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Asbeek Robertson  
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BOOKS READ FOR THESIS ON VEDANTA PHILOSOPHY.

1. Shad Darshan Darpan, or Six Philosophical Systems by Nehemiah Goreh- in Hindi.
2. Bhagvadgita in Hindi and English.
3. The Religion and Philosophy of India- Deussen.
4. The ~~Thirteen~~ Principal Upanishad; Translated by Hume.
5. Pantheism and the Value of Life. W.S. Urquhart M.A. D.Phil.
6. Modern Religious Movements in India- Farquhar.
7. The Crown of Hinduism by Farquhar.
8. Three Introductory Lectures on the Vedanta Philosophy by F. Max Muller K.M.
9. Dialogues on Hindu Philosophy by K.M. Banerjea.
10. Sankaracharya by Sita Nath Datta.
11. Extracts from the Vedas.

12. Ramayan. Ayodhya Khanda. by Lala Des.  
in Hindi. See X

Asbeek Robertson.

## THE VEDANTA PHILOSOPHY.

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In order to get the foundation principles of the Vedanta Philosophy one must roll back the pages of time until one breathes the same atmosphere as the writers of the Upanishads somewhere eight or nine hundred years before Christ. The ancient literature of India is divided into two classes, श्रुति Sruti and स्मृति Smriti. The first means "heard" and are believed to have been spoken by Brahma. In this class are the Vedas, the Brahmanas, Aranyakas and the Upanishads. Smriti means "remembered", and to this class belong the Mahabharat, the Ramayan, the Six Hindu Systems of Philosophy and the Puranas.

The Vedas come to us as far as is known from the time when the Aryans first began their trek into India from beyond the mighty Himalayas, out through the Khyber Pass into the great plain of Northern India. What a sense of comfort and well-being this Southern land must have brought to them at first with its warm sunshine on their backs, its great rivers and fertile soil. Consequently there is no trace of pessimism in the Vedas, but in the Rig-Veda there are hymns of praise to the gods— to Agni, the god of fire, of light and of warmth, not only on the hearth and the altar but in the Dawn, in the Sun, and in the world beyond the Sun; to Indra in his golden chariot driven by two yellow horses, the thunder-bolt is his weapon, the rainbow is his bow; to Prajapati, celebrated as the creator

of the universe "Hiranyagarbha", the golden germ or golden egg floating on the primeval waters; to Soma, the nectar of the gods, "We have drunk the Soma, we have become immortal, we have entered into light, we have known the gods. What can an enemy now do to us?" And to Varuna, the god of the high and glorious heaven,

Sing forth a hymn sublime and solemn, grateful to glorious  
 Varuna, imperial ruler,  
 Who hath struck out, like one who slays the victim, earth  
 as a skin to spread in front of Surya (the sun).  
 In the tree-tops the air he hath extended, put milk in kine  
 and vigorous speed in horses,  
 Set intellect in hearts, fire in the waters, Surya in heaven,  
 and Soma on the mountain.  
 When Varuna is fain for milk he moistens the sky, the land  
 and earth to her foundation,  
 Then straight the mountains clothe them in the rain-cloud:  
 the heroes putting forth their vigour, loose them.  
 I will declare this mighty deed of magic, of glorious  
 Varuna the lord immortal;  
 Who standing in the firmament hath meted the earth out with  
 the sun as with a measure.  
 If we have sinned against the man who loves us, have ever  
 wronged a brother, friend or comrade,  
 The neighbour ever with us, or a stranger, O Varuna, remove  
 from us the trespass.  
 If we, as gamblers cheat at play, have cheated, done wrong,  
 unwittingly or sinned of purpose,  
 Cast all these sins away like loosened fetters, and Varuna,  
 let us be thine own beloved."

The Yajur Veda contains mantras to be muttered by the  
 priests while preparing the altar for sacrifice, slaying  
 the victim and pouring out the libation of its blood. The  
 Sama-Veda contains chiefly selections from the Rig-Veda to be  
 chanted at sacrifices of which the juice of the Soma-plant was the chief  
 ingredient. The priests who recited the Sama-Veda were called  
 "udgattris".

Of the Atharva-Veda Max Muller says, "The songs known under

the name of the Atharvan Girasas formed probably an additional part of the sacrifice from a very early time. They were chiefly intended to counteract the influence of any untoward event that might happen during the sacrifice. They also contained imprecations and blessings and various formulas such as popular superstition would be sure to sanction at all times and in all countries.

