foreign demons, and calling on her sons to rescue her in the name of religion. This is probably also the explanation of the misuse of the Christian Scriptures in 1906, when, "shamelessly appealing to the language of Christ," it justified the enlistment of boys and young men in the service of a lawless propaganda by the words "Suffer little children to come unto Me."*

This dominance of ceremonial religion is calculated to hamper the process, and thereby to narrow the conception of material prosperity. Western civilization is sometimes described as a mere scrambling for money, a desire to get rich at all costs and at any sacrifice of higher things. But this is mere special pleading. The Indian is just as anxious for wealth as the European, and if he is not so rich, the difference is not to be found so much in an abstract contempt for wealth as in other causes. When important

* Chirol, "Indian Unrest," p. 353.

business has to be neglected owing to the astrological calculations for a wedding which lasts five days, to funeral rites which last twelve days, or to a pilgrimage which may run into months, it is clear that business methods must suffer. If caste restrictions forbid free intercourse with other nations, and hence a knowledge of the world in the literal sense, it is evident that the commercial horizon must be narrowed. Moreover, caste laws and traditions very often contract the field of possible enterprise, so that the Brahmin is limited to the learned professions, the Vaisya follows the caste profession of commerce, the Sudra takes up the ancestral occupation of agriculture, of carpentry, or of weaving. The Government, no doubt, does its best to encourage all castes, and the lower ranks of the different departments—the policemen, the sepoys, the forest guards—are freely recruited from the Sudra ranks. But even in Government service the influence of caste is very apparent; the Brahmins hold the majority of clerical appointments, while the Sudras largely fill the ranks of the medical profession, not certainly because of any special aptitude they have for medicine, but because the laws of pollution restrain the Brahmin from dissecting dead bodies, from dressing or touching the pariah.

The state of commercial morality shows clearly enough that it is the ceremonial rather than the ethical side of religion which enters into daily life. Of course, notions of right and wrong may differ, but honesty between man and man, with the confidence which is bred of it, is one of those cardinal points which no system of ethics ignores, and it must unfortunately be admitted that commercial morality is not all it should be. It is seldom that we see business conducted on the grand scale to which we are accustomed in Europe; is not the most that is usually found a family combination of father and son or brothers, all looking more or less suspiciously at the clerk or the accountant?

Lack of organizing power is also to blame. India is full of contradictions, and while we find constant suspicion in large

enterprises existing side by side with the most childlike confidence in the matter of petty loans or of small transactions, so also we see that the want of that co-operation which is customary in such village affairs as the sharing of water is one of the great obstacles to trade on the grand scale. Indian companies on the European model are in consequence as yet comparatively rare, for India is unused to such organization, and her expectations are cast in a less ambitious mould. She thinks in silver where Europe thinks in gold, in hundreds instead of millions. Consequently, her ideas of material prosperity are far less magnificent, just as her needs are fewer; a rich man in India is a person of very ordinary means according to European notions.

But wealth itself is only a means to an end. We have seen that within the limits which circumstances prescribe to the ambitious the Indian is just as anxious to grow rich as the European, but his object is different. One may say that in England, setting aside the question of charities, the two main objects of the man of average means are to live in comfort and to leave a provision for those dependent on him. If his income expands, he will move into a larger house, keep more servants, and generally allow himself the luxuries which he has hitherto not been able to afford, always provided that his expenses do not seriously imperil the future of the family. The object of the Hindu is rather dignity than comfort. The peculiar constitution of Indian society, whereby the care of dependents devolves even upon relatives comparatively remote in degree, ensures a protection against that destitution which is a feature of so many sad cases in England. The acquisition of wealth means the increase of power and the extension of patronage. The rich man, especially in rural parts, is the king of the village; his word is law, his commands are instantly obeyed, and everyone is more afraid of him than of the more remote and less arbitrary official ruler.

There is something in this conception of the value of wealth which suggests a theoretical rather than a practical

view of life—a view probably arising from the nature of the religious dogmas of Hinduism and emphasized by the omnipresence of the religious sanction. We have seen that the religion which pervades everyday life is in its most obvious manifestations a religion of ritual and ceremonies. But even then these terms must be carefully distinguished, for evidently the thing to be done is not the same as the way of doing it. The punctilious attention to ritual need not influence practical everyday life, except in so far as it is given an exaggerated importance to the extent of interference with the business of the day. But the meaning of, and the imperious need for, the ceremonies themselves take us back to the philosophy of Hinduism, and this is abstract and metaphysical in the extreme.

