THE PHILOSOPHY OF OUR ARYAN BROTHER. 1

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Some time ago, I submitted an article on our Aryan brother in which an effort was made to give an historical outline of the main upheavals in the philosophic and religious evolution of that race. 2 Limitation of space permitted of no attempt to enter into any details or analysis of the religious philosophy which underlies and influences the religion and lives of our Aryan brother. To fill those gaps is the object of this article.

Without necessarily being a believer in or a follower of Aryan religious philosophy, before one can write or even read intelligently upon the subject, it is essential to be in sympathy with the Aryan mind and thereby catch the spirit of its thought. Perhaps the greatest difficulty in acquiring this sympathy is the fundamental opposition between our and their philosophical conceptions. To us, the creation of the world is a basic proposition, to the Aryan it is unthinkable in that it implies the doctrine that something was made from nothing. To the Aryan everything that is is either an eternal thing or else a form or manifestation or phase of some eternal thing. From this point of view a mortal thing can never become immortal; to be immortal a thing must always have been immortal, therefore everything that is born must die and everything that dies must have been born some time. This explains why the Aryan is unable to accept the view of soul immortality unless previous immortality be conceded to it. To him it is ludicrous to conceive any Power making a soul from nothing and then bestowing immortality upon it. These are the basic conceptions deeply ingrained in the minds of all Aryans, and the various so-called Hindu philosophies and religions are merely offshoots from this common root.

On those who took the trouble to read my first article, the impression was perhaps made that the question of Aryan religions was one of great complexity and confusion, seemingly based on a shifting foundation and lacking coherence. To those of us out in India the same impression is given, more particularly as we see

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men leading austere and ascetic lives, and know of high spiritual teaching based on a refined and subtle philosophy coming from the advanced thinkers; while on the other hand all around among the masses one sees and hears of the grossest superstition and credulity accompanied by the most absurd forms of ritualistic nonsense, and not infrequently evidence of the worst forms of the old Phallic worship with its associated immorality and obscenity. These are incongruities difficult to reconcile, but, in the history of all races, there are these extremes and contradictions. Usually these antitheses are separated by periods of time or eras of thought; in India, the difficulty is that they exist contemporaneously and side by side. As a student of this question one can only explain the lowest forms of superstition and religious debasement in India alongside of the highest types of religious and philosophic knowledge and teaching by the mentality of the Aryan and his history. For ages the Aryan race has been separated by but a thin veil from "the other side of life." For ages the Aryan mind has been trained to regard the material world as an illusion, and that to the spiritual world the mind of man may most effectually be turned. In a mental soil so rich with material for spiritual growth we find a ready field for noxious crops of superstition, devil-worship and other debasements of thought and practice. This being so we see the more cultured minds mounting to a higher plane and finding satisfaction in an esoteric philosophy, while the ignorant and mentally ill-developed resort to and are satisfied with the lower psychic and spiritual ideals, as represented by the grosser polytheism of our day. Having thus cleared the way; we may pass to an examination of the theory underlying the whole of Aryan thought, and then see how from this theory a philosophy has been evolved, and how the teaching of this is interpreted in the main cults current among our Aryan brothers.

I.

The three following axioms are the basis upon which is built the whole of Aryan philosophy:

(1) From nothing, nothing can come; something cannot be caused by or proceed from nothing; nothing real can be created, for if it is not now, it never can be; if it ever was not, it is not now; and if it is now, it ever has been.

(2) Something real cannot be dissolved into nothing; if it is now, it always will be; nothing that is can ever be destroyed;
dissolution is merely the changing of form, or the resolving of an effect into its preceding cause, real or relative.

(3) What has evolved must have been involved; the real or relative cause must contain the effect; the effect must be the reproduction of the real or relative cause.

