

World's Religions in Evolution

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ZARATHUSHTI HERITAGE AND CULTURAL CENTER
AS PART OF ITS DASTUR M. N. DHALLA MEMORABILIA

MAY 2024

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WORLD'S RELIGIONS IN EVOLUTION

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Mazda; Ancient Iranian Literature; Mankind-Whither Bound?
In Gujarati; Dastur Dhalla - An Autobiography.*

aevo pantōo yo ashahe

“One alone is the Path - it is the Path of Righteousness.”

ZOROASTER

KARACHI

1953

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INTRODUCTION

Religion is as indispensable to man's spirit, as food and drink are for his body. Primitive man is afraid of wild animals. He fears his fellow human beings. He dreads the phenomena of nature. He has ever lived in constant fear of anything and everything. He has not known mental stability, neither has he experienced peace in his heart. He has ever been in the dreadful and deadly grip of fear. The fear complex has always overwhelmed him. He has longed for help, craved for protection from anywhere and everywhere.

Men and women cannot live without religion, as they cannot live without breathing air. Religion is the ever-abiding faith in unseen beings, other than themselves. It takes mankind generations before belief in One Supreme Being, God appears on the horizon after traversing the endless superstitious primitive thinking.

The evolution of religion during the indescribably long period of the human life of savagery and barbarism has passed through the stages of Naturism, Animism, Totemism, Fetishism and Magic, until during some last ten thousand years it has come to Polytheism, Monotheism and Pantheism.

After countless ages of darkness, the sun of religious enlightenment has now dawned upon mankind. Sages and Seers and Prophets of God have illumined the world of humanity with the true knowledge of the world of spirits and God.

Religions take two diverse courses. Animism, Spiritism Polytheism bring Monotheism and Pantheism.

Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Mohammedanism plead for long and happy life upon earth and an enlightening eternity of personal immortality in heaven. Religion among them enthuses and inspires mankind to embrace truth and virtue and leads men and women to walk on the Path of Righteousness. It

prepares them through good thoughts, good words and good deeds in the terrestrial life for the celestial life. It inspires them to love God, to be faithful to him and to establish their personal relationship with the Personal God.

India dissolves Polytheism into Pantheism. India is the land of religions. These religions interwoven with metaphysical speculation, become philosophical religions. The Personal God is replaced by the Impersonal God. Personality, it is argued, implied the existence of another, as an 'I' to 'Thee.' That implied limitation. Idealistic monism came to be taught. The individual self was a mere reflex of the Impersonal Self, which was the only reality. All else was illusion.

The Universal Self was the acme of metaphysical speculation. It could not be defined, nor described. Man had to speak of it in negation only. Better for him it was not to speak at all. It was an impersonal neuter abstraction, a phantom god in the shadowy world of reality, a god who was no god.

The belief in the existence of human beings begin from appearances, projected by ignorance and superstition. The sole existence is God. He is all and man is nothing. Man longs to become divine by ceasing to be human. Great is the longing for union with the divine. The end is the loss of self in God.

Religions in their evolution in India sought escape from all life. To be lost in the All became the prime religious motive of the Indian Aryans. As man cannot have his personal relationship with an Impersonal God, this beatific state was next to nothingness. It led to pantheistic nihilism.

The intermingling of religions. An interchange of manners, customs, practices and beliefs has always gone on between tribes and peoples that have lived as neighbours. Such mutual influence has prevailed throughout history upon the social, cultural and religious life of mankind.

Two-fold interchange of religious beliefs and practices is witnessed in the religious life of peoples. The masses borrow and practise ritualistic and superstitious customs of their neighbours.

The enlightened members of different communities have been mutually influenced by higher religious and philosophical teachings of their neighbours. Abstruse religious or philosophical questions such as monotheism or pantheism, Personal or Impersonal God, one life upon earth or many lives with transmigration of souls, exoteric or esoteric form of religion, worldly life or ascetic life and various other problems inter-penetrate the religious life of peoples following diverse religions.

CHAPTER I

MINOR RELIGIONS

The Egyptian religion. Before we take up the discussion of the great existing religions, we will deal in brief with the early religions of the people of Egypt and Mesopotamia, who have later embraced Mohammedanism.

Foreign conquerors from Elam or Mesopotamia who came by the way of the Red Sea, brought about the unification of Egypt. During the period of the rise of the Egyptian Kingdom, the Asiatic Sumerian culture influenced Egypt.

The Egyptian people were made up of the mingling of Hamitic and Semitic elements, with the fusion of their cultures. Egyptian civilization began about 5000 B.C. The documented account of the life of the people for about seven thousand years exist on the walls of the temples and tombs of the Pharaohs and in the hieroglyphic writings preserved on papyri.

Among the many tribal and native gods, Amen and Amen-ra rose to great eminence at Thebes, Re-Horus at Heliopolis and Ptah at Memphis. Hymns to Amen-ra and to Aten are sublime and lofty in spirit and are full of religious fervour. Amenhetep iv replaced the lesser gods by Akhenaten or pleasing to the Sun-disk, but the reform did not survive.

In the high moral teachings it is said that the human heart represents the voice of God. Man becomes prosperous by following its guidance. Fleeting are the riches of the world. Man's duty is to be generous and give in charity what he has. Man should not eat when another man near him stands hungry. He should extend his hand full of food to him. It is man's sacred duty to father the orphan, help the widow, feed the hungry, clothe the naked and protect the needy. Honesty in word and deed, compassion and

forgiveness are necessary. The highest expression of religious thoughts are found in the hymns to gods.

The winged solar disk as a symbol of God in the sculptures of the Achaemenian kings of Persia came from Egypt. Cambyses gave orders to repair the desecrated temple of the Goddess Neit at Sais in Egypt. Darius the Great, his successor, was called the son of Neit.

Religions in Mesopotamia. The non-Semitic Sumerians and Semitic Akkadians created the culture and civilization of the Babylonians in about 3000 B. C. on the soil fertilized by Euphrates and Tigris. The Sumerians believed in many gods and temples were dedicated to them. At a later period when Babylon rose in eminence, its God Marduk absorbed all other gods. The hymns composed in honour of the gods were now dedicated to Marduk. The clay tablets of Nineveh and Babylon state that man is incurably religious.

When Shamash outshone his confederate solar gods, he rose to the high position of the supreme god, accommodating other gods as his satellites.

The solar gods were celestial judges. They were bountiful, merciful and forgiving, when people propitiated them. In the hymns composed in their honour, the gods were addressed as wise creators, powerful and merciful.

Mankind longed for immortality. God Ea once tried to secure it for mankind, but he failed in his attempt owing to the jealousy of gods, who wanted it exclusively for themselves.

The heroic king Gilgamesh longed for immortality. He was informed that immortality was for gods alone and he should therefore give up yearning for it. It was better for him to enjoy life, for death would be an end to everything. People, therefore, prayed for life and long life upon earth. Life was joy when death was sorrow.

The Sumerians had constructed a tower tapering upward the holy mount of Enhil at Nippur as the residence of the God of wind. The Christian Church Chaples were later built like the Babylonian

temple.

The Assyrians had taken over the Babylonian gods. At the same time they worshipped their ancient tribal God Assur, after whom the name of their tribe and city was derived.

The Hittites had taken the winged sun-disk from the Egyptians. The Assyrians adopted the same.

The last of the Semitic Empire was Chaldea. The ruins of the 'Ihtar Gate' which the great king Nebuchadnezzar built near the temples still exist.

The Egyptians had given great attention to life after death. The Mesopotamian religions were more for the present world. They gave little attention to life after death.

The Aryans from the north-east brought an end of the last Semitic Empire.

There has always been religious intercourse between the Eastern and Western peoples, between the Aryans and Semites and others.

CHAPTER II

INDIA THE LAND OF RELIGIONS

Hapta Hindu, Sapta Sindhu. This land of the Aryans was originally called Aryavarta, 'the land of the Aryans.' When the heroic Bharatas established their empire in the land, it began to be called Bharatavarsha or Bharatabhumi, 'the land of the Bharatas.' Another name that was given to the land was Jambudvipa, the central place round about Mount Meru.

The Iranian cousins of the Vedic Aryans wrote in Avesta, the Sacred language of Zoroastrianism, about this land as Hapta Hindu, the land of seven rivers. Sanskrit, the sacred language of the Hindus, is the sister language of Avesta. It named the land Sapta Sindhu, the land of seven rivers. The Zoroastrian texts speak of the angel Sraosha, that he goes every night from Iran guarding the sleeping mankind from the onslaughts of the demons and goes south-eastwards to the land of Hindus.

The Greeks first came to Iran in the sixth century B. C. They pronounced the word Hindu as Indos, the country of the river Indus. The Ionian Greeks drop the aspirates. Consequently came the words Indus, India and Indians.

The earliest settlers in this sub-continent from the Old Stone Age were the Sumerians, Elamites, Kolarians, Mongolians, Veddhas and Dravidians.

The Aryans descended in 2500 B. C. in successive waves from the Hindukush and after long continued warfare, conquered the country.

CHAPTER III

THE VEDIC RELIGION

Rig Veda. The metrical hymns of Rig Veda and the other Vedas that followed them give the earliest religion. Animism was first the universal religion. The Gods of the Indo-European period that had migrated to India with their Aryan votaries were Dyaush pitar, Greek Zeus pater, Latin Jupiter or Father Sky, Bhaga, Varuna, Greek Ouranus, the god of the all compassing heaven. Besides these gods there were others of the Indo-Iranian period. The valley of the Indus was inhabited by the Sumerians and the dark-skinned aborgines. The Aryans invoked Indra who had slayed the demon Vrtra to defeat and destroy them. Indra then became the greatest god. Many hymns were composed to invoke him and many sacrifices were offered to him. He represented strength and power. People needed these to oppose their enemies and they worshipped him. Abstract virtues came to be deified with the advancement of thought. Varuna came out as the prominent god of ethical greatness and became the foremost god of moral order. He was called omniscient and infallible. If two men sat together and schemed to do some wrong, he was there as the third. He numbered the winking of men's eyes. The sinner confessed his sins and praying for forgiveness said that he did not willingly sin, but wrath, dice and liquor led him astray. Most ethical hymns were composed in his honour.

People performed ceremonies and offered sacrifices to gods and prayed for health and riches and long life. Gods had specific gifts in their power and the worshippers invoked them for those boons. The fulfilment of their desires and wealth were asked from Agni and Prajapati. Heroic offspring and prosperity were asked from Agni and Maruts. People implored Usha to give them good luck, glory and riches. Yama was invoked for long life upon earth and

happiness in heaven. The souls of the departed ones who dwelt in heaven were invoked to bestow gifts upon their survivors. They were invoked to give offspring and riches.

To the Vedic Hindus, life was joy and they prayed for long life and cattle and crops and horses and chariots and riches. They played and hunted, sang and danced. They did not brood on the dark side of life. The youthful, buoyant Hindu soul was not yet infected with world-weariness in the Vedic age.

The great gods Indra and Varuna sank into obscurity by the end of the Vedic period and Prajapati came into eminence. The Vedic polytheism tended towards pantheism in the latest hymns and became completely pantheistic by the time of the Atharva Veda.

CHAPTER IV

BRAHMANISM

The Brahmins rise to great power. They belonged to the first of the four classes into which the Hindus were now divided. As priests, they received divine honours. According to the Shatapatha Brahmana, there were two classes of gods. Besides the divine gods, there were the human gods. The Brahmins, learned in the Vedic lore, were the human gods. The sacred person of a Brahmin was inviolate. The legislators laid down that the King should never think of administering corporeal punishment to the brahmins for their crimes. The brahmins performed ceremonies for the laity and propitiated gods with libations and sacrifices and won magical power.

The brahmins interpreted and explained the Vedic language and literature when they had been antiquated. This amplification of the ancient texts brought into existence the Brahmanas which dealt with sacrificial texts that were based on the authority of the Vedas. The Vedic literature was made up of beautiful lyric poetry. The brahmins now undertook to adapt the hymns to the performance of the ceremonial and sacrificial rites. They attached symbolic significance to ceremonial rites. These were invested with mysterious power which secured, it was believed, for the donor his desires. Magical potency to heal the disease, to placate the gods, to rout the demons and the enemies who schemed harm was gained by specifically arranging and reciting the sacred words in a special manner. Elaborate ceremonies and animal sacrifices were believed to procure earthly as well as heavenly bliss. Ceremonialism rose to preeminent position under the brahmins and ritualistic religion appeased the innate human hunger and thirst for religion of the people.