No man can escape entirely from the religious environment in which he has been brought up. However little an Englishman may accept Christianity, however crude may be his conception of Christian dogma, he is still a member of a Christian nation, and must be influenced—perhaps unconsciously—by the force which has played so great a part in the fashioning of Europe as we know it. And in like manner the Hindu partakes of the mysticism, of the contemplative abstractions of his religion, which issue rather in thought than in action. His ideal is to take alike :

> "Pleasure and pain; heat, cold; glory and shame";

to be—

> "Of equal grace to comrades, friends,
> Chance-comers, strangers, lovers or enemies,
> Aliens and kinsmen; loving all alike,
> Evil or good."

And such an attitude of mind is only to be obtained by seclusion from the world, its passions and its vanities :

> "Sequestered should he sit,
> Steadfastly meditating; solitary,
> His thoughts controlled, his passions laid away,
> Quit of belongings."
>
> "Setting hard his mind,
> Restraining heart and senses, silent, calm,
> Let him accomplish Yoga and achieve

Pureness of soul, holding immovable
Body and neck and head, his gaze absorbed
Upon the nose, and, rapt from all around,
* * * * *
Musing on Me, lost in the thought of Me."

Such passages as these—and they are typical of the constant teaching that the highest goal is a concentrated meditation on the Divine Essence, the universal self—lead directly to the doctrine of Maya, which affirms that all material things are an illusion of the senses, and therefore to an unpractical habit of thought. Professor Wegener, of Berlin, who travelled to India with H.I.H. the Crown Prince of Germany, even declares that the former Indian apathy in politics and affairs of administration is due to this doctrine among other causes. Convinced of the unreality of mundane things, the Hindu "smiles at those who trouble themselves with such trifles, and leaves the whole business to them." Sir Valentine Chirol refers to the doctrine in more cautious terms when he says, "The whole world in which he lives and moves and has his being, in so far as it is not a mere illusion of the senses, is for him an emanation of the omnipresent Deity." * It is, however, very doubtful if any such definite influence can be ascribed to this doctrine. In its extreme form it is a practical absurdity; for if pain and wealth and food are really only shadows affecting shadows, why do they possess the importance they certainly have? Why do the Hindus cry out for autonomy with a vehemence that has at times extended to the shedding of blood if politics and government are trifles to be dismissed with a contemptuous smile? Surely the orthodox Hindu who acted upon the doctrine of Maya would be only too glad to get someone else to do the dirty work of this shadowy world, while he was left free to contemplate "the things that are more excellent." The plain fact is that to the average Hindu, as to the average man everywhere, food is food and a flower is a flower, though it may please subtle theologians to draw distinctions between

* "Indian Unrest," p. 240.

the essential divinity in them and the shadowy husk which is apparent to the senses. It is true that Hinduism teaches men to strive after an ideal indifference to pleasure or pain, heat or cold, poverty or wealth ; but we are talking of things as they are, not as they ought to be. To the practical man of affairs the doctrine of Maya need mean no more than the old familiar teaching that, compared with the spiritual and eternal, the earthly and temporal are of small importance. How far this doctrine is a reality in the affairs of everyday life depends in India, as in Europe, on the temperament of the individual.

The life of every man is governed, according to Hindu ideas, by the three "qualities" called Sattuvam, Rajas, and Tamas. Sattuvam may roughly be defined as equanimity, coupled with a sense of proportion. The highest ideal is contemplation of the truth as manifested in the Deity, and compared with this all else is of little or no account. But this ideal can only be reached after a life of discipline, which consists of the exercise of virtue for its own sake, purified from any thought of the consequences and untainted by any motives of gain or pleasure or desire. Rajas is an intermediate state in which actions good in themselves are tainted by human passions, and the character is flawed by lapses into wrong ways. Tamas is ignorance and darkness from which only evil can issue. No man is debarred from the highest or condemned to the lowest state ; virtue and vice are not the exclusive property of any caste. This conception explains many things. It explains why the Brahmin caste claim so great a superiority ; for, as knowledge leads to enlightenment, the "learned" caste is evidently in a position favourable to the attainment of Sattuvam. It explains why in some cases pariahs have been canonized ; for Sattuvam is open even to the lowest. It even explains to some extent the reluctance of Brahmins to enter into any but the learned professions ; for trade and commerce are too much occupied with the things of the world, and leave no time for the contemplation of divinity.