About the seventh or eighth century B.C. the Brahmanas were appended to the Vedas- long rambling prose compositions containing full details of ritual for the priests- how to pronounce the mantras, how to sing them, how to perform the sacrifices and the various rites and ceremonies to be performed to avert the evils that lurk in the long grass along our human pathway.

As the priest had to learn by heart the Veda of his Sakha or class and the Brahmanas as well, it grew to be a cumbrous task. To supply the need of the Vanaprastha, or those who left their homes to dwell and meditate in the silent forests, the Aranyakas were composed and these were explanations of the deep mysterious meaning of the ritual written in the form of allegory, such as the hermit could remember and ponder over in the forest- for he carried no volumes with him- a written language was only being born- only his staff and lota/ wearing his saffron robe, in his eyes the light of the seer.

~~For~~ four asramas or stages were gradually being established in the life of the Brahman, the priestly caste, first, the Brahmacharin or Brahman- student when the youth takes the fuel

in his hand as a token that he is willing to serve the teacher and especially to maintain the sacred fires. As a further act of service he was ready to beg for his teacher. The students wandered from place to place and 'hastened from all sides to famous teachers like water down a hill'. He usually lived in the house of the guru and there he thoroughly learned the Vedas and the formulas of the sacrifice. The next stage was Grihastha or householder. His most imperative duty was to establish a family and beget a son to keep the line of his race unbroken. The third stage was Vanaprastha when a man having fulfilled the duties of the householder retired into the solitudes of the forest and devoted himself to ascetic practices. The last asrama of all was the Sannyasin, so called because he casts off everything from himself, because he wanders around homeless and lives without possessions as a beggar. He has attained complete release from his individuality and all that pertains to it and is "exalted above the three asramas". At first the two stages "Vanaprastha" and "Sannyasin" were not distinguished.

The word "Aranyakes" is from Aranya, a word often met with in the Ramayan, meaning ban or "Van" (for "v" and "b" are interchangeable), the forest. It is natural that from the speculations of the Vanaprastha should come the Upanishads or philosophical speculations of the Aryans closing the Vedic period- the Vedanta, as their teaching is called in the Svetasvatara Upanishad.

"The supreme mystery in the Veda's End (Vedanta),  
Which has been declared in former time,  
Should not be given to one not tranquil,  
Nor again to one who is not a son or a pupil.

To him who has the highest devotion for God,  
And for his spiritual teacher even as for God,  
To him these matters which have been declared  
Become manifest if he be a great soul.  
Yea, become manifest if he be a great soul!"

The word "Upanishad" is derived from the root "sad" to sit, and "upa" near by, upa-ni-sad, and therefore means in contrast with "samsad", an assembly of all, a confidential secret sitting, where the pupil sits near to the feet of his teacher, his guru. In the Maitri Upanishad we find also, "This profoundest mystery one should not mention to any one who is not a son, or who is not a pupil or who is not tranquil."

Not by any means was the esoteric doctrine of the Upanishads to be imparted to the Sudras, the lowest caste of the Aryans, whose blood was possibly tinged with the colour of the Dravidians, the earlier inhabitants of India. "The ears of the Sudra who hears the Vedas are to be filled with molten lead and lac, and if he dares to pronounce it his tongue is to be slit."

Max Muller, in seeking to uphold the point of view that in India the truth was open to all who thirsted for it, that nothing was kept secret, says, "It is true that the lowest class, possibly the original inhabitants, were excluded. The caste of the Sudras was not admitted to the education provided for the higher or the twice-born castes. To admit them to a study of the Veda would have been like admitting <sup>naked</sup> savages to the lecture-room of the Royal Institution". But he surely does not prove anything by that statement. It only goes to show the complete intellectualism of the system and how firmly the foundations of caste were being laid, treading down in the new soil the tender roots of brotherhood.

A naked savage might be excluded on the charge of unfitness from the Royal Institution, but is he to be left bound by the chain of hopelessness and degradation outside the gates of God's temple of learning? Christ answers that himself,-

"Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Religion is to satisfy the needs of man as man, and to set his feet on paths that lead upward to God.

The secret teaching of the Upanishads seems in reality to have had its origin from the Kshattriyas, the warrior caste who were said to have sprung from the arms of Brahma, but the Brahmans readily imbibed it and made it their own. The Upanishads still lie at the foundation of thinking in India.