The hermitage. The Vedas had taught the higher ethical

religion, which was now converted by the brahmins to ritualistic religion which rested on elaborate ceremonies, sacrificial offerings and magical incantations. When this form of ritualistic religion satisfied the masses, there were some persons who thought that this was outward religion that did not satisfy the inner cravings of the spirit. They longed for personal, devotional religion which would lead them to know God, to meet him and greet him, to commune with him. They learned to see that life was physical and spiritual. Spirit was greater than the physical frame into which it was encased. There was antagonism, they felt, between the flesh and the spirit. They saw that they had no inner peace. There was constant struggle going on in their inner world. They saw that their mind was divided between the good mind and the evil mind. When they desired to think good thoughts, the evil thoughts rose to assail them. When they longed to garner virtuous feelings, vicious feelings interrupted them. They came to their avowed conclusion that the body was the avowed enemy of the spirit. They must subdue it, control it and by hard actions defeat it. This, they thought, could be done by ascetic practices if they left their homes and social life and retired to the forests where they could free themselves from temptations, passions and vices. In the life in the forests they began the life of austerities. They starved themselves, they tortured, flagellated and emaciated their bodies. The ascetic monks, known by the name of Shramanas were believed to have won supernatural power by devotional exercises and by practising austerities.

The Atharva Veda and the Brahmanas wrote that even the gods were originally mortals. By practising austerities they came by their supernatural power and became immortal.

Manu says that the austerities are the best means of gaining bodily purification. Life was divided into four stages of discipleship, householdership, hermitage and renunciation by the close of the Vedic period. When the householder finds that his skin is wrinkled and his hair has grown gray, when sons are born to his sons, he should retire from life and go and live in forest. So says Manu, the great legislator. People of all grades of society were

attracted by the cloister. King Janaka gave up his throne in his old age and became a hermit.

CHAPTER V

THE UPANISHADS

The philosophic religion. As time went on many forest dwellers began to be dissatisfied with the ascetic life of the mortification of the body. They began to think deeply and seriously on the great problems of man's life upon the earth. People had begun by looking to religion as the spiritual aid to solve the problems of life. The thinkers now undertook to solve the riddles of life by secular method.

Religion depends upon the divine revelation to solve the riddles of life which the prophets of God confer upon mankind. Besides this spiritual method of gaining knowledge of the life upon earth and in heaven, there has been from ancient times a secular movement in which the gifted learned men think out these obtruse problems and enlighten mankind.

In India the sages, seers and thinkers and all those who think out such deep problems of life pertaining to both the worlds are considered as divinely inspired. In Greece, on the other hand, the attempt of the philosophers to think out and solve the riddles of life is regarded as secular. The Vedic seer in the hymn of creation sings that water is the germ of life. This is regarded as the revealed truth. Whereas when Thales of Miletus declares that water is the first principle of life, his expression is considered as his expression of cosmogonic philosophy. When Kapila speaks of his great Samkhya system of numbers, it is regarded as divinely vouchsafed. But when his Greek contemporary, Pythagoras declares number as the first principle of the world, his declaration is regarded as the grafting of metaphysics on numbers by a lay thinker. When renowned thinkers weave their metaphysical speculations into creative systems of philosophy in India they become religious philosophy.

The Upanishads are a part of the Vedas. The ascetic philosophers set aside the Vedic gods and Brahmanic rituals. Their writings are appendices to Brahmanas and are the essence of higher Brahmanism. The highest god of the Brahmanic period was Prajapati or Brahma. He was a personal god like the other Vedic gods. The Upanishads replaced this personal father-god by the impersonal world-soul.

The principal of divine immanence now came to the forefront. It was said that the existence of another as an 'I' to a 'thee' implied limitation. All is Brahma and nothing exists outside of Brahma. It is idealistic monism. The only reality is Brahma. All else is illusion. The Self or Brahma, is the universal Self. The individual self is a mere reflex of the Self. The inner self of the individual and the outward Brahma are one and the same. It has been the custom of man to extol God and humiliate himself. God has all along been considered as infinite and man has been considered as finite. God was regarded as all powerful, whereas man was held to be a weakling. Man was a subject of God who was considered to be the King. God was looked with awe and reverence and man bowed before him and prayed with folded hands and bended knees. Man is now taught to hail himself God. Every human being has potential divinity. Man is identical with God. With the dawning of knowledge upon him, man can acclaim with sublime ecstasy 'I am Brahma.' Philosophy raises man to become God by means of knowledge. Man has divinity sleeping within him and he has to awaken it. Every individual is God in the making. It is knowledge that makes the individual human being God.

Brahma is nameless, colourless, and lifeless. He, therefore, denies definition and description. Man can speak of him in negation only. It would still be better for him not to speak at all. Brahma is an impersonal neuter abstraction. He is a mere phantom god in the world which is of shadowy reality. He is a god who is no god.

Mankind in general finds it difficult to live without a personal god or gods. It hungers for God who is a personal God, who can

hear its progress, who can help, guide, guard it in the world. Life is struggle. Man suffers in a hundred ways. Man fears life. The personal God alone can comfort and befriend him. Without him man is lonely. The personal God can stand by his side, console him when he is heavy of heart, can heal his heart when it is bruised and bleeding, wipe his tears when he weeps, can be ever near him and with him. Man has everything when he has God's protection. Without God he is lost in the wilderness.

When the philosopher had removed the gods, they did not disappear altogether. If the old gods disappeared with the passing of time, the craving of mankind in general brought into existence new gods. The sacred texts explained the advent of the new gods by declaring that the new gods were the incarnations of old gods. When Rudra, for example, complained about the way he is neglected, he is pacified by saying that old and new gods are one and the same and the homage paid to the new gods is like paying it to the old ones, because they were both one and the same. In the fourth century B. C., Brahma and Shiva were reduced to subordinate position and asked to carry out the will of the new God Bhagavat or Vasudeva who had risen to be the supreme God. Like the kings that rise and fall, old gods fell and new gods arose. The great thinkers and philosophers could live without personal gods, but the masses craved for them and secured them. They prayed to them and offered them rituals and sacrifices. Religion was thus divided into two branches. The thinkers followed the philosophical religion and the generality of mankind followed the ritualistic religion. They came to be known as esoteric and exoteric.

Knowledge of God is higher than rituals and sacrifices. The Brahmanas had taught that rituals and sacrifices led to salvation. The Upanishads preached that it is knowledge that shaped the destiny of man. Yajnavalkya informs his learned wife that the ego or self of the individual is dear for the person's own sake and neither husband nor wife, nor son. To know the All, one has to know the ego and understand it in its true light. With the disappearance of the knower and the known, the ego learns that it is the part of All, itself the All. Then is the emancipation

reached.

Man is misled by his senses. Man is one with Brahma. He realizes it when he frees himself from 'maya' or the cosmic illusion. The senses are to be subdued by rigorous discipline, because they bring about the illusion of the I-ness or the self in man. Man has to forget the idea of self, he has to live beyond self, forget his individuality and lose it in the Self. The self can greet and meet the Self when man stops senses to intrude and remains in solitude. Patanjali teaches the science of meditation for those who seek true knowledge. True knowledge is not gained by reasoning, but by the practice of Yoga. Man has to bring about a receptive, ecstatic state of mind, so that he can get inspiration from Atman. Man has to meditate in solitude and retreat within himself so that the consciousness of thoughts and feelings may fade into mental poise. Man gains rapturous calm and peace, when he loses the consciousness of self.

The transmigration of souls. The Indo-Iranians and the Indians of the early Vedic period believed in mankind's one life upon earth. After death human beings received reward or retribution in accordance with good or evil lives they lived upon earth. This view of only one life upon earth began to change in the later part of the Vedic period. The new belief arose that many lives were required upon earth to enable human souls to gain emancipation through the purification of the souls. The theory of the cycle of rebirths came to be established throughout by the sixth century B. C. After receiving reward or retribution in the next world, the souls returned to earth to live their life according to the good or evil deeds they had committed in their past life. Life now began to be living out Karma or deeds in a round of rebirths. To the post Vedic seers this world became transitory and full of woe. It was not the abode of joy and life as it was in the early Vedic period. Another life upon earth was impending for a pious man between his death and rebirth. Freedom from the round of rebirths became the goal of life. When the soul was freed from the wearisome round of rebirths, it rested in the transcendent peace of Brahma.

The soul is rooted to the world by desire. It is desire that

is the source of man's actions. Desire is woven with life and prevents the soul from deliverance. When Brahma existed alone and when there was nothing besides him, desire arose in him with the consequence that the creation came into being. Yajñvalkya speaks of man as being altogether desire. From desire results Karma and the time of the deliverance of the soul is determined. Manu says that when fire is fed with clarified butter, it grows stronger. In the same manner when man enjoys what he desires, it makes him long for still more. During his life upon earth man every day desires health and happiness and offspring and riches and glory and various other good things that could be found upon earth and he prays for bliss in his life after death. The incessant longing for a hundred good things of the world forge fetters round the human ego and the period of his liberation is indefinitely postponed.

Towards pessimism. When the Indo-Iranians had separated and the Iranians were left behind the Hindukush, the Vedic singers had optimistically sung of life upon the earth in laudable terms and fervently prayed for the joys and riches and long life upon earth. The early Aryan settlers were robust and joyful. After they had spent a thousand years upon the valleys of the Indus and Ganges, their character was sombered. During the late Brahmanic period, when their descendants gave up the former cheerful and optimistic view of life upon earth they became gloomy and pessimistic. They became more imaginative, brooding and dreaming. Metaphysical speculations of their great thinkers altered their views about life upon earth.

The Mahabharata and Ramayana, the two great epics, were compiled during the millennium before the beginning of the Christian era. The Mahabharata, that was completed by 1,000 B. C., commemorates the heroic exploits of the Kurus and Panchalas and sings of their manly virtues, pride, ambition and adventure. The heroic feats of the brave Kings and warriors were sung by the bards in ballads at royal courts and before large numbers of people at great festivals.

On the other hand, the Ramayana which originated among the Kosalas and Videhas and which deals with Rama's adventures

extols softer virtues of gentleness, chastity, constancy and resignation to suffering. When the priestly sages who composed the Vedic hymns throb with cheerful and optimistic view of life, the Kshatriyas or men of ruling and fighting class bring about the pessimistic philosophy of the Upanishads from about 800 B. C. onwards.

All sentient creatures have inborn cravings for joy and happiness in this world and felicity for the soul in the next world. The new philosophical religion, on the other hand, preaches that happiness in this world and the next reacts upon the person and condemns him to several lives upon this illusionary world of woe, soaked in sorrow and suffering. It is man's desire for happiness that brings him again and again to this purgatorial world to go the dreary rounds of births and deaths to live out the karma of his past lives. When he is divested of actions and their consequences at a dim and distant date, he wins liberation from the labyrinth of life and escapes heavenward to rest his world-weary head on the bosom of Brahma.

Happiness consists in resting in Brahma, says Upanishads in the sixth century B. C. It becomes the standard philosophy for all time and in all subsequent religions in India.

CHAPTER VI

JAINISM

Mahavira, the founder of the religion of the Jains. Ceremonial religion brought about intellectual revolt, which resulted in schismatic heresies of Jainism and Buddhism. The Vedas were repudiated. The intellectuals seceded from Brahmanism. Tradition asserts that Jainism prevailed from the earliest times. Tirathankars of the different emancipated persons, about twenty-four in number, are said to have preached the religion at different periods and were worshipped as gods. In the fifth century, B. C. flourished Mahavira of princely descent, who was the last of them. Like various other thinkers he disliked the affairs of the world and was disgusted with the life upon earth. At the age of thirty he renounced the world and retired to the forest. After practising rigorous austerities for twelve long years, he finally came out as Jina or victor as the conqueror of desires. His outlook on life is pessimistic. Life is wedded to misery. He always avoided entertainment that gave pleasure, for pleasure, he said, was sinful. He teaches that the life of asceticism and self-mortification is desirable. The chain of rebirths is elongated by Karma or actions. It is wise for the individual to divest oneself of Karma. The ideal of life should be the detachment from actions. If the actions are performed, they should be done without passion or attachment. Such actions live but a short life and die. When the Karma is extinguished soon, the liberation from the trammels of existence follows. Man is speedily enabled to free himself from Karma by living the life of renunciation accompanied by bodily mortification. When the soul wins liberation, it lives its life of peace and rest in heaven for ever.

The three most precious possessions for which man has to aspire are : right faith, right knowledge and right conduct. Right conduct embodies five vows. They are : not to kill ; not to lie ;

not to steal ; not to indulge in sexual intercourse ; not to form attachment with worldly objects. In the case of the laity, the rigour of the last two vows is abated. All life being sacred, Jainism preaches ' ahimsa ' or absolute non-injury to any living being. Even flies, bugs, fleas, rats, snakes, insects, vermins and all small and large animals, birds and insects are never to be killed.

Woman, it is said, is a lamp that lightens the road leading to hell. There are two sects of the Jains called Swetambaras or the white-soiled and the Digambaras or the sky-clad, that is, the naked. One of these sects admits women as nuns.