It might be thought that "to govern India according to

Indian ideas" would connote the almost exclusive employment of Brahmins, since it has been shown that by far the largest share of the "quality" of Sattuvam should naturally fall to them. But the three "qualities" shade off into one another, and the best that can be hoped of the great majority of men is a high state of "Rajas"; for there are few men who have so mastered themselves and their lower nature that the ordinary passions of humanity have become quite extinct. And since any man may attain to the highest state, the Government of India is free to choose, even in terms of Hindu thought, those who most nearly approach to the highest state, irrespective of their caste.

Whether the abstractions of religious philosophy are the outcome of the original character of the people or themselves moulded it, it seems highly probable that they do influence the modern intellectual attitude. The doctrine of Maya is, no doubt, the logical conclusion of a philosophy which attempts to treat the world as non-existent, but we have seen that no one acts consciously and definitely upon such a doctrine. Nevertheless, a people taught to fashion its conduct upon such abstract lines is apt to carry this mode of thought into worldly affairs, and so the Hindu often betrays a somewhat unpractical attitude in dealing with them. But this lack of initiative, this want of constructive power, is just what we should expect from a mental attitude of which the religious philosophy is the type, and probably to a great extent the cause. This shows itself constantly. Someone states a proposition in general terms; the idea is enthusiastically received; everyone talks and writes about it; perhaps even the machinery to carry it out is invented, and then the whole thing fails for want of ability to grasp the details. Everyone, for instance, both English and Indian, fully sympathized with Mr. Gokhale's ideal that all the youth of India should be educated, if need be compulsorily. Nobody denies that education is in itself an excellent thing, but very few Indians faced the difficulties or suggested any remedy for the two main obstacles—the want of money and the dearth

of teachers. The principle was enough; the details would right themselves.

But no notice of Hindu life would be complete without a reference to its æsthetic side. For there is no people in the world in whom the love of art is so deeply ingrained and so universal as the Hindus. In England the established poet obtains reverence and respect, but the man who is striving for self-expression in verse is too often the object for cheap jokes and unsympathetic laughter. The lover of music who desires only the highest forms is looked upon askance as somewhat of a crank, not perhaps always without resentment that he should be arrogating to himself a certain superiority, while the registers of our libraries show that the popular appetite is for fiction, often of a very uninspired kind. The Hindu is artistic to his finger-tips. The very villager has his music parties and his recitations of the epics. Poetry and the drama are closely interwoven with music, and the music of India, whatever its appeal may be to us, is to the Hindu as the very voice from heaven—the creation of the Supreme Being, the delight of the celestial throng, and the special nursling of India's favourite god. This love of art has, perhaps, some influence in retarding trade expansion among the Hindus. His productions were the fine muslins and the shimmering silks, the gold and ivory carved with loving hands, the woodwork fashioned with careful attention to minute detail. Trade to him was a thing of beauty; he read it in the phrases of romance and poetry, and finds now some difficulty in learning that it is more often written in the language of very dull prose. We see this æsthetic attitude even in everyday life—in the dress of men as well as of women, in the carven doorways of some poor village house, in the decoration of a loved musical instrument. Where India has copied from the West she has not usually been successful; that is because she has not been able fully to appreciate Western standards of æsthetic taste; where she has followed her own line of thought she is unsurpassed. And if there be any who dispute this conclusion, let him

commune with himself and ask whether his judgment is not warped partly by appraising India by her imitation of the West, and partly by his own inability to understand Indian æsthetic canons. For if you examine closely the Hindu claim to the spiritual life, you will find that its content is made up largely of religion and æsthetics.

It cannot be said that these broad outlines present a faithful picture of the life of the masses—of that great majority which lives in the villages and subsists wholly by agriculture. For them life means, first of all, a continuous struggle for existence—a long battle against adverse seasons, ruinous pests, and other dire calamities. The mystical side of religion touches them no more than learned discussions on the nature of the Atonement touch the Christian millions of East London; nor are they called upon to decide questions of large import, which demand the practical mind. Their horizon is the limits of the next village; their most serious politics a dispute about water or an epidemic of cholera. Not that religion is without its influence; on the contrary, it is nowhere more apparent than in the villages, but it is no longer a religion of mysticism or ethics, of philosophy or sacraments. It is almost wholly a religion of mythology and superstition. It is true that such generalizations are apt to be misleading. A wedding or a funeral is as important a ceremony to the rustic as to the educated Brahmin; and if the rustic does not understand the ritual, neither can the Brahmin explain the esoteric meaning of the service which unites a man with a maid. But to the villager a wedding is rather a festival than a sacrament, and in this, as in other ceremonies, he considers only the superficial accompaniment.