Evolving out of their speculations as from cause to effect, about the seventh century B.C., the Six Shastras or Systems of Philosophy were produced in crisp obscure sentences by men who were termed Rishis. Of these Shastras the Nyaya and Vaisheshika, the Sankhya and Yoga, the Mimansa and Vedanta are of kin. The Nyaya Shastra by Gautama furnishes a method of philosophical enquiry into all the subjects and objects of human knowledge, including amongst others the process of reasoning and laws of thought as its name implies, and is generally the first studied as its terminology is adopted by the other systems. Then the Vaisheshika by Kanadi Rishi extends the Nyaya to physical



enquiries. It arranges these under seven categories:- substance, quality, action, generality, particularity, relation- such as exists between a substance and its qualities, between a water-pot and the earth which composes it, between cause and effect- and the seventh category, non-existence.

These systems are dualistic in that they believe in material eternal atoms side by side with eternal souls.

The Sankhya and the Vedanta% You breathe their atmosphere in India- an atmosphere of determinism and Pantheism, the one dualistic the other , in its most popular form, idealistic. To the followers of the Sankhya system there are two eternal elements- the soul (purush) and matter or nature (prakriti.) To the Vedantist there is Brahma, one only without a second.

In the Sankhya the Rishi Kapila tells us that there are many individual souls, there is no supreme soul. Prakriti is a lifeless substance, the material cause of the universe. It has three qualities- sattvam, rajas and tamas. In the Svetasvatara Upanishad it is written:

"The one she-goat, red, white and blackish,  
Casts many young which are fashioned like to her."

The white is sattvam, goodness; the red rajas, emotion, activity; the blackish tamas, darkness.

Hear the exposition of these qualities from the Bhagvadgita which was added to the Mahabharat at a much later date and which reconciles in itself the Sankhya, the Yoga and the Vedanta shastra. In that wonderful dialogue between Arjuna, a hero of the Pandavs, and the god Krishna, seated in their war-chariot between the

opposing armies on the field of Kurukshetra, Krishna says,-

"Goodness, Passion, Darkness, these qualities born from Nature, O you of mighty arms, bind down the inexhaustible soul in the body. Of these Goodness (sattvam), which in consequence of being untainted is enlightening and free from all misery, binds the soul, O sinless one, with the bond of pleasure and the bond of knowledge. Know that Passion (rajas) consists in being enamoured, and is produced from desire and attachment. That, O son of Kunti, binds down the embodied with the bond of action. Darkness know to be born of ignorance, it deludes all embodied selfs. And that, O descendant of Bharat, binds down the self with heedlessness, indolence and sleep."

Prakriti <sup>प्रकृति</sup> frequently unfolds itself before the Purush, the individual soul. First is evolved buddhi, the understanding; from the understanding ahankara, the ego or thought of self as different from other objects. From the ahankara were produced on the one hand the five senses and the five activities of the body together with the manas or mind, and on the other the tanmatras, the source of the gross elements of the world- earth, air, fire, water and ether. Behind the individual unfoldings of Prakriti there must exist a corresponding general unfolding of a cosmical nature, but the thought plays no part in the system. At the end of the Kalpa or age all the created world dissolves once more into Prakriti. Then follows a period of repose called a pralaya. We are now in the kali yuga of this Kalpa and only one-fourth of good survives.

The understanding, the ego and the mind make up what the ~~Hindues~~ call the Antakaran ( <sup>अन्तःकरण</sup> ) to which there is no corresponding English word. The Sankhyas say the soul is sheer knowledge. It is not such as we call knowledge which implies a subject and object. To know a substance is called

knowledge; "That is a lota", "this is a book". But according to the Sankhya School ~~this~~ knowledge is not in the soul, but in the antakaran. When we cognize a lota or a book our antakaran takes the form of the substance. Knowledge then is a state of the antakaran. But from eternity the soul and the antakaran have been so near together that the purusha, the soul, illuminates prakriti, and the prakriti is reflected in purusha. The state of the antakaran in the shape of a lota or a book is reflected in the soul.

In the same way desire and activity (rajas) are affections of the antakaran and they are reflected in the soul, so that the soul by ignorance (tamas) conceives of itself as desiring and as doing. For this reason it must reap the reward of good and evil deeds, such as joy and sorrow, heaven and hell, death and rebirth. By ignorance then the soul is in bondage.