CHAPTER VII

BUDDHISM

Gaotama, a warrior prince of the Sakya caste. He was born at Kapilavastu in 557 B. C. on the frontiers of Nepal. Naturally he was bred in the cradle of luxury. He had a son.

At the sight of old age, sickness and death, he was awakened to the sufferings of mankind. He gave up his home and courted the life of retreat to meditate and probe the anomalies of life and seek the solution of life upon earth.

He studied Hindu philosophy at Rajagriha, the capital of Magadha. Ritualistic religion and Yoga or concentration of mind did not appeal to him. He took to the life of austerities and rigorous bodily mortification to extinguish the life of the senses. He soon found that it was futile to aim at gaining spiritual exaltation by means of the life of physical tortures. He began to think deeply on the mysteries of life and concentrated all his attention to probe the mysteries of life. He discovered the truth that he was seeking when he entered into deep meditation in 522 B. C. under the tree known as Buddha Gaya. He now came to the conclusion that man cannot get salvation by means of rituals and penances, but by holiness, charity, forgiveness and love. The highest virtue for man was to return good for evil and love for hatred.

In common with the thinkers from the 7th century B. C. whose outlook upon life was gloomy, Buddha's mind was saturated with pessimism. Kapila, the founder of the Samkhya philosophy exerted great influence upon Buddha. Life upon earth was full of pain and suffering. Pleasure was pain in disguise. It was gilded pain.

The prince-prophet who had now gained the insight was termed Buddha or the Enlightened One. Life is compared by Buddha to a

tree whose roots, branches and leaves are all perishable. Life is steeped in sorrow and suffering. Joy is veiled sorrow ; age is sorrow ; wealth is sorrow ; desire for life is sorrow ; ungratified desire is sorrow. The life of birth and death knows no joy. Peace and happiness ensue only when the round of birth and death is finished and life reaches its end. Buddha says that a vaster expanse of waters is made by the tears that the weary wayfarers shed upon their pilgrimages upon the earth than the waters of all the oceans.

Ignorance is the root cause of the ills of life. Bramhanism was ritualistic. Buddhism ethicizes and idealizes Brahmanism. Buddha says in common with Brahmanism that the root cause of the ills of life is ignorance. One who has not seen the light of knowledge finds life as a long drawn agony of births and deaths. The forest philosophers had said that Self alone existed and all else was delusion. Buddha likewise says that a huge hoax is perpetuated upon human beings by ignorance. A bubble that floats on the surface of the water mistakes itself as living a separate and independent life, so does self which is blinded by ignorance erroneously believes that it lives a separate and independent life from Self. The consciousness of self is created by ignorance and delusion leads self to perpetuate itself.

As the Cross occupies the place of symbolical reverence among the Christians, so does the Wheel of Life among the Buddhists. In the Ajanta Caves in Central India is found a fresco representation of a wheel divided into six compartments that are separated by spokes. The same kind of the pictures of the wheel appear among the Japanese and Tibetan art. A blind camel or a blind man is the symbol of the first spoke. It symbolizes ignorance as the prime cause of the miseries of life. The third spoke shows an ape climbing a tree. It typifies the consciousness of the ego playing pranks like the ape. Desire with its attendant attachment, greed, envy and wrath arise from it. The self is acquainted by the senses with the fleeting objects of the world which awaken desire. When the self is caught in the meshes of the net of attachment, it hankers after their possession. Endless sorrow and suffering are occasioned by desire to live perpetual and recurring lives. The illusion of the

I-ness is created by the erroneous idea of the separation of the self from Self. The self screens the Self. The reality of the self comes through ignorance, whereas knowledge reveals its unreality. To forget and forsake self is to secure salvation. Man's duty is to be selfless. Deliverance is the death of self.

The Noble Eightfold path. Though knowledge is indispensable to dispel ignorance, morality is greater than knowledge. One who knows Vedas is not a true Brahmin, but the one who is pure in heart. The life of moral laxity and the life of self-mortification, says Buddha, are the two extremes.

The middle, according to Buddha is the life of the Noble Eightfold path. They are : right views ; right aims ; right speech ; right conduct ; right living ; right effort ; right mindedness and right meditation. Man has to break ten fetters which are : ignorance ; delusion ; doubt ; pride ; attachment to earthly things ; longing for heavenly happiness and similar human feelings. The prominent place in Buddha's moral code are : kindness ; love towards one another ; compassion ; generosity ; tolerance ; self-sacrifice and other gentle virtues of self-abnegation. Good is to be returned for evil, love for hatred, forgiveness for injury. The highest duty of man is to help the suffering, to comfort them and to mitigate their sufferings. Men should not eat without sharing their food with beggars and wayfarers. Men should scatter their bounty among the needy, even as a cloud pours forth its fertilizing waters all around. Buddha's teachings brought into existence from early times, schools, hospitals, founding asylums and other institutions.

Mara promises Buddha the highest mountain Himalaya converted into gold, if he relinquished his path of righteousness. Buddha did not submit to the temptation.

The way of life, taught Buddha, is moral discipline. Superior to the heroic warrior who vanquishes a thousand foes on the battlefield is the man who conquers his own self.

Karma alone survives the death of man. The ego that, according to the Upanishad goes the round of birth does not exist says Buddha. The individual has no soul or spirit. What survives his death is Karma, which transmigrates and makes man in its own

image. Rebirth is the corollary of Karma. Man's coming back to earth ceases when he becomes an Arahat or a perfect sage and enters into Nirvana. Yet even after reaching the final state of beatitude, if man desires to resume the cycle of rebirths for the amelioration of the suffering mankind, he can do so. As the birth stories of Buddha relate, Buddha had done it so himself.

Buddha's Bhikkus or disciples propagated his religion all around and a third of mankind follows Buddhism today.

CHAPTER VIII

BHAGAVAD GITA

The Religion of Devotion. Bhagavatism, the religion of devotion, love, *bhakti* was founded in about 4th century B. C. It rose under the influence of Sankhya and Yoga. As Sankhya was an atheistic system, Bhagavatism allied itself with Yoga. The fundamental concern of Yoga which was concentration of thought, was converted to devotion to a personal God. This personal God was termed the Adorable One who was the objective of man's devotion and love. Bhagavad Gita or the Song Celestial propounds this doctrine. Gita accepts as axiomatic truth the theory of rebirth and the binding nature of Karma or actions.

Unthinkable is life without actions. They are however to be performed with complete detachment of their consequences. The doer is not fettered when actions are performed dispassionately and disinterestedly. The world would perish, teaches Krishna, if he ceased to work. Whenever evil preponderates over good, he recreates himself and works to inspire mankind to walk on the path of goodness. Life without actions is unthinkable. But man should act dispassionately without expecting any reward. He has never to think of the fruits of his actions in life. As Krishna says, man should dedicate all his actions in the service of God without the least idea of thinking of the resulting reward for himself. The actions that are performed should be absolutely selfless and in the name of God. Man has to live his life of selfless deeds for the greatness and glory of god. Life is duty, but duty performed for the love of God. Life of love and devotion for god is everything. All ceremonies and ascetic practices are to be performed for the love of God. Man is happy and safe in life when his heart is full of devotion and love for God. Man becomes happy in this life and lives the life of felicity in the celestial world after death, when, he lives his selfless earthly life of resignation.

Man should guard himself from being swayed by desire. The senses delude man and misleads him to hunger and thirst after the wordly objects. When man lives the life of attachment to the fleeting objects of the world and falls a victim to greed, wrath and desire, he paves his way to hell. Man should develop his tranquility of mind by controlling his senses. Man should practise temperance in living, working, eating and everything that he does. To free himself from the onslaught of senses, he should retire to a quiet place and learn to think deeply and meditate. He should think of God, offer him his prayer, love him, adore him and give himself up to God heart and soul. God is near him and with him. Let him therefore think of God, dream of God and look to God with the eyes of his mind and spirit. Quiescence is supreme happiness and let man live and aspire for its attainments.

CHAPTER IX

ZOROASTRIANISM

The Indo-Iranians. The Indo-European peoples who had long lived together as a homogeneous people, spoke the same language and shared beliefs and practices in common.

In the early part of the second millennium B. C., some people left their primitive home, turned westwards and reached the Aegean. Others, in successive waves, turned southward from the Steppes of the Caspian.

The Ancient-Iranians settled in Bactria or modern Afghanistan.

After the separation of the Indo-Europeans, the Indo-Iranians had lived long together. Those that now settled in Airyanavaeja or the stem land of the Iranians, brought with them Avesta as their sacred language, which was the sister language of Sanskrit, the sacred language of the Indians or Hindus. They brought with them the belief in the Indo-Iranian divinities and various rituals and ceremonies, the chief among them being Haoma, corresponding to the Indian Soma.

Zarathushtra, the Prophet of Ancient Iran. He is known in history as Zoroaster and his religion as Zoroastrianism, as pronounced by the Greeks, who had come in close contact with the Persians as the Iranians were later called.

The prophet's date of birth according to Persian tradition is about 600 B. C. It is stated by the Persian writers that Alexander the Great defeated the Persians three hundred years after Zarathushtra founded his religion.

The Greek writers, on the other hand, place his advent to about 6,000 B. C. Diogenes Laertius, Xanthus of Lydia mention Zoroaster by name in the fifth century B. C. Platonic Alcibiades speaks about him. Pliny the elder states that the only human

being that laughed at the time of his birth was Zoroaster. His brain, he adds, was pulsating so forcibly that the hand put over it was repulsed at once.

Diogenes of Laerte quotes Dino in 340 B. C. and Plato's disciple, Hermodorus wrote that Zoroaster meant one who sacrificed to the stars. Eudoxus, Aristotle and Hermippus wrote that Zoroaster lived 5,000 years before the Trojan war. Hermodorus and Xanthus agree with this opinion.

Polyhistor, Plutarch, Apuleius of Madaura, Clement of Alexandria, Hippolytus say on the authority of Diodorus of Eretria and Aristoxenus, a disciple of Aristotle, that Pythagoras was a pupil of Zoroaster. Pliny doubts whether there was one Zoroaster or there were others bearing the same name.

Besides the Greeks, the Romans and Christians in the Occident and the Indians, Hebrews, Arabs, Syrians, Armenians and Chinese in the Orient have written about Zoroaster and his religion.

Zoroaster is credited with having written profusely. Hermippus, who flourished in the early part of the third century B. C. had, according to Pliny, studied some 2,00,000 verses composed by Zoroaster. The Arabic historians Tabari and Masudi state that the Zoroastrian texts were copied on 12,000 cowhides.

According to the Ancient Iranian writers, Zoroaster wrote twenty-one Nasks or volumes. Of these only one and a half Nask or volume survived the vicissitudes of time and circumstances.

At the close of the Indo-Iranian period, when the two Aryan groups separated and the Iranians came and settled in Iran, they brought with them the Indo-Iranian religious beliefs and practices, the worship of ten Indo-Iranian divinities, various rituals and ceremonies, the chief among them being Haoma, corresponding to the Indian Soma.

When the prophet Zarathushtra preached his new religion, he removed entirely all beliefs, practices and rituals of the older Indo-Iranian religion. His religion was altogether devoid of any ancient doctrine that had come to Iran.

In India, Sanskrit *deva* meant divinity, God. The prophet of

Iran dethroned *deva* from his lofty height of godhead and termed *daeva* as demon. In his Gathas he uses *daevas* as demons. Upto this day the word means demon among the followers of Zoroaster. Even when the Mohammedans who conquered the Persians in the seventh century, took the word *div* with the demoniac meaning and it persists among them throughout the Moslem world upto this day.

In his Gathic hymns Zoroaster teaches the unprecedented ethical and devotional religion, with Ahura Mazda as the supreme godhead.

CHAPTER X
AHURA MAZDA

Ahura Mazda is the being par excellence. Ahura Mazda, later Ormazd, means the Wise Lord. He is omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent. He is the creator, guardian and protector. He is all-good, beneficent, benevolent and merciful. He is far-seeing and all-seeing. He knows no elder, nor has he any equal. He is incomparable and unprecedented in sublimity, grandeur and nobility. He is devoid of all anthropomorphic traits. He is ever present on the path that leads mankind to righteousness. As Ahura Mazda lives in the celestial mansions in the highest heavens, so does he dwell in the hearts of the righteous persons.

Zarathushtra yearns to see him. His consummate passion is to hold communion with him. In moments of transcendent ecstasy, he gets the beatific vision of Ahura Mazda. His heart's longing is to approach him, greet him and live in his love.

The prophet longs to wean the hearts of men and women and lead them on the path of righteousness, where all can meet and greet Ahura Mazda as friend and father and live into the closest relations with him. Those who seek his friendship get it and those who long for his love receive his love. Ahura Mazda's love towards all knows no bounds. He loves human beings with the love of a father for his child.

As the father of mankind, Ahura Mazda has created men and women as the greatest in all creation and has endowed them with the power of thinking and freedom of will.