On general lines, then, the Hindu conduct of life does not differ greatly from that of Europe. The first care of every living thing is simply to live; and every civilized man desires to live uprightly and to maintain himself in ease, comfort, and dignity according to his enlightenment and opportunity, having due regard to the claims of this world and to his expectations of another. And yet we are

told, quite justly, that the civilizations of East and West are essentially different. Wherein lies this difference, and what is the cause of it? A people of great intellectual power, extraordinarily adaptable, and infinitely patient, has not, until recently, made any notable contribution to science, to research, or to invention. The activity of Europe finds no time for meditation; the meditation of India finds no time for activity. Climate, tradition, history, and especially the want of a national life, have no doubt had a great influence on the Indian character—an influence which must never be underrated; and if these things have not been considered, it is because the first three are too obvious and the last too complex for discussion in this paper. But it is not enough to refer the whole difference to these causes. Religion is undoubtedly the great motive power in India, and in the term "religion" is included the caste system. But if it is wrong to ascribe any single phenomenon to a definite religious dogma, it is also unsatisfying to be told that "religion" (by which is generally meant the outward observances of rites and ceremonies) permeates the whole life of the Hindu, or to read prose pictures of "men, almost naked, standing in the Ganges to salute the sun . . . feeling after God, if haply they may find Him."* It is true that the pure philosophy of the Hindu religion has been overlaid with much mythological extravagance, which appeals to the grosser minds, but to confuse the two is as unfair as to give the story of Noah the same religious value as the Sermon on the Mount. Every educated Hindu, whatever be his opinion of the mythology, reveres his sacred books, and is willing to discuss their philosophy with eagerness and courtesy.

For the motive power of the Hindu religion is neither its mythology nor its idolatry, but its philosophy. No man can truly sympathize with the Indian, no man, in Lord Morley's phrase, can "get into his skin" until he recognizes that. And yet the mystery is only half revealed; for, let the Englishman be never so sympathetic, let him put off to

* *Contemporary Review*, May, 1915, p. 635.

the utmost those airs of "superiority" and arrogance of which he is accused, there will always be an inner sanctuary where the deeper life of the Hindu is hidden behind the veil.

DISCUSSION ON THE FOREGOING PAPER

A MEETING of the Association was held at the Caxton Hall, Westminster, on Monday, December 4, 1922, when a paper was read by Stanley P. Rice, Esq., I.C.S. (retd.), entitled, "The Hindu Outlook on Life." The Rt. Hon. Viscount Peel, G.B.E. (Secretary of State for India), was in the chair, and the following ladies and gentlemen, among others, were present; The Right Hon. Lord Pentland, G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E., and Lady Pentland, General Sir Edmund Barrow, G.C.B., G.C.S.I., and Lady Barrow, Sir Charles Stuart Bayley, G.C.I.E., K.C.S.I., Sir John G. Cumming, K.C.I.E., C.S.I., Sir Patrick Fagan, K.C.I.E., C.S.I., Sir Mancherjee M. Bhownaggree, K.C.I.E., Lieut.-Colonel A. D. Bannerman, C.I.E., M.V.O., Sir Duncan J. Macpherson, C.I.E., Sir William Ovens Clark, Sir Herbert Holmwood, Mr. A. Porteous, C.I.E., Mr. F. H. Brown, C.I.E., Mr. N. C. Sen, O.B.E., General F. C. Carter, C.B., Mr. F. C. Channing, I.C.S. (retd.), Mr. K. N. Sitaram, Lieut.-Colonel F. S. Terry, Mr. M. N. Ali, Mr. S. C. Gupta, Lieut.-Colonel T. S. B. Williams, Lady Beauclerk, Baroness Steinheir-Sclier, Mrs. Anderson, Mrs. A. M. T. Jackson, Miss Scatcherd, Mrs. McClement, Miss Corner, Mrs. J. R. Reid, Mrs. Arnell, Miss Marx, Miss Pratt, Miss Turner, Mrs. Drury, Mr. Bhupendra Nath Basu, Mr. A. Pullar, Mr. H. S. L. Polak, Mrs. Fox-Strangways, Mr. Edwards, Mr. F. J. P. Richter, Mr. Arnold Lupton, Mrs. White, Miss Shedden, Mr. F. Grubb, Mr. S. B. Mitra, Mrs. Martley, Miss Baudains, Mr. C. L. Simpson, Colonel Lowry, Professor Bickerton, Miss Peel, Miss Trotter, Mr. P. Padmanabha Pillai, Mr. and Mrs. Q. Henriques, Mr. Robert Mann, Colonel L. C. Swifte, Mr. and Mrs. E. F. Allum, Mr. G. M. Ryan, Lieut.-Commander H. O. Boger, R.N., Mr. S. K. Dutt, Mr. Herbert Gibbon, Mr. Ram Hari Bhagat, Miss L. M. Gibb, Mr. J. Sladen, I.C.S. (retd.), Mrs. Herbert G. W. Herron, Capt. H. W. Whittaker, Mr. S. D. Pears, Mr. G. F. Sheppard, I.C.S. (retd.), Mr. and Mrs. W. F. Westbrook, Capt. Rollestone, Mrs. Faridoonji.