Starting from these axioms, the teaching which underlies all the Aryan philosophic systems develops from the basic idea that there is one Absolute Being from which all else emanated, and from whom all individual souls proceeded. It followed from this that the soul is immortal, but capable of re-birth under a universal law of cause and effect. Even in the earliest developments from this idea, it was formulated that there is nothing constant, fixed, or imperishable in the observable aspects of the universe; consequently, none of the things of this world are real. Next, underneath all the changing manifestations of the universe there must be something that is Real. This Reality must be One in its essential being, otherwise there would be no continuity or method in the observable universe. Obviously, this ultimate Reality must be above all observable attributes or qualities, including man; hence its inner nature is unknowable, and beyond definition or name. The Sanskrit term for this unknowable Reality is Tat, but in current Aryan literature it is usually referred to as the Brahman or Absolute. As something could not come from nothing, or something be dissolved into nothing, it is reasoned that the Brahman was eternal. The next step in reasoning argues that as nothing existed outside the Brahman, therefore the observable universe is the effect of the Brahman, and the Brahman is the Cause. We must here note that the Aryans never say "the first Cause"; to them the Cause is the only real cause, and withal a causeless Cause. The subtlety of this is obvious. A further step is the affirmation that as all that is must be real, and as the Brahman is all that is real, therefore the Brahman is all that is, and consequently anything that is not the Brahman can be nothing that is. It follows from this that all that seems or appears to be must lack reality and existence, and must be either nothing or else an emanation or manifestation of the Brahman or Absolute. It comes, therefore, to this that to the Aryan philosopher, the Brahman or Absolute is that from which all life, function, and attribute is manifested by emanation, reflection, or otherwise; and it is only when all these secondary conceptions of the Brahman are thought away that the Absolute is thinkable.
On these fundamental ideas six main and some ten or more minor systems of philosophy have been evolved by the advanced thinkers among Aryans. Only one calls for detailed analysis, as it is the system controlling and behind the religion of nine-tenths of present-day Hindus. The system in question is the Vedanta; the other great and minor systems are practically dead in India at the present time, each having relatively few adherents. All are dominated by the ideas already explained, but differ one from another in respect of details and metaphysical arguments.

The Vedanta Philosophy had as its forebear the original system of Kapila dating back to about 1500 B.C. The Vedanta system probably dates from 700 B.C., when it was evolved from the Upanishads or later Vedas in response to the demands of the philosophical minds of the Aryans, who desired a codification of the general speculative ideas of the race dealing with the Absolute and its relations to the many, as distinguished from the ritual and dogmas upon which the early parts of the Vedas laid so much stress. The dominancy of this particular system dates from the middle of the eighth century or the time of the decline of Buddhism in India. The cold doctrine of Gautama, the Buddha, with its austerities, did not satisfy the cravings of the race for a more tangible religion—though it had driven many of the old ideas and dogmas from the minds of the people. In response to this need, a revival of the Vedanta philosophy, led by Sankara, has been followed by an extension of its adherents throughout India, until now it practically holds the field amongst orthodox Hindus.

A basic proposition of the earlier Kapila system is that in the universe there exist two emanations from the Brahman, the interaction of which produces the activities and forms of the universe, including Life. These two principles or emanations are prakriti, or the primordial substance or energy from which all material forms and energies evolve, and purusha, or a spirit which seeks embodiment in prakriti, thus giving rise to all the various entities from atoms to man. The entanglement of purusha in prakriti leads to Ishwara, from which results the whole of the observable world. This dual aspect of the Brahman involving a conception of many forms of matter sensitized by many souls or spirits is not accepted in this simple form by the Vedantists, as a whole. One school holds that the Brahman contains within himself elements of plural modes of existence which share his
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reality, and are at one with himself, although apparently separate and individual. This school further holds that the material universe is an illusion occasioned by the individual souls or plural elements of the Brahman, being deluded by Ignorance, which produces maya or Illusion, the cause of the material universe as man sees it. When the individual soul realizes its nature and identity with the Brahman, the spell of maya or illusion is over, and the soul escapes samsara, or this present world of existence or cycles of existences, and returns to its original state of Bliss by absorption into the Brahman.