But ignorance is a state not of the soul but of the antakaran, for it is a kind of knowledge, ~~this~~<sup>is</sup> misapprehension or untrue knowledge, such as when we take a rope for a snake. The soul is absolutely free from qualities, for if knowledge, desire and activity were its nature then how could it be liberated? It is liberated by the cognition, "I am distinct from nature and am unchangeable". But this too is an affection of the antakaran, and the antakaran, it is to be remembered, is an evolution of matter or nature, so prakriti by means of misapprehension binds the soul and by right knowledge frees it.

If it were a real union between these two entities the soul and prakriti how could such a cognition by a wave of its wand

dissolve the union, and if it were not a real union it could have no existence at all.

Since this school recognizes no God we have a picture of the individual soul passing through countless births and rebirths, until having gained the knowledge, "I am not prakriti", it is set free into sheer knowledge, which involving no object, no thought, is sheer non-entity. There is no song of joy in this shastra. Kapila has cast upon his disciples not the garment of praise, but the spirit of pessimism. An Indian writer, R. C. Bose, says:

"Hindu philosophy is pessimism. It begins with a recognition of human sorrow, goes out in vain in quest of a proper remedy, and ultimately arrives at annihilation as the goal where human misery terminates only in the extinction of life. Even Schopenhauer does not speak in terms more lugubrious than those which form the prominent features of the phraseology and nomenclature of philosophy in our country."

Of the Sankhya system, De la Fosse in his History of India, says: "The historical importance of Kapila's system is that it is an open revolt against Vedic rites and sacrifices. In the age which followed, its essential doctrines were popularized by a great reformer who made it the basis of his teaching. In the hands of Buddha it blossomed into a religion destined to exercise the profoundest influence on the history of mankind."

Other writers consider the Sankhya school and Buddhism to have been at the same period, but it shows the general trend of that century- a break with ritualism, like the Reformation in the church in the days of Luther and Erasmus.

Turning from the Sankhya Shastra to the Puranas of much later date, one finds that Purusha and Prakriti began soon to be compared to male and female, and this idea of the production of the universe by the male and female principles as symbolized

in the God Shiva and his wife Parvati, lies at the root of all later Hindu mythology. The uneducated classes could understand little of Kapila's doctrine of an eternal primordial energy evolving out of itself twenty-three other elements or substances to form a visible world for the soul, which was in itself devoid of all qualities, and deluded by ignorance, but they could understand the idea of a universe proceeding from Purusha and Prakriti as father and mother.

The Yoga system of philosophy written by Patanjali may be regarded as a branch of the Sankhya, but differs from it in teaching that there is a Supreme Soul. Its aim is to teach how the individual soul may attain union with the supreme soul. The eight means which it propounds for effecting this union- restraint, religious observances, postures, suppression of the breath, restraint of the senses, steadying of the mind, contemplation, absorption- we find to have been adopted by the Vedanta. ~~We find~~ The foundation of this system lies in the Svetasvatara Upanishad:

"Holding his body steady with the three (head, chest and neck) erect  
And causing the senses with the mind to enter into the heart,  
A wise man with the Brahma-boat should cross over  
All the fear-bringing streams.  
Having repressed his breathings here in the body, and having  
his movements checked,  
One should breathe through his nostrils with diminished  
breath.  
Like that chariot yoked with vicious horses,  
His mind the wise man should restrain undistractedly.  
  
In a clean level spot, free from pebbles, fire and gravel,  
By the sound of water and other propinquities  
Favorable to thought, not offensive to the eye,  
In a hidden retreat protected from the wind, one should  
practise Yoga.  
Even as a mirror stained by dust  
Shines brilliantly when it has been cleansed,  
So the embodied one, on seeing the nature of the Soul  
Becomes unitary, his end attained, from sorrow freed."

Jaimini, the founder of the Mimansa System, believed in the eternity of Sound, of Speech. He makes the spoken Veda the only God. One finds the root of this thought in the first Khanda of the Chandogya Upanishad:-

"Om! One should reverence the Udgitha (Loud Chant) as this syllable for one sings the loud chant beginning with 'Om'.

The further explanation thereof-

The essence of things here is the earth.

The essence of the earth is water.

The essence of water is plants.

The essence of plants is a person (purusha).

The essence of a person is speech.

The essence of speech is the Rig (hymn).

The essence of the Rig is the Sama (chant).

The essence of the Sama is the Udgitha (loud singing)

Now then, the Udgitha is Om: Om is the Udgitha. The Udgitha is then identified with the sun, with breath and with space, the ultimate. He brings all things to a unity then in sound.