The CHAIRMAN: Ladies and Gentlemen,—I regret to say that after I have introduced the Lecturer I shall have to leave, and therefore I shall be unable, as I had wished, to give my views on the points raised in his paper. We are met here to-night to listen to and discuss a lecture given by Mr. Stanley Rice on the "Hindu Outlook on Life." There are very few people whom I can think of who are more competent than Mr. Stanley Rice—I am speaking of my own countrymen—to discuss the points of view of the

Hindus. Mr. Stanley Rice, I believe, during the whole of his career in India was engaged in work in the districts. He was not caught up into some of those high places in the North of India where there is less opportunity, perhaps, for being in close touch with the views of the peasant or the cultivator than if one spends one's life in district work. There is another great strength that is possessed by Mr. Rice, and that is that he spent most of his time in Madras. Hinduism has had what I may call an almost uninterrupted development in that province, for, shall we say, 3,000 years, which is a period of time long enough to satisfy most of us in these shorter-lived political communities. In the North, as you know, Hinduism had to fight for its life against other religions and alien rules, and therefore it has not had in the North, as it has had in the Madras Province, an uninterrupted development for its social arrangements and its religious tenets. On two grounds, therefore, I strongly recommend the views of Mr. Stanley Rice to you. On these two grounds I think he is particularly qualified to be an interpreter to his own countrymen of the views and of the outlook of the Hindu towards life and his general view of life. I understand that Lord Pentland will be good enough to take my place in the chair, and nobody could be better qualified to preside. (Applause.)

The Rt. Hon. Lord PENTLAND in the chair, the Lecturer then read his paper, entitled "The Hindu Outlook on Life."

Mr. BHUPENDRA NATH BASU said it was difficult for anyone but a native-born Hindu to realize what was the Hindu outlook on life. He was not surprised that even the Lecturer, who had spent a large portion of his life in India, had not succeeded in catching the spirit of the Hindus in regard to life. He had stated that their life was a round of ritual and ceremonies. Ritual and ceremonies held a very important place in the life of the Hindu, but the ritual and ceremonies conveyed a very different impression to the Hindu to what they did to the outsider. With all the ritual and ceremony were connected customs which prevailed in the past ages, and therefore handed down the stories and customs of the past. He knew very little of how Hinduism was practised in the South, but in his part of the country there were various agencies by which the doctrines of Hinduism were taught. There were expositions in the public temples or at the houses of fairly wealthy men to which the whole country-side was invited. On one occasion, travelling on a P. and O. boat from Colombo to Calcutta, he met a missionary who had been attracted by his reading the Bible every morning. The missionary gentleman asked him why he did this, and he replied that among the Hindus there was no conflict of faith, and he offered to take him to one of the expositions at which the people received their moral instruction. In Calcutta, where he lived, there was an open space where men well versed in the scriptures and who were well qualified to illustrate the scriptures to the common people gave