Knowing human infirmities, he forgives man's iniquity, when he is penitent. When the sinner approaches him with heartfelt contrition, resolving to redeem his sinful past by good deeds, he forgives him. A penitent heart and a contrite spirit are better sacrifices than offerings of libations and oblations.

Formidable are the iniquities and infirmities of this imperfect world. The world is to be regenerated and made perfect. When man fights against imperfection and strives to work for the perfection of the world as his sacred duty, he pleases Ahura Mazda most. Mankind is steeped in the slough of melancholy, gloom and helplessness and prays to Ahura Mazda that he may salvage the world and assuage its sufferings.

In his bitterness, anguish, sorrow and suffering, poverty and misery, man finds his final refuge in Ahura Mazda. By living for the welfare of all and working for the amelioration of the poor, man serves Ahura Mazda most.

Man has to serve Ahura Mazda not because he fears him, but because he loves him. The best sacrifice that man can offer to Ahura Mazda is the purity of thought, word and deed. Good thoughts, good words and good deeds are the outward expressions of the holy heart. When devotion wells up in man's heart, he aspires to weave his personality with Ahura Mazda, like the warp and woof. He implores Ahura Mazda to be the very life and limb of his body.

CHAPTER XI

SPENTA MAINYU

The Holy Spirit. Spenta Mainyu or the Holy Spirit is the self-revealing activity of Ahura Mazda. The unchangeable nature of Ahura Mazda with the world of change is solved by introducing the Holy Spirit, who intervenes between the unmoved mover and the moved. He spans the chasm between the supersensuous and the sensuous as the working medium of Ahura Mazda and brings into a synthesis the transcendence and immanence of Ahura Mazda. The immutable supreme godhead is not completely separated from the world, as he is not completely merged in the world. The Holy Spirit ever existed in Ahura Mazda. As part of Ahura Mazda, he manifests himself as the working self of Ahura Mazda. Yet he is different from Ahura Mazda. He is not a personality. As the image and replica of Ahura Mazda, he represents his creative attribute. Spenta Mainyu symbolizes the ideal or perfect existence as Ahura Mazda conceives it in thought. He is the vicegerent and co-worker of Ahura Mazda. He is identified with Ahura Mazda, as also he is spoken of as distinct from Ahura Mazda. Through Spenta Mainyu, Ahura Mazda hears man's prayer and through him, he bestows Perfection and Immortality unto the righteous. At the final dispensation, Ahura Mazda will come with Spenta Mainyu.

The Holy Spirit has as his rival spirit, Angra Mainyu or the Evil Spirit. He has his inseparable opposite, because the materialization of the divine thought spells imperfection in creation. The two rival spirits Spenta Mainyu, the Holy Spirit and Angra Mainyu, the Evil Spirit who have emerged from the divine bosom of Ahura Mazda are twins. The Holy Spirit chose righteousness and the Evil Spirit wooed wickedness. By their innate choice, one stands for good thoughts, good words and good deeds and the other

for evil thoughts, evil words and evil deeds. The Holy Spirit tells the Evil Spirit that they were by nature opposed in their thoughts, words, deeds and understanding. In nothing could the twain ever meet. When they first came together, they created life and non-life. The law of reward for the righteous and retribution for the wicked was established by them, according to which the righteous would reap the weal of Best Thought and the wicked the woe of the Worst Existence in the other world.

Good and evil are co-existing polarities in life. Man has to think of life in terms of its opposites. Health is followed by sickness, joy by sorrow, prosperity by adversity and life by death. Truth is darkened by falsehood, virtue by vice and wickedness spells the death of righteousness. Happiness and joy follow from the fountain of life and people cheerfully drink a draught. But the sweetness and joy of the drink is often embittered with misery and sorrow. Light and cheerfulness of life are shadowed by the clouds of darkness and gloom.

The minor evil spirits. Aka Manah or Evil Mind is the antithesis of Vohu Manah or Good Mind. When man fails to fill his mind with good thoughts, it becomes an easy prey to Aka Manah.

Druj personifies wickedness. This demon is the rival of Asha, 'Righteousness.' His followers are called dregvants or the Wicked. Man's mission in life is to live for and strive for the formation of the world of righteousness. This can be done when he fights and routs Druj, the Demon of Wickedness. The goal towards which mankind moves is the final defeat of Druj or Wickedness and the establishment of the World Righteousness.

Aeshma, the demon of wrath. He is the foe of Sraosha. It is the paramount duty of mankind to fight this demon of fury by embracing Good Mind and following on the path of righteousness.

The existence of evil is a fundamental fact in life. It is a challenge which Zarathushtra accepts. Life is struggle. Man has to struggle and wage an incessant war against evil so that good may triumph. Man is the comrade of his Heavenly Father in his fight against evil. The struggle between good and evil goes on in the

inner nature of human beings as outside. With good thoughts, good words and good deeds men and women have to lay the foundation of righteousness and strenuously extinguish their evil thoughts, evil words and evil deeds that wickedness may not linger in their inner world. When men and women fight evil in their inner nature and lay low their enemy, they have to fight the enemy in the outer world. To rout and demolish evil in their inner nature is the passive virtue. The active virtue demands that every one should combat evil among others and destroy it.

The world is imperfect socially and morally. It is everyone's paramount duty to fight imperfection in all its phases. All have to contribute their mite to redeem the world of its imperfection. Then by the accumulated work of mankind in countless generations to fight imperfection, the world will ultimately be perfect.

CHAPTER XII

MAZDA'S MINISTERING ANGELS

The Archangels in the making. The Gathas of Zarathushtra speak of seven cardinal virtues of Ahura Mazda. They appear as abstract figures, divine attributes and later rise to be his associates and are called Amesha Spentas, the Holy Immortals or the Archangels.

Of the six associates of Ahura Mazda, Vohu Manah, 'Good Mind' stands for good thoughts and wisdom.

Asha Vahishta, 'Best Righteousness' is the pivot around which the Zoroastrian ethics revolves. One who leads the life of good thoughts, good words and good deeds and walks on the path of righteousness, leading to Ahura Mazda is called *ashavan* or righteous.

Khshathra Vairaya the 'Wished for Kingdom,' will be the Divine Kingdom of Ahura Mazda, when by the efforts of mankind, the world of perfection will come.

Spenta Armaiti, 'Holy Devotion' stands for Divine Love. Through Holy Devotion men and women have to wed their souls to Ahura Mazda.

Haurvatat stands for Weal or Perfection.

Ameretat is emblematic of Immortality. Those who befriend Ahura Mazda with their good thoughts, good words and good deeds win perfection and immortality for themselves.

Among other minor divinities mentioned in the Gathas are Sraosha who stands for devoted attachment and obedience to the religious lore. Sraosha teaches mankind to obey the ordinances of Ahura Mazda and work through good thoughts, good words and good deeds for the furtherance of righteousness and the perfection of the world, so that the Divine Kingdom of Ahura Mazda may come.

Ahura Mazda is eternal light and Atar who presides over fire is the emblem of light. The fire of Atar becomes the Symbol of the eternal light of Ahura Mazda.

Ashi Vanghuhi represents sanctity and becomes the genius of fortune.

Geush Tashan, Geush Urvan and Gav Azi represent cattle-tending and agriculture, which bring prosperity.

CHAPTER XIII

LIFE IS A BLESSING

Nature mirrors God's face for mankind. Before the advent of the holy prophets of God with their sublime religions, nature became man's primitive religion. The Book of Nature is replete with colours of matchless beauty and nature leads and inspires early mankind to discover and greet God, the Father of Nature. When man converses with nature and reads and meditates on the Book of Nature, his mind is filled with great thoughts and noble ideas. Nature speaks and nature inspires man. Nature is saturated with the life of God. It is aglow with his presence. It is the generous bestower of creative thoughts and noble ideals to man's mind. Nature teaches man to invent and inspires him to create great works of arts and sciences.

Splendid are the glories of nature at the dawn. Nature then is sweet and fragrant, invigorating and inspiring. When the brilliant sun, the King of Day, rises in his august majesty and rends the dark veil of night, nature dons resplendent robe and bathes the earth with its golden light. Nature paints in brilliant hues at sunset. When the heavenly Queen of Night, the Moon, rises in her silvery splendour and bathes the earth with her white shining cool light, she makes it charming and smiling in her resplendent glory. Myriads of twinkling stars brighten the blue vault of heaven and display the glory of the starlit sky.

When the earth dons the garment of green in the spring, the birds fill the air with vernal melodies. The sweet fragrance of rose woos the nightingale into love and the nightingale sings the sweet songs and melodies. Flowers exale sweet aroma and fragrance. Green grass and weeds, beautiful to look at, are kissed by the sun during the day, and by the moon during the night. Imagi-

nation revels in the luxuriance of sweet nature, when pleasant sights and lovely sounds fill nature all around.

God's bountiful nature inspires man to forget his sorrow in its soothing company. Mother nature kisses away grief and gloom of man, when he feasts his eyes on the beauties of nature. It soothes the depression of the mind and sorrow of the heart and imparts peace and rest and quiet. Man learns to discover God clothing himself in the resplendent garment of nature.

Zoroaster gives a joyful orientation to life upon earth. Life is the greatest gift of God. Everyone prays for happy life, joyful life and long life. This unborn urge to live a full and useful life drives man to stimulate progress. Life has a purpose. Man has a great mission in life to work for the decrease of the world of wickedness and to strive for the furtherance of the world of righteousness. God has owned men and women as his fellow-workers in the stupendous task of the removal of the imperfection of the world and the bringing about the world of perfection. They have to do their duty with alacrity and with dauntless courage. Mankind has to live for countless generations in this world. Hence the removal of its imperfection and the making of the world of perfection is most indispensable.

Life is a blend of contradictions. Life of joy and happiness is shadowed by the life of sorrow and misery. Life is sunshine, as it is darkness. It blooms and blossoms, so does it wither and fade. Life is an uphill fight and man has to fight it valiantly. Man has to be joyful at heart, hopeful and courageous to face the difficulties of life. Sorrow darkens life and weighs it down. When the outlook on life becomes clouded, man feels forlorn and forsaken. Despair is barren and bankrupt. Hope is man's potential health, wealth and happiness. Hope and joy and courage conduce to health and happiness. Life is stimulant. Life has to glide on the joyous wings of hope, which God has ingrained in the human breast. Hope is creative and fruitful. It sustains and stimulates, comforts and cheers, encourages and inspires. Man has never to be a defeatist at heart. He should so live that life may never lose its zest for him. He has ever to say yea to life.

Man has to face life with a robust faith. Life has diverse ways and man has to adjust himself to them. He has to be cheerful and work for its greatness and glory.

During the Middle Ages when Scholastic philosophy was pursued under the domination of Christian theology, wise philosophers were discussing the problem of the hardships of life upon earth. It was argued that God being omniscient he should have foreseen the dark side of life and being omnipotent he could have created a better world with more of easy life and happiness for mankind. The wise thinkers ultimately pronounced that it was futile to argue whether God should have and could have created a better and a happier world. The world is what it is and will ever remain what it is. Man has to accept life in this world as he finds it and make the best use of it.

Life is duty and everyone has to discharge it faithfully and willingly. The path of duty is rugged and rough, but God helps and guides all to tread it. Everyone's duty is to bear the burden of his brethren and relieve them of their burden. Man has always to place service before self and live for the amelioration of the condition of the poor and the needy. He has to make all around him happy and find his happiness in their happiness. He has to consider his duty to ward off gloom and melancholy from his surroundings and be an active worker of promoting joy and hope and courage among his fellow human beings. It is his paramount duty to remove hardships, disasters and difficulties of the poor and make their lives livable upon earth. Duty is the ideal of life.

Man has conquered physical nature. He has not conquered his human nature. Pure science has benefited agriculture, chemistry, engineering. Production is increased by labour and time-saving methods.

Preservation of health and prevention of disease have progressed as never before. Medical and surgical science have conquered diseases and eradicated contagious and infectious diseases. The gains of the health-giving sciences accrue to ever increasing numbers in the world. Mankind has made indescribably great

advances in the preservation and furtherance of its health, happiness, comfort and safety, in this age of science and machine.

Religions, ethics, philosophy, literature have taught man the excellence of the moral law. Yet greed, jealousy, mutual distrust, enmity and hatred between races and races and nations and nations have made mankind today most miserable and unhappy.

Militarism is still mankind's fetish worship. When mankind has reached the climax of civilization in the twentieth century, it has fought the two World Wars, the most destructive and devastating and barbaric than all previous wars in history.

Much of the sorrow and unhappiness that we witness is of man's own making.

Let mutual trust and goodwill lead us to be all the world to one another and be the harbinger of good-will to all.

CHAPTER XIV

LIFE AFTER DEATH

The corporeal and the spiritual worlds. The Gathas speak of the two worlds, called the 'corporeal' and the 'spiritual.'