The other school of Vedantist thought, and which claims to be the exponent of the true philosophy of Sankara, maintains that the Brahman himself is entangled and affected by the baleful principle of maya or illusion, and that the Brahman, influenced by this glamour, imagines himself separated into countless individual spirits or souls and creates an imaginary universe of the senses which serves to bind it more and more. From this, it will be obvious that the Vedantist of this school conceives the Brahman or Absolute One involved in a figment of his own imagination, losing himself in a dream of an observable universe and believing himself to be countless individual selves or entities, instead of the One spirit and One self which he really is. We must own that it is an extraordinary conception and represents the extreme position of the Vedantic idealistic philosophy. Putting it in another way, the teaching of this school of Vedantists amounts to this, that the Brahman being the one immutable, indivisible Reality, it follows that the observable manifestations or phenomena of this present world of existence and the material universe are but illusory fictions—the figments of the imagination or dream state of the Brahman himself. The first stage of the fantasy being the illusion of “separateness,” the second stage being the illusion of the sense universe appearing to the individual entities or souls, which themselves are but illusory fictions in the mind of the Brahman. To use one of their own phrases, it is the Brahman who sees himself reflected from the water drops or water jars of maya, and imagines that he is many instead of one. So long as they are in the bonds of this world which holds their attention, the individual souls or entities persist in their illusory semblance or reflection of the Brahman, though all the time they are but the Brahman himself. Only by realizing this unity with the Absolute can each soul or entity escape, one by one, from this glamour of Illusion or maya, and awaken from the dream of
samsara or this present cycle of existences. Only by "knowledge" can the soul escape its isolated bondage and return to a true consciousness of its Real Self.

If the reader has followed the argument it will be apparent that the differences between the two schools of Vedantists is really a matter of metaphysical conceptions. Both accept the doctrine of illusion, but differ as to the manner by which it comes about. This idea of the illusory nature of this world and all its manifestations runs through all the Aryan philosophies and is the key to the peculiar mental attitude of Aryans which is so puzzling to us when we discuss the nature of Life and its destiny. One of the most difficult questions which arises in discussions of this kind between ourselves and an educated Hindu is, what is the nature and origin of this mysterious maya or function of illusion? What is the cause of maya? It must come from the Brahman, then why does he permit it? Most Brahmans decline to discuss it in this form. They say that maya appears and is in accord with the Brahman's nature and being and that it is no question of its being contrary to the will or desire of the Absolute One. From this point of view, therefore, the Brahman himself is the cause and why of maya, or, in other words the mystery is unsolvable except by the Brahman, and the question can no more be answered than the reason or necessity of the existence of the Brahman himself. We find then that even the Vedantist philosophy brings us no nearer the solution of the great riddle of all, which is why was the universe created? Notwithstanding the advanced metaphysical views of the Vedantist philosophers the doctrine of a personal God is admitted. Ishwara is the personal God, by the conception that when the creative processes began, the Brahman, overspread or under the glamour of maya, manifests first as Ishwara and then from Ishwara proceeds the remainder of creation. The deduction follows that the individual soul is identical with Ishwara and Ishwara is identical with the Brahman. Thus, Ishwara is the universal soul, containing within itself the collective totality of all individual souls, and may be worshipped as a personal God and loved as an Over-soul. But even Ishwara is but an appearance in maya or illusion, and finally must awaken to the fact that he is nothing in himself but everything in the Absolute. In the same way, the individual soul, once seeing the truth or acquiring the knowledge, may ignore Ishwara and breaking free from his illusory nature may proceed direct to the Brahman. The attainment of this knowledge is possible only by self-
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contemplation, right living and good works, the rewards and advancement up the steep ladder of knowledge being strictly in accord with *karma* or the effects resulting from action by means of a series of re-births.

III.

The reader with a knowledge of India may say these metaphysical conceptions are all very well, but what bearing have they upon the every day religion of our Aryan brother as one sees it in that country? We pass now to consider that point, but would preface it with the statement that India's philosophies and religions blend and coalesce; there is no hard and fast dividing line between them, they are really two phases of thought. In the earlier centuries of their history, the Aryans were pantheists. As time went on the nature and duties of the Gods changed or the conceptions of two or more Gods were blended into one. As this process developed, the distinctions between the several Gods became vaguer, and the people began to regard them as appearances or personifications of some one deity. The philosophers and priests of these early days undoubtedly had developed an idea of a Supreme Self, an Absolute or the *Brahman*. Gradually the idea made headway among the masses, and accordingly the God *Brahma* or personification of the *Brahman* began to attain popularity. Though *Brahma* thus began to be regarded as the creative deity, he did not altogether displace the older Gods, some of whom were retained as subordinate to *Brahma*. Under the tutelage of the priestly castes, there slowly developed a definite idea of the *Trimurti* or Hindu Trinity, represented by *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Shiva*, these being held to be aspects of the One Supreme Being, or respectively the principles of Creating, Preserving and Destroying.