expositions. When he took the missionary to the exposition there were 2,000 to 3,000 people seated on the ground. When the missionary heard the exposition, and when he heard the Brahmin dwelling upon the great force of virtue, and when he saw men and women deeply stirred, he had realized how the Hindu assimilated the teachings of the past. All of them who were familiar with the Bible knew of Christ's method of teaching through parables, which were the stories of lives of men and women in common villages. The Hindu also did the same. It might seem strange that one who had received Western education should still follow the ritual and ceremonies of his ancestors which had been handed down to him from time immemorial, but there was in Hinduism, he believed, a provision which did not exist in any other faith, either Christian or Muslim. A Hindu might be a worshipper of the sun, but they were all Hindus. The Hindu went by stages. He could not, perhaps, at once go to the religion which teaches of one invisible God, but in time he would do so. Just as Western people believed in the conservation of energy until it was utterly dissipated, so the Hindus believed that if a man had done a good act he would reap the benefits of it, and if he had done a bad act he had to bear the consequences. One would see in the evening in a village, perhaps, a grocer reading to an audience and expounding to them some stories, and one would see the ordinary people standing round trying to understand him. He once had heard a peasant say that they were like bullocks tied to a pole going round and round working a mill which produces the oil; the bullock did not know why he went round, and in the same way they did not know why they moved round; they did not know for whom they manufactured the oil, but they did it all the same. That was the Hindu state of mind, but it was a mistake to say that the Hindu's attitude of mind was unpractical. In Hindu life they had two elements, contemplation and action. He realized that he was addressing a Christian audience. A Christian might be an ascetic who had given up the world, but the Hindu must discharge his duty to his ancestors: he must bring up his family; he must do his duty to his country and his neighbours, so that Hindu religion was different from other religions. There was an old saying, "Love your neighbour as yourself." They had a saying of greater significance: "Love all creatures, neighbours or not neighbours." The Hindu life was a mixture and a blend which through many centuries had held its own against the invasions of the Assyrians, the Huns, and the Muhammadans. (Applause.)

Lieut.-Commander H. O. BOGER, R.N., asked what was the qualification for the canonization of India's holy men; was it merely confined to a life of seclusion and meditation, and was active social or any other work necessarily excluded? Mr. Boger reminded the meeting, and his Indian friends in particular, that England also had her saints, and that day—December 4—chanced to be the

anniversary of one of the most notable—St. Osmund, who was canonized 500 years after death, and only after repeated petitions from his diocese. His relics were said to be responsible for many well-attested miraculous cures. He came over to this country with William I., was Chancellor, and afterwards one of the earlier Bishops of Salisbury. His career was a contrast to St. Thomas of Canterbury, who was canonized very shortly after his assassination at his own altar in Canterbury Cathedral, and St. Alban, who was canonized by virtue of his martyrdom.

Mr. F. C. CHANNING said that there were two doctrines of Hinduism which, if he accepted, would lead him to look at the world from an entirely different point of view: the doctrines of the Four Ages and of the Great Night. That of the Four Ages was a movement from perfection to imperfection. They began with the first age, in which righteousness ruled, and went down gradually to the second and third ages, and then to the fourth age in which they lived; so that there was no hope of progress because they were gradually descending.* Life also was described as a continued alternation of day and night, and then at the end came the Great Night, when everything was dissolved. It led to nothing, because everything finally dissolved. In England they looked forward to gradual development in the direction of perfection. Did the Hindu hold as a principle governing his life that the progress of the world through the ages was always for the worse, and did he hold that whatever was done was swallowed up at the final dissolution of Great Night, so that it was for all eternity one revolution without end and without achievement?

Mr. ARNOLD LUPTON said he had listened to the paper and to the subsequent speeches with the utmost interest. When in India eight years ago he had seen people who were as poor as it was possible for people to be having regard to Western ideas. These people lived in mud huts; they had little or no clothing and no furniture, and yet they appeared to be happy. They had a smile upon their faces, as if they were at ease with the world and the world at ease with them. An Indian gentleman had said that it was their religion which made them happy. They had heard much about Indian education, and learned professors had advocated that Indians should be better educated, but one of these professors admitted in answer to a question that the Indian people were religious, polite to one another, industrious and law-abiding; then, why talk about education? What more did they want?

Mr. SITARAM said the canonization of holy men in India was only attained by leading a pure life. He denied that the Hindu religion was from progress to retrogression; they wanted to go on progressing to perfection. The Hindus had their stories concerning morality and a variety of other things explained at the expositions before referred to. The Hindu was by nature and by climate more

* See, *e.g.*, Manu, i. 81, 82.

meditative and less active than the Englishman, but the Hindu was more humane and merciful.