The Vedanta is sometimes called the Later Mimansa. It is evidently later than the Sankhya which it resembles in some points but it is more satisfying to the heart of man, for whence come our strivings after God if there be no God. But the Vedanta though it means the end of the Vedas, does not mean the end of revelation, for the God we yearn after is not Brahma but Jehovah.

The Vedanta Sutras of Badarayan Vyas are written in such cryptic style for the chosen few that they would not be of much use to us without the commentary written by Shankaracharya in the ninth century or that of Ramanuja in the twelfth century A.D. There is also a commentary by Madhavacharya, but he was practically a dualist.

The picture of Ramanuja shows him as a clean-cut, clear-eyed Indian type of youth, wearing the mark of Vishnu on his

forehead- three vertical lines, two white and the inner one red. In his commentary he follows closely the Sutras. Dr. Urquhart says his system may be described as monism with a difference. He is a Pantheist and believed in Brahma as the Absolute Reality- one only without a second. "Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma", "All this is Brahma". But he does not believe the world to be mere appearance but modes of Brahma, the Divine Unity going forth into difference, as we read in the Taittiriya Upanishad:-

"He (the Atma) desired, 'Would that I were many! Let me procreate myself!' He performed austerity. Having performed austerity he created the whole world, whatever there is here. Having created it, into it, indeed he entered. Having entered it, he became both the actual and the yon, "tya", both the defined and the undefined, both the based and the non-based, both the conscious and the unconscious, both the real and the false. As the real he became whatever there is here. That is what they call the real...Both he who is here in a person and he who is yonder in the sun- he is one."

Finite souls do not altogether lose individuality, though they are related to Brahma rather as parts to the whole, and at the end of the age both they and the world they inhabit will be reabsorbed into Brahma. Ramanuja strives to give reality to a world that Shankam has made "Maya" or illusion, as Spinoza found it necessary to reconcile himself with ordinary experience and took a naturalistic trend- God became<sup>ing</sup> identified with the universe. But he found it difficult to derive this actual world from the abstract thought with which he began, and Ramanuja in his philosophy leans over the abyss of materialism, for one cannot think<sup>of</sup> a real world being a unity with a "nirguna" Brahma, a God who has no qualities.

We have been coming down from the far-away snow-clad peaks of the Himalayas- the Vedas- following the course of the melting

streams through the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas and the Upanishads, and we have met tributary streams flowing in, the Nyaya, the Vaisheshika, the Sankhya and Yoga and Ramanuja's interpretation of the Vedanta Sutras, and now we are gliding out into the broad <sup>current</sup> ~~current~~ of Vedantism, like the Ganges River as it flows across the plains of Oudh, Bihar and Bengal, and empties its waters at last into the great mysterious ocean. Of this tide of Vedantism which has influenced so greatly all Indian thought, Shankaracharya gives us the best interpretation. It is summed up in one Sanskrit shlok:-

ब्रह्म सत्यं जग न मायम् जीवो ब्रह्मेव नापरः

"Brahma satyam jagan mathya jiva Brahmaiva napara".

Brahma is true, the world is false, the soul is Brahma and nothing other.

Brahma is true, eternal, unchangeable, nirguna (without qualities), unknowable. Brahma is All-one only without a second- ekam evadvitiam;

One can see the development of this thought in the Upanishads amidst dialogue and figurative thought that to a Western mind seems often weird and unbalanced. Picture the ascetic seated in the solitude of the forests under some great spreading banyan or peepul tree, every sense restrained, meditating- What is God? What is the soul? What am I?

The word "Brahma" itself seems originally to have meant prayer- the prayer used at sacrifices. Their conception of Brahma, the Creator, was at first material as the Cosmic egg. In the Nineteenth Khanda of the <sup>third Prapathaka of the</sup> Chandogya Upanishad it says-



"The sun is Brahma- this is the teaching. A further explanation thereof:

In the beginning this world was merely non-being. It was existent. It developed. It turned into an egg. It lay for the period of a year. It was split asunder. One of the two egg-shell parts became silver, one gold.

That which was of silver is this earth. That which was of gold is the sky. What was the outer membrane is the mountains. What was the inner membrane is cloud and mist. What were the veins are the rivers. What was the fluid within is the ocean.

Now what was born thereof is yonder sun. When it was born, shouts and hurrahs all beings and all desires rose up towards it. Therefore at its rising and at its every return, shouts and hurrahs, all beings and all desires rise up towards it.

He, who knowing ~~this~~ it thus, reverences the sun as Brahma- the prospect is that pleasant shouts will come unto him and delight him- yea, will delight him."