From the fact that *Brahma*, as the creative principle in the Trinity, was too much of an abstraction to be the object of worship, the popular idea centred on the two other aspects of the *Brahman*, with the result that *Vishnu* and *Shiva* came to be regarded as the highest conception of the fundamental *Brahman* or Absolute One. At the same time, the worship of the *Brahman* as conceived in the philosophies has almost disappeared as a distinct form of religion. It is true that, nominally, the Hindu Trinity is spoken of as existing and ruling the religious conception of India, but in reality it is not so; and the two great classes of present day Aryans, who represent the modern Hindu religion, have practically discarded the
Trinity and substituted the worship of Vishnu or Shiva as the case may be. Brahma is still seen in the temples, usually as an image with a red body and several heads. His chief worshippers are women desirous of children. We may now pass to a consideration of the development of the two present-day cults from their earlier form to the present, particularly as concerning the influence of the underlying philosophy.

The two dominant cults among present-day Aryans are the Vishnuites and the Shivaites. Although besides these there are a number of minor cults, still all belong more or less to the two great schools.

The Vishnuites are those who worship the Supreme Being under the name of Vishnu, the second person of the Aryan Trinity and presenting the aspect of Preservation of the Absolute One or Brahma. The original rise of this cult dates from the eighth century, but since those days it has undergone many vicissitudes, the most notable being one in the fifteenth century when stress was laid on the worship of Krishna, an avatar or incarnation of Vishnu, who was represented as a most attractive human personality. The Krishna variation of the Vishnu cult developed certain ecstatic and emotional phases known as bhakti or love worship; for a while it made much headway, but in this form during the last two centuries it has gradually lost ground and the cult reverted to a less exaggerated type of emotional Vishnu worship.

The Vishnuites, who usually mark their foreheads with vertical lines as a cult sign, hold that Vishnu may be considered in both the impersonal and personal aspects. As the impersonal Vishnu, he is the Brahman or Absolute One of the Vedantist philosophy. Practically, no one worships Vishnu in this impersonal sense. When we come to everyday worship the personal aspect is ever in evidence. The personal Vishnu is held to dwell in the highest heavens which he rules. In the temples, he is usually represented by a blue or black image. The popularity of the Vishnu cult is probably due to the fact that he is believed to have had various avatars or incarnations in human form. These avatars are supposed to have appeared for the purpose of regenerating the race at times when it was in need of revival. The two chief incarnations of Vishnu which receive worship are—as Rama or as Krishna. Rama is held to be the seventh avatar of Vishnu, and is the hero of the great epic the Ramayana. We need not follow the history of Rama as given in this poem, other than to say that he figures therein as the saviour of mankind. The devotees of Rama are very
many and generally noted for their high moral tone. They hold that Vishnu has positive qualities of goodness, and that there is a heaven of pure bliss in which the righteous emancipated soul will spend eternity, instead of being absorbed into the Brahman as formulated in the Vedanta philosophy. Krishna is the eighth avatar of Vishnu, and his history and teachings are given in the epics known as the Mahabharata and Bhagavad-Gita. The devotees of Krishna are notable for their extreme "Love of God" conception, possibly as a phase of the bhakti ideas of an earlier period. Many exalt Radha, the consort of Krishna, to a high position in association with a child, and in this form there is a superficial resemblance in some of their ceremonies to those associated with the Roman Church. The Krishna cult has been subject to many subdivisions. Some sects are notable for a high degree of morality and a pure form of worship, but others have lapsed into low forms of ceremonial, degenerating in some cases to a type little removed from the old Phallic worship. In the temples, Krishna is usually represented by an image playing a flute and often with his consort encircling him with her arms.