Human beings are made of bodies and souls. The dissolution of the two diverse elements is brought about by death. The body crumbles into dust and the soul which is immortal, flees heavenward.

The soul reaps as it has sowed. It is responsible for the good or evil deeds it has done in this life. The soul that has lived the life of good thoughts, good words and good deeds, reaps the reward in the next world and the soul that has lived the life of evil thoughts, evil words and evil deeds meets with retribution. It is solely on the merits of the soul that it wins beatitude. If it loses it, it is owing to the wicked life that it has led. If it has lived the life of righteousness, it ascends to heaven. If it has lived the life of wickedness, it sinks into hell.

Heaven. The abode of the righteous souls is called 'Abode of Song,' or 'Abode of Good Mind.' Here the righteous souls reap the reward which their goodness has earned. The heavenly bliss is abiding and knows no end. It is everlasting.

The souls whose good deeds are on a par with their evil deeds go to the intermediary place between heaven and hell.

Hell. The abode of the wicked is called 'Worst Existence' or 'Abode of Wickedness,' or 'Abode of the Worst Mind.' Darkness is the characteristic of hell. The demons greet the wicked souls with foul food and sorrow and punishment fall to their lot. The wicked soul is condemned by its own conscience and it writhes in agony, as it finds itself alienated from Ahura Mazda.

CHAPTER XV

THE FINAL DISPENSATION

The end of the world. When the evolution of the world will be completed, creation and life will end. The saviour prophets will appear at different intervals to reform the world. The greatest of them will be Soshyos.

Before the Renovation of the World, all souls will be subjected to a collective judgment. The souls of the righteous and the wicked will be judged by the great ordeal by fire and molten metal. This tribulation will reclaim the sinners.

Asha's righteousness will now triumph over Druj or Wickedness. When Righteousness will smite Wickedness, the Kingdom of Righteousness will pervade the entire world. The great world drama will then be over.

CHAPTER XVI

REVIVAL OF INDO-IRANIAN RELIGION IN IRAN

Post-Zoroastrian religion. Eastern Iran was the stronghold of Zarathushtra's religion which was a reform on the Indo-Iranian faith of the early Iranians. The prophet's reformed religion was soon followed by the counter-reform after his death. A great religious syncretism followed and the Indo-Iranian divinities were accommodated in the divine household of Ahura Mazda.

With the return of the Indo-Iranian divinities came the rituals and sacrifices, libations and oblations. The old socio-religious customs, beliefs and practices were grafted on the new religion of Zarathushtra. These were ascribed to the authorship of the prophet. The writers of the later Avestan texts depict Zarathushtra himself as worshipping the Indo-Iranian divinities whom he had not recognized in the Gathic hymns composed by himself. The Indo-Iranian religion which Zarathushtra had replaced by his new religion came back to remain as an indissoluble part of his new religion. Zoroastrianism has remained up to this day as a blend of pre-Zoroastrian Indo-Iranian religion and the new reformed religion of Zarathushtra.

Dualism in evolution. The leading idea of the Gathic hymns was Monotheism. The twin spirits Spenta Mainyu, the Holy Spirit, and Angra Mainyu, the Evil Spirit were the constructive and destructive powers of God. The opposition rested with the two rival spirits. Nowhere in the Gathas, Angra Mainyu or the Evil Spirit stands in direct opposition to Ahura Mazda. This fundamental distinction is lost sight of in the post-Zoroastrian period. Spenta Mainyu is now identified with Ahura Mazda and Angra Mainyu, the Evil Spirit consequently stands in direct antagonism to him. This opposition becomes so pronounced that even distinctive linguistic expressions are now used for both. The words used for

the organs, movements and speech for both and for righteous and wicked persons now become separate and different. The righteous person 'speaks', but the wicked 'howls or roars'; the righteous 'eats,' but the wicked 'devours'; the righteous one dwells in a 'house', the wicked in a 'burrow'. Thus does the antithesis between the good and the evil becomes more and more prominent and indelible. Evil becomes as real, independent and active factor as good. All prayers in the Younger Avesta begin with the exhortation to propitiate Ahura Mazda and to abjure Angra Mainyu.

The Greek authors write that Zoroastrianism is the religion of Dualism. On the authority of Aristoxenus (about 320 B.C.) Hippolytus writes that the Persians believed in two primeval causes of existence, the first being Light or the Father, the second Darkness, or the Mother. Diogenes Laertius states that Eudoxus and Aristotle wrote of these two rival powers as Zeus or Oromazdes, and Hades or Areimanios. Plutarch writes that Oromazdes came from Light and Areimanios from Darkness. The Good Spirit created six archangels and other angels and the Evil Spirit created as a counterpoise to them six arch-fiends and other demons. When Oromazdes created good animals and plants, Areimanios created in opposition noxious creatures and poisonous plants.

Angra Mainyu's final defeat. This opposition between the two rival powers will go on upto the end of time, but ultimately the Evil Spirit will be defeated and forced to disappear. As the world progresses, mankind will embrace Righteousness and weaken the power of Wickedness. The perfection of the world will come and its Imperfection will be no more. The Father and Sovereign of Evil will bow to his final fate and flee and will hide himself forever in the bowels of the earth.

The Yazatas or Angels. Though the later Avestan texts state that the angels are numerous, about forty only are actually named in the sacred texts. Plutarch refers to twenty-four angels. Among the Yazatas or angels are ten Indo-Iranian Yazatas and twenty of Iranian origin.

Mithra, Sanskrit Mitra, comes from the Indo-Iranian period.

As an associate of Varuna, Mitra's individuality was eclipsed in the Indo-Iranian period. But he rose to great eminence and became the premier and most conspicuous angel in Iran. Several of the archangels and angels have a Yasht composed in their honour. The one celebrating the greatness of Mithra is the most prominent. Mithra was the genius of light on the material side. He became the warder of truth on the spiritual side. Light was synonymous with truth as darkness was with falsehood. Mithra was also a war divinity and the lord of hosts. Warring peoples invoked him before going into battle.

We shall speak more of him in a separate chapter when his religion known as Mithraism goes to Europe.

The divine double of man. From primitive times the belief in a higher double of the living and the dead, animate or inanimate things, influencing persons or objects has prevailed among different peoples.

The Egyptians believed that Ka was the higher double of man. Formerly it was believed that the Ka belonged only to the Kings. Then the belief arose that all human beings possessed it. At the time of the death of an individual, his Ka interceded for him with God and looked after his welfare and protection.

The Vedas in India called the disembodied spirits the *pitra* or the Fathers. They lived in the third heaven. Their abode situated in the south is called *pitraloka*. They ride on the celestial car with Indra and other gods. They are invoked individually and collectively. They come to the sacrificial repast and the worshippers invoke them for help and protection, riches and long life.

The Iranian Fravashis, later Farohars. They are the guardian spirits and prototypes of mankind. They constitute a world of homonyms of the earthly creations. They have lived as conscious beings in the empyrean with Ahura Mazda from all eternity. They are the celestial originals of multifarious objects of this world which are their terrestrial duplicates. Earthly creations are imperfect copies of these types. When Ahura Mazda lived in his sublime singleness before creation, he had the ideas, concepts of the material and spiritual creation which he contemplated creating in time.

The projection and manifestation of his will and thought and the emanation of his creative mind was Spenta Mainyu. The Alexandrian philosopher, Origen later says that Logos represents the sum total of the world-thoughts of God. Spenta Mainyu is the embodiment of Ahura Mazda's prototypal ideas which are called Fravashis. Creation is the materialization of these idealized contents of his mind and through him of Ahura Mazda's mind.

When a child is born, its Fravashi accompanies it as the guide, friend and guardian spirit of its soul. At the death of the individual, the soul advances to meet its fate, its Fravashi returns to the celestial world and lives an individualized life as the Fravashi of a certain person, who lived his or her life on earth. The last ten days of the year are set apart for the cult of the Fravashis. They come down from their heavenly abode to the earth to bless and help the families in which they had lived. They are propitiated, invoked individually and collectively.

The cult of the higher doubles goes to Europe. Plato taught that the sensual objects in the world are the imperfect copies or reproductions of the quasi-personified ideas that contributed true reality. These transcendental ideas are the contents of the creative mind of God. The World-Soul who bears the images of the Ideas, fashioned the World-Body or the creatures after the pattern of the Ideas.

Aristotle wrote that the spirit which constitutes the real essence of the individual was a second principle in addition to the soul which moved the body and carried on rational activity.

Philo distinguishes between the soul and the pneuma.

The Platonists, Aristotelians and the Stoics of the time of Philo called it Nous.

Plutarch speaks of two principles in man, the spirit and the soul. In the Book of the Wisdom of Solomon, Wisdom, an emanation of God, selects from the divine ideas that are fit for actualization and creates them.

The Romans believed that the dead were gathered to a group of spirits called the Manes. In the period of the Republic arose the

idea of Genius or the divine double that accompanied every individual during his or her life-time and lived with him or her as long as he or she lived. When the individual died, it was gathered to the Di Manes. It came to be believed that the Genius lived after death. Di Manes became individualized protecting spirits instead of an individualized group. Genius was divine during the life time of man. After his death it continued to live as one of the Manes. Genius received divine honours during life-time. After death his Manes received offerings as a God. The Manes came down to earth and influenced the living members of the families among whom they had lived. They received propitiation.

Numenius of Apamea in the second century speaks of the two souls in man. Origen, the Alexandrian philosopher, (A.D. 185-254), speaks of the twofold psychic division of man.

The Zoroastrian view of life persists. The optimistic, cheerful ideal of life upon earth which Zarathushtra had propounded remained as intact as in his days. Throughout the long history of Zoroastrianism, the hopeful view of life has inspired the followers of the prophet. Life was joy as Ahura Mazda himself was the creator and father of joy and happiness. The people prayed by day and by night that joy and happiness may never leave their homes. They invoked Ahura Mazda to bless them with soundness and durability of body, agility of mind and peace of heart to enable them to combat and rout wickedness, to fight and demolish the imperfections of the world and to work energetically and strenuously for the regeneration of mankind and to work with unabated zeal for the perfection of the physical world which was to be the abode of mankind for countless generations. Among the many names that the later sacred texts give unto Ahura Mazda are : All Happiness, full of Happiness and Lord of Happiness. The Father of Happiness has created happiness for mankind. Self-control, discipline of body, purity of mind and righteousness of heart ever remain the ideal of life.

CHAPTER XVII

MITHRAISM

Iranian Mithra's religion goes to Europe. Though Iranian in origin, Mithra's cult was soon surcharged with Semitic accretions. The Achaemenians had conquered Babylonia, Assyria and Chaldea. The Chaldean astrology or the Semitic star worship came to be assimilated with Mithraism. Mithra was assimilated to Shamash, the god of the Sun, by the Chaldean theology. In Zoroastrian theology, Mithra was distinct from the Sun. Now he was united with the Sun and called Sol Invictus or the Invisible Sun in the Roman Mysteries. Afterwards Mithra came to be identified with the gods of Asia Minor and at a later period with the Greek gods. Heterogeneous elements were mixed up with Mithra's cult from Babylonia, Asia Minor and Greece.

According to Plutarch, Mithra's cult was first taken to Rome by the Sicilian pirates who were taken captives in 67 B. C.

The martial instincts of the Roman legions that had poured forth into the Parthian regions were strongly influenced by the warlike trait of Mithra. The auxiliary soldiers of the Romans were recruited from Pactus, Capadocia, Commagene and lesser Armenia. They widely diffused Mithra's cult in Rome. So did the Roman slaves living in the Roman families spread his religion. The fame of Mithraism reached the borders of the Aegean Sea. His worship spread between India and Pontus Euxinus. His cult went in the 3rd century A. D. to the North-Western provinces and Gujarat in India.

The State patronizes Mithraism. Antiochus I, king of Commagene on Euphrates pays homage to Ahura Mazda, Mithra and Verethraghna in his epitaph (about 35 B. C.) and orders that the priests shall dress themselves and the images in Persian costume at the festivals and cover the images with golden diadems. The

relief shows Antiochus clasping the right hand of Mithra who is dressed in Persian costume with radiate nimbus. Mithra appears on horseback in Persian costume on coins. Nero asked the Magi priests who accompanied Tiridates, King of Armenia, to initiate him in the mysteries of Mithra. A temple was dedicated to Mithra by Diocletian, Galerius and Licinius. Diocletian declared Mithra as the protector of his empire by royal proclamation in 307 A. D. It seemed in the middle of the third century, when Mithraism was at the height of its triumph, that the whole Europe would turn Mithraic.

Mithra had brought the idea of Avestan *hvarena* or Kingly Glory which descended upon the kings of Persia as a shining halo. The belief prevailed that it was inherent in the person of the king. The king thereupon declared himself the descendent of divinity or divinity in flesh.

The Roman emperors honoured and patronized Mithraism, because it encouraged and supported their autocratic pretensions.