In the "honey-doctrine" of the Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad we see the Atma (Soul), which originally meant "breath", and Brahma, the All, becoming identified and attaining to a spiritual meaning- the absoluteness of the immanent Soul; ~~more theistic perhaps than pantheistic:-~~

"This earth is honey for all creatures, and all creatures are honey for this earth. This shining immortal Person who is in this earth, and, with reference to oneself, this shining, immortal Person who is in the body- he indeed is just this Soul, this Immortal, this Brahma, this All.

This fire is honey for all things, and all things are honey for this fire. This shining, immortal Person who is in this fire, and, with reference to oneself, this shining, immortal Person who is made of speech- he is just this Soul, this Immortal, this Brahma, this All.

This wind is honey for all things, and all things are honey for this wind. This shining, immortal Person who is in this wind, and, with reference to oneself, this shining, immortal Person who is breath- he is just this Soul, this Immortal, this Brahma, this All.

.....  
Verily, this Soul is the overlord of all things, the king of all things. As all the spokes are held together in the hub and felly of a wheel, just so in this Soul all things, all gods, all worlds, all breathing things, all selves are held together."

In the dialogue between Yajnavalkya, the guru, and the

woman, Gargi Vacaknavi, Brahma is shown as the ultimate world-ground. She questions him:-

"Yajnavalkya, since all this world is woven warp and woof on water, on what, pray, is the water woven warp and woof?"

"On wind, O Gargi."

"On what then, pray, is the wind woven, warp and woof?"

"On the atmosphere-worlds, O Gargi."

"On what then, pray, are the atmosphere worlds woven, warp and woof?"

"On the worlds of the Gandharvas, O Gargi!"

and so on the regression goes- from the Gandharvas to the sun, from the sun to the moon, from the moon to the stars, from the stars to the worlds of the gods, from the worlds of the gods to the worlds of Indra, from the worlds of Indra to the worlds of Prajapati.

"On what then, pray, are the worlds of Prajapati woven warp and woof?"

"On the worlds of Brahma, O Gargi."

"On what then, pray, are the worlds of Brahma woven, warp and woof?"

Yajnavalkya said: "Gargi, do not question too much, lest your head fall off. In truth you are questioning too much about a divinity about which further questions cannot be asked. Gargi, do not over-question."

Thereupon Gargi Vacaknavi held her peace.

But to Uddalaki Aruni, the student, who questions him,

Yajnavalkya declares Brahma as the Inner Controller, the immortal pantheistic Soul.

"He who dwelling in the earth yet is other than the earth, whom the earth does not know, whose body the earth is, who controls the earth from within- He is your Soul, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

He who dwelling in the sun, yet is other than the sun, whom the sun does not know, whose body the sun is, who controls the sun from within- He is your Soul, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

He who dwelling in breath yet is other than breath, whom the breath does not know, whose body the breath is, who controls the breath from within- He is your Soul, the Inner Controller, the Immortal.

.....  
He is the unseen Seer, the unheard Hearer, the unthought Thinker, the understood Understander. Other than He there is no Seer. Other than He there is no Hearer. Other than He there is no thinker. Other than He there is no understander. He is your Soul, the Inner Controller, the Immortal."

Following along the line of thought here Sankaracharya formed his conception of Brahma, for in his Commentary on one Vedanta Sutra he interprets their teaching in the light of the Upanishads. One seems able to describe him only by negatives, "neti, neti", or by contradictory terms:

"That, O Gargi, Brahmins call the Imperishable. It is not coarse, not fine, not short, not long, not glowing, not adhesive, without shadow and without darkness, without air and without space, intangible, odorless, tasteless, without eye, without ear, without voice, without wind, without energy, without breath, without mouth, without personal or family name, unaging, undying, without fear, immortal, stainless, not uncovered, not covered, without measure, without inside and without outside.

It consumes nothing soever,  
No one soever consumes it."

Such an abstraction is the Brahma of the Vedanta. Sankara is quite free from any charge of anthropomorphism. It is the impersonal Absolute of Hartmann.

Brahma is defined by the Vedantist as sat, chit, ananda, existence, thought and bliss; but the being of Brahma is so impalpable, so abstract that he is really non-being, and when they say Brahma is chit, is knowledge or thought, it is not in our sense of the word, a subject that thinks and an object thought. There is no object. Brahma is knowledge in Kapila's sense of the word when he described the soul. It is not knowledge of anything, therefore it cannot be knowledge at all.