The Shivaite sects usually carry a cult sign in the form of horizontal lines on the forehead. Their deity is Shiva, the third person of the Aryan Trinity. He typifies those aspects of the Brahman which may be described as pertaining to change, reproduction and destruction. While the Vishnuites, by virtue of their God Vishnu existing as human avatars, can regard and do regard him as being in intimate relation with them as human beings, the Shivaite devotees have no such sense of intimate approach to their God, the reason being that Shiva is not held to have had any human incarnations or avatars.

The Aryan conception of Shiva is twofold. One or other is favoured by the various sects in the general cult. In fact, there are two Shivas or two aspects of him as conceived by his devotees. The higher Shiva sects, such as the Dandis, Dasnamis and Lingayats, are ascetic and puritanical; these virtually worship the Brahman under the name and form of Shiva, and their religious philosophy resembles that of many Vishnuites. Other high sects are composed of the better class of Yogis. To these latter, Shiva represents renunciation and unworldliness, and is the God of magic and superhuman powers, in fact, a personification of the Supreme Being with whom they are ever seeking union. Behind all this, among these higher sects, is the Shiva of the transcendental philosopher who thinks of him as identical with the Brahman or
Absolute One. In contrast to these are many low and degraded sects. To them Shiva is a fierce, revengeful, warlike God of a destructive tendency. This aspect attracts to him the ill-educated and uncultured, or those whose minds turn to self-torture and low forms of asceticism so much affected by certain false yogis or mendicants. Among sects worshipping this aspect of Shiva, his images are revolting and weird, in fact, among these devotees, Shiva is little more than a sorcerer God, and their worship little more than a devil worship, devoid of any of the higher philosophical conceptions.

Associated with Shiva worship is Shakti worship or veneration of the creative principle. In its higher forms shakti worship is the adoration of the mother aspect of Nature, and is analogous to some Western ideas expressed by poets who rhapsodize over Nature personified as a Mother Being. In contrast to this, there are many low sects of Shakta's who picture and venerate shakti in hideous forms representing death, disease and other undesirable aspects of Nature and Nature's laws. Many of the devotees of Kali, Durga and other wives of Shiva have similarly associated their cult with conceptions representing the grosser side of the female nature. Just as woman herself may rise to the highest heights or fall to the lowest depths, so have the conceptions and practices of the shaktas risen high or fallen low according to their natures. Similarly, those who can appreciate intellectually the phenomena of Nature, contemplate her underlying laws according to physical theory, while the less advanced prostitute the same study into witchcraft or sorcery. So it is with both Shaktas and pure Shivaites, a paradox of the very high alongside with the very low.

IV.

In closing this conspectus of the philosophy of our Aryan brother of to-day, the writer is conscious of its thinness and lack of many details. This was inevitable as space is not unlimited. In presenting it at all, the object has been to explain as intelligently and concisely as one could the fundamental ideas which underly the religion of our Aryan brother. Many of us serve in India, but few ever get at the bottom of that puzzling religion which we call Hinduism. The writer does not claim himself to have plumbed those depths. At most, he feels that he has formed some working conception of its theory and practice and, in this article, tried to present it in readable form to others. In so
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doing he has not exhausted the subject either for himself or the reader. India has ever been the land of religions, and an adequate study of them would take a lifetime. Moreover, India is a land of paradoxes, and in no respect is it more paradoxical than in regard to its religions. This elementary article has presented sufficient evidence of that. When first the writer began to study the question, he regarded so-called Hinduism as a conglomerate and inchoate system of pure idolatry. Many have thought the same; but as one has endeavoured to explain in these pages, though, as practised by the masses, Hinduism at best is but symbolism carried to extremes, still as represented in its higher phases Hinduism is based on philosophical considerations of a high and subtle nature. We may not be able to agree with either Aryan premises or Aryan deductions, yet we must admit the superlativeness of the mental gymnastics which have formulated their philosophic systems. One forgets who said them originally, but there is truth in the sayings, "A man's God is himself at his highest," and "A man's idea of God is but the man himself magnified to infinity." At that we may leave it.