The Iranian *hvarena*, 'Kingly Glory' came to be called *gada* by the Semites. The Greeks called it Tyche. Alexander's successors established the worship of the Glory or Tyche of the king to strengthen their position that they had usurped. The Glory was honoured by the kings of Cappadocia, Pontus and Bactriana. The Seleucids proclaimed themselves the favourites of the Glory or Fortune and thus ordained to rule by the grace of God.

Mithra is spoken of as the giver of Glory in the Avestan Yasht dedicated to him. The function of dispensing the Kingly Glory made him the favourite of the Roman emperors who declared themselves possessed of this divine Glory. They ruled with absolute power in the name of God and ordered the people to worship this goddess of their own person. Many theophorous or god-bearing names compounded with the name of Mithra were used enthusiastically.

The Avesta Zravan Akarana or Boundless Time was named Kronos in Mithraism. He was declared to be the supreme godhead, the First Cause. The Sun was his physical manifestation. He is

represented in sculptures as a lion-headed human monster with a serpent encircling his body. He holds the scepter and the bolts of sovereignty and holds in each hand a key to heaven. The Iranian Yazatas or angels that had accompanied Mithra are worshipped under Greek and Latin names. Their dwelling place is on sunlit summits of Mt. Olympus. The chariot of the Supreme God is driven by the four steeds, fire, wind, water and earth. The Sun goes his daily round in the chariot. The Moon drives in a cart drawn by white bulls.

Plutarch says that Oromazes dwells in eternal light as far above sun as the sun is above the earth and Ahriman or Pluto lives down below in darkness. Mithra occupies intermediary place between them.

The aspirants to the Mithraic mysteries or the neophytes had to undergo repeated lustration and ablutions to cleanse their souls of sin. They had to live austere lives and perform elaborate ceremonies. The mystic had to undergo seven degrees of initiation to acquire wisdom and holiness.

The Mithraic sanctuaries were in caves and grottoes. Fire burnt perpetually on the altar in the deep recesses of the subterranean crypts. Greek art was enlisted in the service of Mithraism. Mithra is represented in stone monument in the act of immolating the Bull in Mithraic legends, cosmogony and mysteries.

The souls are judged after death by the tribunal of judges, presided over by Mithra. He helps the pious souls to ascend to heaven. The wicked souls go to hell.

At the end of time, Mithra will bring about the resurrection of the dead. Ahriman and demons will perish. The world will then be renovated.

Christianity triumphs over Mithraism. The Jews had settled in Roman cities in large numbers. Paul, a disciple of Jesus, had preached his master's faith far and wide. Besides the Mithraic mysteries, the worship of Isis and Osiris from Egypt and other mysteries were popular among the masses. Cultured men drew their inspiration from Greek philosophy and reproduced the works

of Cicero and Seneca. The Hellenistic Roman philosophy gradually lost its hold on those who longed for divine knowledge. Pagan philosophers were vague over the life after death.

At this time Christianity entered Rome and comforted those who were heavy laden in their lives upon earth and assured them of future recompense. The new religion exercised great influence upon the masses. They refused to pay divine homage to the emperor. They were persecuted. But the numbers of the followers of Christianity went on increasing.

The Roman empire was now on the decline. After the death of Marcus Aurelius, Christianity rose in influence and won a legal recognition in the early part of the fourth century. The Church became all-powerful a century after Constantine. By taking over the Hellenistic-Roman philosophy, the disciples of Jesus worked out a rational theology that satisfied both the spirit and the intellect.

The conversion of Constantine to Christianity became a turning point in the destinies of Mithraism. Hostility against it began under his successors. A reaction followed under Julian the Apostate (A. D. 361-363), who was initiated in the mysteries of Mithraism when he was young. He openly underwent elaborate purificatory ablutions to wipe out the stains contracted when he had received baptism and the communion of Christianity. When he ascended the throne, he introduced Mithraic worship in Constantinople and celebrated the first taurobolia at Athens. His premature death put an end to the reactionary movement. All hopes of its revival by the aristocracy that was still faithful to the Mithraic cult were extinguished with the victory of Theodosius in 394 A. D. After two hundred years of its existence in Rome, Mithraism fell when it lost the protection of the State. It lingered in the Alps and Vosges and other out of the way places for considerable time.

Though Mithraism perished, it left its marks behind and many of its beliefs and ritualistic practices and its art influenced Christianity. The votaries of Mithra used to celebrate the birth of the Sun on December 25, when at the winter solstice light triumphed over darkness and the lengthening of the day began. The Christians chose this day as the feast of the Nativity of Christ, which is celebrated to this day.

CHAPTER XVIII

MANICHAËISM

Heresies. The Greek, Arabian, Syriac and Armenian writers have frequent allusions to them in their writings. Sharastani, who wrote in the early part of the twelfth century in his *Book of Sects*, speaks of three sects. Mohsan Fani speaks of fourteen sects as he witnessed them in the seventeenth century. The Armenian writers Eznic and Eliseaus, writing in the fifth century, write about the two rival sects called Mog and Zendik.

Damascius (529 A. D.), states on the authority of Eudemus, that sects flourished in Iran which held Space as the premordial being that created the rival spirits of Good and Evil. Others held Time as the father of Oromazdes or Light and Arimanius or Darkness.

According to the Avestan texts Zravan Akarana, 'Boundless Time,' was eternally with Ahura Mazda. Later arose the sect of the Zarvanites who, according to the Armenian and Syrian writers, held Zravan as the generative principle of the universe. Moses of Chorene wrote that Time was the father of existence. Photius calls Time as the ruler of the universe and father of Hormizdas and Satan.

Zarvan or Time accompanied Mithraism to Europe as Kronos. Antiochus I of Comagene speaks of Boundless Time.

Mani's religion goes to China and Europe. Mani's heresy was as its height in Iran during the reign of Shapur II. He was a Zoroastrian priest. He claimed to be a prophet, the very seal or the last of the messengers of God, as other great and small prophets have spoken about themselves upto this day.

When Mani's followers took his religion to Europe, Manichaeism contested supremacy with Christianity in the fourth century. St. Augustine was a follower of Manichaeism before he was

converted to Christianity. Even after joining the Christian Church, he was not able to free himself from the influence of Mani's teachings. It imparted its dualistic philosophy to Christian doctrine.

Mani's eclectic system. Mani based his religion on materials drawn from Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Syrian Gnosticism. He accepted the later Zoroastrian dualism in his synthetic religion as the basic doctrine to explain the existence of evil. Light was synonymous with God and Darkness with Satan. Light will dispel Darkness in the final dispensation.

The prominent features of Manichaeism that are fundamentally opposed to Zoroastrianism are the ascetic principles of self-mortification, celibacy, fasting and the vow of poverty.

Mani holds matter as the root of evil, hence self-mortification of the body becomes a virtue in his religion. His religion becomes quietistic, ascetic and inculcates passive virtues. Life is a fleeting illusion.

Zoroastrianism stands for controlling and regulating bodily desires, but not for suppressing and killing them. Matter is not inherently evil. A healthy body can nurture a healthy mind. Man can act righteousness and assail wickedness with a sound body. The faithful prays for a long life in the body in this world. Man may work with the body and yet may live for the soul. Discipline rather than austerity is the Zoroastrian watchword. Man can effectively combat the hydra of evil with a strong body.

Monastic life is unknown throughout the long history of Zoroastrianism. Christianity had entered Iran during the Parthian rule after the conquest of Iran by Alexander the Great. Monasteries of both the sexes flourished in the Assyrian Church during the Sasanian period. The Zoroastrians looked upon them with great aversion. The Zoroastrian works of all periods exhort both the laity and the clergy to enter into matrimony. Celibacy was not to be found among the Zoroastrians at any period of Zoroastrian history. Marriage was a religious duty to the Zoroastrian Church, as it was a civic duty to the State. Herodotus writes that the Persian Kings gave prizes to those who were blessed with many

children.

Mani extolled celibacy as the greatest virtue. Marriage, according to him, was incompatible with sanctity.

Zoroastrianism condemned fasting as a sin. The only fast proper for the faithful was the fast from sin. Mani, on the other hand, advocated abstinence from food as a means of expiation for sin. Zoroastrianism enjoins that man should have sufficient food to keep his body strong and active and not to make it languid by withholding the due share of food from it. Man cannot work strenuously for righteousness and carry on a vigorous warfare against the world of wickedness which was the chief duty of man's life upon earth.

CHAPTER XIX

JUDAISM

The Hebrews. At the dawn of history, the Hebrews lived as nomad shepherds in Arabian desert. Later, some of them settled west of the river Jordan in Cannan. After a great famine some went and settled in Egypt.

About, 1300 B. C., they conquered Palestine and settled there as pastoral tribes. David later destroyed the Philistine power, subdued the Aramaeans and the peoples of Moab and Eden. He chose Jerusalem as his capital. He built his palace and fixed the Ark, the sanctuary of Yahweh (Jehovah).

Sargon II defeated their successors and carried them into captivity in Assyria. Nebuchadnezzar carried those who lived in Judah into captivity in Babylonia in 536 B. C. The Kingdom of Israel came to an end.

The Jews came under the direct influence of Chaldea and Babylonia and their culture came to be penetrated by the Babylonian culture.

Hebrew religion. After worshipping their tribal gods for a long time, the people came to believe in a more powerful god, Yahweh. He was worshipped in the form of a brazen serpent in the early period. The idol worship fell, when God came to be worshipped in a purer form. Prophet Amos (760 B. C.) raised him to monotheistic grandeur. Hosea, Isaiah exhorted the people to give up idolatry.

When the children of Israel were suffering in Egypt in bondage, God had compassion on them. He appeared unto Moses in a flame of fire burning in a bush.

In the ten commandments, Moses asks man to fear God, walk in his ways, cleave unto him, obey him, love him, and serve him with all his heart and all his soul.

Yahweh has chosen Israel unto himself as a beacon light and righteousness to mankind. They should, therefore, serve him faithfully and transgress not his commandments. If the people do this, he will give them seasonal rains, full crops and victory in warfare.

The Psalms and Prophets are full of ethical sentiment and fervent expressions of religious emotions. God is not only a judge but a god of loving kindness. He is Father in Heaven. He is merciful. 'Do not worry, for joy in the heart is life to a man,' says Ecclesiasticus. Hilel says: 'Do not to another what thou thyself hatest.' 'God is more delighted,' says Samuel, 'when one obeys him than when he offers him burnt offerings.' The Psalmists sing that a broken spirit and a contrite heart are the best sacrifices. 'Be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect.'

People bewail the unmerited sufferings in life. From the earliest times the prophets exhort the people to practise virtue. Moses reminds them to be faithful to God who had helped them and delivered them from the house of bondage, led them safe through wilderness and rescued them from great hardships. He rebuked them that now when they were happy and prosperous, they were forgetting God.

On the other hand, the anomalies of life when the righteous suffered and the wicked prospered baffle the writers of Job and later Psalms. When the poor were suffering from wretchedness and misery, the rich were living in barbaric ostentation.

Amos, a shepherd of Judah, championed the cause of the poor in the middle of the eighth century. He rebuked the rich for their greed and avarice. He is unsparing in his denunciation of the evils that flourished among the people.

Job, the richest man of his time, was righteous and eschewed wickedness. Yet calamities later befall him and he loses his property and his sons die. With pious resignation he consoles himself that what God had given him was taken away from him. He prays to God and beseeches him for mercy. But his misfortune and sufferings increase. Yet he says that God is right, but man is helpless and cannot understand God's ways which are unscrutable.

When protracted agony breaks his patience, he becomes sceptic of God's goodness. He feels that God's rod does not fall upon the wicked who prosper and the righteous suffer. He becomes weary of life and curses the day when he was born.

People in their despair, long for the coming of the Messiah who would end the sufferings and bring happiness to mankind.

Jeremiah says that every individual can raise a temple to God in his heart. The prayer for the faithful is: 'Hear O Israel, the Lord and God, the Lord is One, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might.'

Zoroastrianism influences Judaism. Jeremiah says that the Magi or Persian priests exercised great influence in the court of King Nebuchadnezzar at Jerusalem in Babylonia. During the seventy years of exile in Babylonia, the Jews came in close contact with Zoroastrianism. Raphael, Gabriel, Michael, Uriel and Azazel are of the post-exilic period. The seventh chapter of Ezra speaks of the King of Persia. Cyrus was the shepherd and the anointed of Yahweh in Judea. He ordered the restoration of the temple at Jerusalem. Gabriel and Michael are the angels who have Persian character. There is a great resemblance between the purificatory rites of the Vendidad and the Pentateuch. Persian eschatology greatly influenced the Hebrews. Reward and Retribution after death in the next world, Resurrection of the Body, the coming of the Saviour came from Zoroastrianism.