Again, Brahma is ananda or bliss, but it is not the joy that we have - the happiness that comes from the satisfaction of our earthly desires, nor the joy that we have in the realization of our higher selves - but the bliss of deep, dreamless sleep. Deussen says, "Bliss is only a negative quality, and is

regarded simply as absence of pain, which alone befits Brahma: for what is different from him is full of pain."

Could one worship a god that can be predicated only by negations, thus "neti, neti"? But indeed they believed him to be beyond our worship, beyond the reach of prayer, and so left humanity as completely without a god as the Sankhya Shashtra or the Buddhist School.

"The world is false". All Vedantists will not agree that this is one of their tenets, but it stands out in Sankara's system, and is the result of their search after unity. Some would call Sankara an idealist rather than a pantheist, but is there any difference between "All is Brahma" and "Brahma is All"?

All is Brahma, but just as one mistakes a ~~snake~~<sup>rope</sup> for a snake, so one sees the phenomenal world, whereas there is no reality but Brahma. The world is illusion and its cause is Avidya-ignorance. And what then is the cause of ignorance? If Brahma is the only eternal principle, is he the cause of ignorance, or is ignorance as eternal as he?

The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad says, "As a spider might come out with his thread, as small sparks come forth from the fire, even so from this soul come forth vital energies, all worlds, all gods, all beings." And in this we see Brahma as the material cause of the world. But in the Maitri Upanishad, supposed to be of later origin, we read- "There are assuredly two forms of Brahma, the formed and the formless. Now that which is the ~~unformed is real~~ formed is unreal, that which is the formless is the real, is Brahma, is Light."

Here we have the germ of Maya or illusion. There is the real, formless, noumenal Brahma, but he is the vyavaharik cause of the world, that is, in sport (lila), in union with avidya, ex

or as it is translated "ignorance", Ishwar is produced, himself an illusion and comprehending in himself the totality of all things, just as a forest is made up of trees or a lake of the water which tosses to and fro on its bosom. To draw this out more fully- he is the causal body likened to the state of dreamless sleep and "begets the primeval waters and issues forth from them as golden germ, Hiranyagarbha", the thread soul, "stringing together all dreaming souls clothed in invisible bodies that accompany them in their migrations as pearls are strung upon a thread to form a necklace". The next emanation is Viswa, the universe, the sum of souls in the waking state, his body the whole mundane egg. These are the three states- the causal body, the dreaming state, the waking state. Pure, unassociated Brahma is technically termed "The Fourth".

In reality Ignorance with Sankara takes the place of the Prakriti of Kapila. He believed that all was Brahma, and he had somehow to explain the universe. He did not believe that a Brahma without qualities could create a material universe. Hence his theory of illusion. Brahma is true, the world is false.

Again as we have noticed, Brahma created the world in sport. In the Vedanta Sutas of Badarayan Vyas it is written, "But Brahma's creative activity is mere sport such as we see in ordinary life", and Sankara elucidates the Sutra in this way-

"We see in every day life that certain doings of princes or other men of high position, who have no unfulfilled desires left, have no reference to any extraneous purpose, but proceed from mere sportfulness as, for instance, their recreations in places of amusement. Analogously, the activity of Brahma also may be supposed to be mere sport proceeding from his own nature without reference to any purpose."

The formless Brahma without attributes could not have any purpose in creating a world. Whether with our old friend, Janet, we believe in a final end or aim to which all things are tending, and to which all things are accommodating themselves, or whether with Bergson we see the purpose to be behind the vital impulse, it is impossible for us to conceive of the universe with its majestic mountains, its wide lakes and rivers, the moon and the stars and the little flowers in the grass, as 'the baseless fabric of a dream.'

It was natural that it should be difficult for him to <sup>Sankara</sup> explain this universe as it appears to us ~~the~~ earth solid and unyielding when he saw God as all. Deussen considers the doctrine of maya to be in marvellous agreement with the philosophy of Plato and Kant: "The objects which lie around us on every side in infinite space, and to which by virtue of our corporeal nature we ourselves belong, are, according to Kant, not things-in-themselves but only apparitions. According to Plato they are not the true realities, but merely shadows of them. And according to the doctrine of the Upanishads they are not the Atman, the real 'self' of the things, but mere maya, that is to say sheer deceit, illusion."