Miss SCATCHERD read the following note from Dr. John Pollen:

"The Hindu outlook on life is, after all, the only true one. It recognizes that 'the world and all that is in it will only last a minute.' But it does see that while the world lasts (however 'maya,' or shadowy, that lasting may be) it is very real. From the Hindu point of view the world is all in a state of probation or progression from unseen to unseen, and all men are in progression with it. This, after all, is really and truly the Catholic or Christian outlook. Christ is *implicit* in *all* religions, as His Spirit is their common cause. The idea of redemption (vaguely intimated when not expressly declared or revealed) is common to the whole human race and every human heart. The Hindu, in common with every other race and religion, feels that some 'buying back' was necessary; and sanctification (the being rendered fit to take advantage of this universal redemption) is certainly taught or implied in the Hindu doctrine of Karma. Salvation is not any geographical privilege, any inclusion in heaven or hell of anyone of any race or creed whose character and fitness have not sent him there and enabled him to stay. Redemption is offered to everyone, and each human being shall receive a fair field and all the favour God and things can give. But according to both the Hindu and the Christian outlook whatever offends and maketh and loveth a lie must be purified, purged of, and consumed away, while the simple truth must be sought, and if sought will be found. That truth is not far from the Hindu and from each one of us. So much for the outlook and true religion of the Hindu in so far as philosophy is concerned. In practice, as the Lecturer shows, many imperfections arise and shortcomings come in, as, indeed, in all religions. But Mr. Stanley Rice is right in maintaining that the English official attempting to analyze the outlook of the Hindu is met by the initial difficulty that he is only permitted to see a small part of the more intimate Indian life. However, even from this partial view one can catch a glimpse of the chief influences of that outlook, and Mr. Rice is certainly not wrong in putting religion in the forefront."

The LECTURER, replying to the remarks on his paper, said it had been a great privilege to hear the remarks of Mr. Bhupendra Nath Basu. He would like to correct one wrong impression, that he had said that Hindu life was a meaningless round of rites and ceremonies. The greater part of his paper had been intended to show the exact opposite. Mr. Bhupendra Nath Basu had also stated that he (the Lecturer) had said the Hindu was unpractical, and he had claimed for them that they bound together theory and practice in a way which Western people did not. Perhaps action to the Hindu did not mean quite the same thing as action to a Western man. It was possible they took a somewhat different

view of contemplation and meditation. There were a great many things which Christians read from the Bible, but if they looked at the life round about them in London they found that these things were not as a matter of fact carried out. He did not accuse the Hindu of doing nothing; but merely said that his outlook on life was more of the meditative and contemplative type than that of Englishmen, who rather prided themselves on being practical. With regard to the remarks that the Hindu proceeded from perpection to imperfection, that question perhaps had been answered by Mr. Sitaram. The law of Karma went on until it became dissipated by absorption into the Divine essence. (Applause.)

The CHAIRMAN: Ladies and Gentlemen,—I am sure we are all very grateful to Mr. Rice, and it is a real compliment to his paper that it should have provoked such an illuminating and interesting discussion. I am sure most of us have been more than delighted at the time we have spent in considering the subject. (Hear, hear.)

Professor BICKERTON, in proposing a hearty vote of thanks to the Lecturer, said that recently when investigating the basic principles of all the great religions he was astonished to find how almost identical they were. It was only the expansions or additions, that had been made gradually, in which they differed from one another. One point was that everything a man possessed should be dedicated to the wellbeing of men as a whole. That was fundamental. Religion did not make in any way for forcible appropriation; it simply said, as Lord Bledisloe had so strongly impressed upon the agriculturists, that they should act as stewards in trusts, each looking on himself as a cog in the cosmic mechanism, and each trying to work for the good of all. That was the idea which had come out in the reading of Mr. Rice's paper.

The vote of thanks was carried with acclamation.

Sir MANCHERJEE M. BHOWNAGGREE, in proposing a hearty vote of thanks to the Chairman, said that Lord Pentland had come to the rescue of the Association by accepting the position of Chairman of the Council on Lord Lamington succeeding to the Presidentship, and the value of his services to the Association might be measured by the close attention which he had been already giving to the proceedings at the Council meetings. They had all witnessed that that afternoon he had presided over them at short notice with conspicuous success. (Cheers.)

The vote of thanks was carried by acclamation.

The Chairman having thanked the meeting on behalf of the Lecturer and himself, the proceedings terminated.