In the apocryphal Book of Tobit, we have Asmodaëus (Avestan Aeshma Daeva), the Demon of Fury. Reference to Zoroastrianism are found in Ezekiel and Isaiah. As Ahura Mazda clothes himself with the massy heavens, so Yahweh covers himself with light as a garment. Judea was one of the provinces of the Persian Empire.

Greek philosophy comes to Judaism. From the fourth century began the intercourse with the Greeks, who gave their philosophy to the Jews. Though Hebrew was the sacred language, the Aramaic was more popular. Jewish literature was enriched by Greek writings like the wisdom of Solomon.

There was great syncretism in Babylonia during last four centuries before Christ. It was in Alexandria that Judaism came in close contact with the Hellenic spirit. Philo brought the Platonic philosophy to Judaism.

The great Jewish medieval scholar Marmonides bases his philosophy on Aristotle. His teachings are optimistic. Evil is negative. The function of religion is to teach mankind how to gain happiness, which is the aim of life. Virtue is to be practised for virtue's sake. Spinoza says that virtue is its own reward. The aim of existence is human happiness, says Crescas.

CHAPTER XX

CHRISTIANITY

The Prophet. Jesus Christ was born in a manger in a stable of an inn in Bethlehem. Out of compassion for mankind living the life of inequity and sin, God became man in Jesus. As the mediator, he alone could secure from God forgiveness of man's sins and restore him to divine fellowship. He lived and suffered and undertook to save mankind by his supreme sacrifice of dying as ransom for mankind. Jesus, the Son of Man, offered the very life of his body for the sake of mankind. To lay down one's life for the good of others is the best expression of love for others. When one becomes dead to self and self-centered desires, then only one can dedicate one's life as a living sacrifice.

Jesus does not speak as only a messenger or prophet of God, but in the person of God to give consolation to despairing mankind. He asserts that he and his Father are one, both being in one another. The works that Jesus seems to be doing are done by his Father who dwells in him. Those who do the will of God are owned by him as his kith and kin. The Kingdom of Heaven after death will be theirs.

God does not relish burnt offerings and sacrifices. Man has to worship God in spirit. If man has faith in God, he is helped by God in his woe. Faith in God is everything. It can move the mountain and can cast it into the sea. God is merciful, forgiving and just.

Love is the basic principle of life. It is the binding force, the bond of unification between God and man, and man and man. The sphere of love is neither tribal, nor communal, nor national, but universal. When a man wishes well to himself, he must recognize that his neighbour has an equal right to his own well-being. The golden rule of life for man is, as Zoroaster and Con-

fucius had said before Jesus, to do unto others what he wills, others should do unto him and not to do to others what he wills others should not do unto him.

“Love thy neighbour as thyself” is the sublime teaching of Jesus. If man loves God with all his strength and all his mind and all his heart and all his soul and if nations love all nations as themselves, all will be well with the world. The two fundamental commandments, says Jesus, are that man should love God and his children. Mankind’s salvation lies in the faithful practice of universal love.

Greed, jealousy, envy and hatred divide God’s children into two antagonizing factors of the strong and the weak and the rich and the poor. The world is owned and ruled by the strong and the rich. The weak and the poor toil and suffer. Jesus comes as the friend and saviour of the weak and the poor. He says: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are very heavy laden, I will give you rest.” He lives himself the consecrated life of weakness and poverty. He exhorts the faithful to rescue and uplift the weak and the poor, the sorrowing and the suffering.

Jesus lived and died a poor man. If man has money, let him help the poor and the needy. Let him relieve the poor of their misery as his duty towards his fellow-beings. Let his left hand know not what he gives by the right hand. The riches and the treasure of the earth can be corrupted by moth and rust and stolen by thieves. The real treasure is the one of virtue which is imperishable. The greatest virtue is charity. God rewards one in heaven with treasure, who gives what he has in charity to the poor. To visit the widows and the orphans to alleviate their sufferings is the best way of practising religion. Contentment with the little that one has of food and clothes is a great virtue that leads to happiness.

Jesus holds service before self. Jesus always speaks of himself as a servant of mankind. He ministers all throughout his life to the poor and the needy. Humility is a great virtue. The man who prides in exalting himself among his fellow-men shall be abased by the hand of God, whereas he who humbles himself before all will win exaltation. Jesus gives his life as a ransom for mankind

and exhorts all to lead the life of self sacrifice.

Evil should be overcome by good. Evil should not be recompensed by evil, for it furthers evil. If one strikes another on his cheek, it is better for the injured person to meekly turn his other cheek to the aggressor, instead of retaliating in any way.

As God, in his mercy, forgives trespasses of the sinners, so should man return the hate of an enemy with love, his curse with a blessing, his persecution with kindness for him. The enemy should be fed when he hungers and he should be given water when he thirsts.

CHAPTER XXI

MOHAMMADANISM

The Prophet. Mohammad was born at Mecca in Arabia in 571. Islam, as the religion is called means : 'to be at rest, to have done one's duty, to be at perfect peace.' It is generally held to be submissive to the will and commandments of God. Moslem, comes from Islam and means a righteous person. Mohammad wrote by himself as the sign and seal of the prophets, as the last apostle of God. Mohammad meets Gabriel. He believed in his divine commission to restore the faith of Abraham. The holy Koran was the word of God transmitted to the prophet by Gabriel.

God. There is no God but God. God is one without the second. He is the Creator, Maker, Merciful, Compassionate, the Most High God. He is the King, the Holy, the Peace-giver, the Faithful, the Protector, the Mighty, the Repairer and the Great. He is not afar. If three whisper together, God is there as the fourth. From the minarets of the mosques, the Muezzines call the faithful to prayer: 'Great is God, God is Great. There is no object of worship, but God and Mohammad is the Prophet of God. Come to prayer, come to prayer. Prayer is better than sleep. So rise you faithful and come to prayers, come to prayers.' Mohammad calls Prayers 'the pillar of religion.' 'Praise be to God, Lord of the world, the Merciful, the Compassionate, King of the Fateful Day. Thee only do we worship and to Thee we look for help. Guide us to the Path that is Straight, Thy love is great.' Nothing can befall people save what God hath destined. 'Praise ye, therefore, the name of the Lord, the Most High. Say, He is God, one and alone, God the Eternal. He begetteth not and he is not begotten. There is none like unto him.'

'Seek pardon of your Lord and be turned to him, verily the Lord is merciful and loving.' 'O Lord, grant to me the love of

Thee, grant that I may love those that love Thee, grant that I may do the deed that may win Thy love, make Thy love dearer to me than self, family and wealth.'

'Thou my Lord art my refuge. Thou art the forgiver. I am the sinner, I am groping in the dark. I seek Thy knowledge and love and mercy. Forgive my sins, O my Lord and let me approach Thee, my Lord.'

God is not to be worshipped for fear of hell, nor for hope of paradise. He is to be worshipped for his own sake.

'Seek pardon of your Lord and be turned to him. Verily my Lord is merciful and loving.'

'A good man gives alms. If he gives it with his right hand and conceals it from his left, he overcomes all things. Every good act is charity, your smiling in your brother's face, your putting a wanderer in the right road, your giving water to the thirsty is charity. Exhortation to another to do right is charity. A man's true wealth hereafter is the good he has done in this world to his fellow-men. When he dies people will ask : what property has he left behind him? But the angels will ask : what good deeds has he sent before him.

The ethics. Ethically, Mohammad taught justice and truth reprehended pride and envy and exalted filial devotion and charity. A pure heart and good works as concomitants of faith in One God and the Judgment Day became the ethical code. God inspires the faithful to give one's alms, one's wealth to the poor and the needy and the orphans. Righteousness consists in such acts. God loves those that are kind.

The righteous repose at peace in heaven. The wicked will suffer until the Day of Resurrection. Mahdi, a guide will appear before the Day. He will fill the earth with righteousness. Those who submit themselves to God and are doers of good to others will have reward from God. The faithful and the Jews and Christians and Sabians and all who believe in God and the last day and do good, shall reap reward from God.

Mohammad teaches tolerance and good-will towards all. 'O

people of the Book : Be not ye troubled for the Unbelievers. Verily they who believe and the Jews and Sabeites and the Christians, whoever of them believes in God and in the Last Day and what is Right, on them shall come no fear, neither shall they be put to grief.'

'We believe in what hath been sent down to us and what hath been sent down to you. Our God and your God is One and to Him are we all in common pledged.'

In his last sermon, the prophet said: 'Know that every Moslem is the brother of every other Moslem. All of you are equal in the eye of heaven. For ye are but the pre-ordained, units of one vast ever-living Brotherhood.'

Islam is an eclectic religion that has taken from great religions. The Holy Koran has contributions from Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Sabeian ideas and practices and ancient Arabian beliefs. The religions of the lands that were conquered reacted upon Islam. Hopkins says that Mohammad was the logical successor of the old prophets of Israel. He believed that he was carrying on their work, God had appointed him as an apostle to the Arabs, as the Hebrew prophets had been chosen to reveal God to their people.

Zoroastrianism influenced Judaism and through it Christianity and Mohammadanism. There is a close resemblance between the theory of Christian and Moslem Repentance and the conception of Salvation through repentance, faith and good deeds.

Neo-Platonism penetrated into Persia when Plotinus and Porphyry came there during the early Sasanian period. Tansar, the premier of Ardeshir, the founder of the Sasanian Empire was a Neo-Platonist. Greek philosophy was studied with deep interest. When the illustrious king Noshirvan the Just became the king of Persia in the sixth century, it was said that a disciple of Plato had ascended the throne of Persia. The great king founded his famous academy at Jundi Shahpur. It was soon filled with great scholars from Greece, India and other parts of the world. King Justinian had closed the philosophical school at Athens and exiled the philosophers

at the time. King Noshirvan welcomed them to his academy. The works of Plato, Aristotle and other philosophers were rendered into Pahlavi, the court language of Persia. This Pahlavi version was rendered into Syriac, Hebrew and later into Arabic.

The Arabs later took the works of Plato and Aristotle to Europe. The Arabs became the teachers of Greek philosophy, medicine, astronomy, mathematics and science in the universities of Bagdad, Cordova in Spain when Europe was in the Dark Ages. The Moslems remained the torch-bearers of learning from the eighth to the fourteenth century in the West.

Burzol, a Zoroastrian physician, had rendered into Pahlavi a Buddhist collection of stories and fables, known as Bidpai or Pilpai. Ibnu'l Muqaffa rendered it into Arabic under the name Kalilah and Dimnah and in Persian as Anwar-i Suhali, Light of Canopus.

The Pahlavi version of Panchatantra, the Sanskrit work of fables, was rendered into Syriac, Hebrew, Arabic, Greek, Latin, Modern Persian. Ultimately, they passed into the modern languages of Europe.

The fiction of the classical and patristic writers who attribute the origin of magic to Zoroaster continues upto recent times. The prophet of Persia figures as the prince of magicians in the Faust-legend. Faust was so fond of his book that he is called a second Zoroaster. Faust's pupil Wagner studied this book most diligently.

In the tenth century Christians, Jews and Moslems spoke the same language and were all invited in their research work at Cordova. Passion for research and study in science, philosophy and literature flourished in Bagdad, Salermo, Cairo and Cordova universities.

The Sufis. Those that clothed themselves in *suf* or coarse wool were called Sufis, The Arabic word *sufi* is equivalent to the Persian *pashmina*. *suf* is indigenous to Mohammadanism. The conception of the Fatherhood of God as the milder aspect and the Immanence of God as the universal aspect was introduced by Sufism in Mohammadanism. The Sufis adopted the neo-Platonic ideas. The individual was identified with God. They gave them-

selves up to religious ecstasy and contemplation and interpreted Koran allegorically.

Asceticism and mysticism are the prominent features of Sufism. It teaches brotherhood of man. God loves those who do good to mankind. God is Omniscient, All-pervading and Compassionate. The Sufi element modified the concept of the religion of fear in Mohammadanism.

CHAPTER XXII

THE FOURFOLD RELIGIOUS PATH

The Religion of knowledge. The prime characteristic of Ahura Mazda, the Zoroastrian godhead, is knowledge. Ahura Mazda means the Lord of Knowledge. Man's life is moulded and made by knowledge which is gained by reasoning process, reading and learning. The priests were the only learned men in early times. They became the custodians of traditions and customs, teachers, scribes, chroniclers, historians and bards.

Man is endowed with intellect. He alone is blessed in the animate world with innate knowledge and wisdom. Progressive is knowledge. It knows no end. Religion, Ethics, Philosophy, History, Classics, Science and various other subjects increase man's knowledge.

Knowledge is secular as well as sacred. From earliest times there have been thinkers, sages and seers who were not content with learning as others did. They considered that they could not get seclusion in the social life. They desired peace for quiet thinking, meditation and contemplation. They therefore sought forest solitude. With rigorous discipline they laboured to suppress passions and feelings to concentrate their mind on God to win spiritual insight. They practised austerities and flagellated themselves. With concentrated meditation and contemplation they laboured to remove thoughts and feelings and passions to bring about mental poise to think upon the verities of life.

The Religion of Morality. Man's nature gives expression to the rules that he has to observe in his life. He finds that he has to be true to his creator and his fellow human beings. He learns by experience that to rise to manhood from his primitive animal nature, he has to be faithful and dutiful to all around him. By thinking and reasoning he comes to frame laws for his conduct and

rules that he has to observe in his dealings in private and public life. Reason reveals and dictates moral laws to mankind which it has to observe for the peaceful, happy life in the world. To be moral is not for the sake of getting any reward or benefit, but it is the duty of man as rational being to observe the fundamental rules and regulations of life which his reason dictates as true and good. He has to obey the dictates of reason for his behaviour and make his life based on morality. The rules and customs and conventions that regulate human relations form morality, which takes shape by man's thinking and reasoning. Man frames moral laws conducive to mutual welfare. He learns by experience that honesty, faithfulness, mutual trust, truthfulness, co-operation contribute to the happiness of all alike.

Whereas the moral laws of conduct are the product of the rationality of man, religious laws of conduct are taught by the prophets of God. Morality created by man receives higher sanction from religion. As religious morality is born of the prophets of God, it is nobler and sublimer. It confers supernatural halo upon human morality.

The Religion of Devotion. Religions foster man's devotional spirit. Devotion is the devout expression of the inner life of man. It is selflessly and willingly giving away one's self to God without seeking any reward, without asking a boon or coveting the frail and fleeting earthly things or any divine gift. It is the genuine self-abnegation and renunciation of self in the whole-hearted search for the Divine Self. Controlling human nature by self-discipline to surrender one's self to the creator is devotion. It is to deliberately forget one's own self to seek the higher heavenly self. It is to think and meditate and pray to see the sublime divine light flash upon the soul. It is the intellectual and emotional sacrificing of one's inner self at the altar of God. Heartily praying to God manifests devotion. It is the passionate, hearty human longing to greet the heavenly father. It is to prostrate before God with the thrilling of the heart. It is the worshipper's deep sentiment of adoration, affection and love for God, the friend and father. It is the deep ardent concentration of the soul and contemplative feeling

of the spirit to be attuned to God. It is fixing the inner eye of one's self upon the one and only God with concentrated contemplation and meditation. It is the worshipper's ardent desire and fervent feeling to love God, to meet him, to greet him, to dedicate himself to him and to make him his own.

Devotion is the outward expression of the passionate will of man to lead devout life. It is man's hearty and willing sacrifice to the will of God. It is man's firm resolve to live for God and to work for God. Man becomes conscious with devotion of the nearness of God. He begins to believe in the coming approach towards God, to get the sight of God, to hear the sound of God. With purity of mind and heart the devout longs to have communion with God. Devotion is the whole-hearted, spontaneous, voluntary submission to the will of God. It is the fervent longing of the devout soul to have a spiritual communion with God.

The Religion of Rituals. The emotional nature of human beings is the important part of religious life. Ritual feeds it. It is an inspiration to devotional fervour. It inspires purity of thoughts. As the formal side of religion, it stimulates religious emotion. It inspires virtuous conduct. It is a substantial aid to religious life. When properly performed, it creates righteous feelings in the hearts of people. It is the formal side of religion and helps the individual's religious life. As the outward expression of religion, it stimulates religious life.

The priests attached symbolical significance to rituals. They attributed mysterious power to rites and ceremonies. Gods came to be propitiated and placated with elaborate ceremonies and sacrificial rites. Those for whom ceremonies were performed secured their heart's desires.

Ritualism rose to pre-eminent position. It became the central feature of religion. Rituals and ceremonies were believed to procure earthly gifts and heavenly blessings. They appeased the innate hunger of the people for religion. The priests satisfied the religious needs of the masses of people who craved for rituals and sacrifices. Ceremonies performed by the priests for the living or the dead came to be believed as bringing great merit.

The belief grows that the intercessory prayers recited and rituals performed by the priests for the souls of the dead help them in the next world. They procure remission of the sins of the dead and help their sinful souls to make their way out of hell and ascend towards heaven. Elaborate rituals came to be performed by the survivors of the dead for their spiritual welfare. Periodical rites came to be performed to secure a better lot for the souls of the departed ones. Rich viands were consecrated in their names. The priests were paid to recite expiatory prayers for the dead.

The religions founded by the prophets enjoin that men and women go to the abode of weal or woe according to their deserts. But the masses believed that the costly ceremonies performed by the living for their departed dead mitigate the sufferings of the sinners and improve their condition in the world of spirits.

The ideals that the prophets had put forth that as man sows so does he reap is gradually weakened. Merit is believed to be purchased at a price and sins expiated by proxy.

CHAPTER XXIII

RELIGIONS LOSE THEIR PRISTINE PURITY

The Zealous custodians of the religions of the world.

Among the early savage and barbarian peoples the priests were the only people who possessed learning howsoever insignificant. As medicine-men, magicians, sorcerers they were found everywhere from the earliest times. The work of healing was performed by them. They acted as mediators with the supernatural powers to bring their superhuman help to mankind. They practised magic and communicated with the gods by ritualistic and sacrificial propitiation. They were believed to be intimately connected with the gods. They were the representatives of gods among mankind. Gods conferred divine powers upon them. They won the favour of the gods by prayer and sacrifice. Gods could be approached only through the medium of the priests.

Kings were often invested with sacerdotal authority. They became the high-priests of the gods or the sons of the gods. They came to be worshipped as gods. Before the establishment of the Republic, when the Roman Empire was monarchical, the sovereign was both king and priest. In many countries there came to be the unity of the Church and the State and the priests rose to position and power.

The sacerdotal caste became highly influential and powerful. The belief prevailed everywhere that the priests possessed magical and divine power. The priests claimed that they were gods on earth.

The priests were the interpreters of dreams and readers of stars. As they were the healers of the body, so were they the healers of the disease of the soul. They absolved man from sin. They were the exorcisers of evil powers.

They became the educators of youths and guardians of human

morals. They rose to a dignified position and they came to be held in high estimation. The profession of priesthood became hereditary among some peoples. This hereditary custom gave rise to the increase of illiterate and ignorant priests.

The team spirit between the priests is conspicuous by its absence. It has been so between the priests of different religions, as also between the priests of various denominations of one and the same religion. God has ordained that religion should be the greatest cohesive factor for the unity of mankind. The priests and their intolerant followers have made religion the greatest divisive factor among all peoples in all periods of history. Fanatic zeal and intolerant spirit have always divided the followers of religions into innumerable sects.

The priests are wedded to orthodoxy. The one inalienable function of orthodoxy is never to tolerate any change in the matter of belief. It asserts a claim to belief and authority. It insists upon conformity to beliefs and customs that have been accepted by a people and opposes any reform or change in the matter. It is a consummate fidelity to tradition. It insists that the dogmas and doctrines that a people has inherited are unchangeable under any circumstances. The established views of life are fixed and right. It is rank obstinacy to forget anything old and to learn anything new. The average man being temperamentally timid and conservative, dislikes to be disturbed in thoughts and views he has inherited from the time past. Orthodoxy's safe refuge is in tradition. It longs to live content and secure in the dead past. Tradition is sacred to it. Being jealous of the views it holds, it vehemently opposes any change in them. It clips the wings of thought, gags speech and cripples action. Free thinking is taboo to orthodoxy. It is impervious to the influence of changing times. It tolerates not intellectual dissent from established views. The collective orthodox mind drives the free thinking dissenters to secrete their differing thoughts in the lowest depths of their souls. Orthodoxy blindly opposes and prevents free thinking and high thinking. It is heterodoxy to dissent from the established dogmas and doctrines, customs and beliefs.

Orthodoxy has numbers on its side. It is the ingrained spirit in mankind. It still prevails all throughout the world in spite of the unprecedented progress of learning and cultural advancement.

Very few priests are fortunate to be free from the fetters of orthodoxy. They are blatantly branded by the zealous orthodox as infidels and heretics.

CHAPTER XXIV

RELIGIONS OF SOCIO-RELIGIOUS CUSTOMS

Religions in history. When the prophets begin their prophetic work among peoples, they find that the peoples are encumbered with many superstitious beliefs and practices. Among the customs prevailing among the masses are many that have come down from primitive times. They may have originated in barbaric or savage life of the ancestors of the peoples, but as they have come down from the remote past, they are loved and honoured as the most precious treasure. The prophets remove them and preach their new religions of higher and nobler type full of great ethical value and sublime teachings.

But as soon as the prophets pass away, there arise great differences in the interpretations of the sacred texts of the new religions among their immediate disciples which give rise to schisms in society.

The ancient beliefs and practices that the prophets had removed had so unbounded fascination for the masses that they revive them and practise them as they did before the advent of the prophets. These get intermingled with the new teachings of the prophets and with the passing of time come to be believed as inalienable part of the new religions. The priests themselves attribute their authorship to the prophets and the religions become encumbered with the essentials and non-essentials and turn out to be the teachings of the prophets and the socio-religious customs of the past.

The priests have always held it their paramount duty to justify and vindicate whatever that has come down to them. They resort to interpreting the sacred texts by means of rationalism, esotericism spiritualism and other fantastic methods to prove them infallible.

People found it easier to gather merit by the rituals performed for them by the priests than by following the life of active virtue. They thought it easier to expiate their sins by means of rituals and

sacrifices. The priests undertook to ward off evil of the people by chanting magical incantations for them and by giving them talismans or amulets to wear.

The old gods beaoned their ignorant and superstitious votaries to give up the new faith and come back to them and offer sacrificial offerings as they had been doing before the coming of the new prophets. The higher ethical religions preached by the prophets thus reverted to ceremonialism and formalism. The ancient gods and goddesses returned to the new religions and were absorbed in the new religions under new names and received offerings and sacrifices and libations as before.

The primitive formulas of magical spells and incantations are incorporated in the litanies of the new religions. They are intermingled with the devotional hymns of the new religions by the priests.

The people have returned to their former religions of fear and superstition instead of firmly adhering to the new spiritual religions taught by the great prophets. With the passing of time the new religions of socio-religious customs came to be believed as the production of the prophets themselves. The superstitious heritage of the primitive times is engrafted on the new religions of the prophets.

CHAPTER XXV

GOD'S UNIVERSAL RELIGION

From religions to One Religion. Primitive religions, when mankind was emerging from ignorance and superstition, evolved gradually from Naturism, Animism, Totemism, Fetishism, Polydemonism, Euhemerism, Dualism, Polytheism, Pantheism and Monotheism. In place of ghosts and goblins the prophets of God taught men and women to believe in angels and archangels.

The sages and seers founded the Vedic religion in India. The holy prophets of God inspired mankind with Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Shintoism, Christianity and Mohammedanism.

It is the habit of thinking persons to extol everything that is their own as excellent and immeasurably superior to all. Their country, they say, is the best and the greatest, their religion is the best and true and the only true and destined to be the Universal Religion of the world.

The coming of those that claim to be the prophets and apostles of God has known no end. When mankind was despairing that the world was full of misery, wretchedness and evil, the prophets gave them hope of the coming Saviour and Mahdi and Messiah in the fulness of time to bring perfection of the imperfect world. The self-styled pseudoprophets and apostles claiming to be such messengers of God have continued to come in the East and West throughout history upto the present day

God made religion the greatest cohesive factor. Man has made it the greatest divisive factor that has divided mankind into rival sects and denominations and creeds.

The great prophets have put before mankind the sublime ideals of Righteousness, Truth, Duty, Self-sacrifice, Mercy, For-

giveness, Love and Brotherhood. Mankind has brought forth religions of Socio-religious Customs and Rituals. Religions have lost their pristine purity.

Religion is the warp and woof of the fabric of life. Mankind would be happy through the unity of religions. Men and Women are all the children of God. They have to live for and work for universal brotherhood. All religions are one and the same in their essentials, they differ in their non-essentials. It is the paramount duty of all to discriminate between the essentials and non-essentials of all religions. All should faithfully work for the unification and co-ordination of all diverse religions as they exist to-day. The basis of religious life are devotion and love. Religion of devotion and love alone can bring the unity and brotherhood of mankind. God desires mankind to work for the unity and oneness of religions. The Universal Religion will unite man with God.

May God bless mankind with boundless brotherly feelings and enthuse men and women to work enthusiastically and strenuously with infinite tolerance to merge all religions into God's Universal Religion.

The earth will then be converted into paradise.

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THIS BOOK WAS DONATED
BY
THE KARACHI PARSI ANJUMAN TRUST FUND (KPATF)
TO
THE ZOROASTRIAN ASSOCIATION OF HOUSTON
TO SAFELY HOUSE IN THEIR
ZARATHUSHTI HERITAGE AND CULTURAL CENTER
AS PART OF ITS DASTUR M. N. DHALLA MEMORABILIA

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