But Kant did not seek to explain away the Ding-an-sich. And the qualities of red, white and black, the phenomena of sunrise and sunset are true, though people may not think of them a hundred years hence as we do now, just as the conception that people had in 1400 differs from our present knowledge of them, and Science exultant from its past success rejoices that it has this great world of phenomena to delve in to and find further secrets and the reason that runs through all things.

Science to a consistent Vedantist would be impossible, for like a mirage things would disappear as he approached to grasp them.

Hegel is an idealist, but though his Absolute is abstract it has within itself the power to develop, and this development is in accordance with the laws of the development of thought, that is world-development is thought-development within or from the sole reality, which is God. In that case the world would be vidya (knowledge) not avidya-misapprehension or illusion. His idealism has an appeal to our sense of truth, but if God has only stretched out a universe to bewilder us then who will lead us straight?

"The soul is Brahma and nothing other."

In the figurative language of the Chandogya Upanishad it is written: "Verily the whole world is Brahma. Tranquil let one worship It as that from which he came forth, as that into which he will be dissolved, as that in which he breathes.

"He who consists of mind, whose body is life, whose form is light, whose conception is truth, whose soul is space, containing all works, containing all desires, containing all odors, containing all states, encompassing this whole world, the unspeaking, the unconcerned; this soul of mine within the heart is smaller than a grain of rice, or a barley-corn, or a mustard-seed, or a grain of millet or the kernel of a grain of millet; this soul of mine within the heart is greater than the earth, greater than the atmosphere, greater than the sky, greater than these worlds..... This is Brahma. Into him I shall enter on departing hence." And again in the Sixth Prapathaka: "That which is the finest essence, this whole world has that as its soul. That is reality. That is Atma (Soul). That art thou, Svetakatu. Tat tvam asi."

In the Kaushitaki Upanishad, Ajatasatru says:- "This self-same breathing spirit, even the intelligential self, has entered this bodily self up to the hair and finger-tips. Just as a razor might be hidden in a razor-case, or fire in a fire-receptacle, even thus this intelligential self has entered this bodily self up to the hair and the finger-tips."

But in the First Adhyaya of this Upanishad the identity of the soul with the infinite real is more clearly set forth:- Whatever is other than the sense-organs and the vital breaths, that is the actual. But as for the sense-organs and the vital breaths that is the yon. This is expressed by the word 'Satyam', the Real. It is as extensive as this world all. You are this world all."

In regard to the One issuing forth into seeming plurality, Sankara says:- " The image of the sun upon a piece of water expands with the expansion and contracts with the contraction of the ripples on the surface, moves with the motion, and is severed by the breaking of the ripples. The reflection of the sun thus follows the various conditions of the surface, but not so the real sun in the heavens. It is in a similar manner that the Real Self is reflected upon its counterfeits, the bodies of sentient creatures, and thus fictitiously limited, shares their growth and diminution and other sensible modes of being. Apart from its various counterfeits the self is changeless and unvaried. The one and only Self is present in the heart of every living one, as one and the same face may be reflected by successive mirrors."

Vedantism has been compared to the philosophy of Berkeley, but to Berkeley there was not just one soul, so that I could say, **"I am Brahma"**, but he acknowledges the real existence of individual souls having their place in a rational world, an expression of the mind of God. Somewhere it says it is better to taste honey than to be honey. It is better to taste the goodness of God than to lose oneself in an impersonal abstraction. Sankara was consistent to the last degree and made the human spirit impersonal also. The soul is Brahma and nothing other. The soul<sup>is</sup> surrounded by physical sheaths, the sheath of food, of the vital airs, of mind, understanding and bliss, and in these sheaths are all the personal and moral qualities, as they are contained in the antakaran of the Sankhya system. When I am home-sick it is not my soul that feels the tie of home- it can not be bound- but my sheath of consciousness.

However uplifting may be the conception of identity with Brahma-"Sat twam asi, That art thou, Svetaketu", could a western



mind with the conception that we have of Jehovah, the great God, King of heaven and earth, pure and holy and loving—say, "I am God". It would seem like blasphemy. God's spirit is immanent in us, seek to work His will through us, but we have the power either to yield ourselves to Him and be pervaded by His beauty and righteousness, or to shut out His influence from our lives, and go out like bats into the night.

The will is free, strong is the soul and wise and beautiful.  
Gods are we, bards, saints, heroes  
If we will.

But if we are all that there is to be how can we ever be more? How can there be progress or evolution? And yet there is the lure of the heights and we press towards the mark to something yet unachieved.

"Come, my friends,

"Tis not too late to seek a newer world,  
Push off and sitting well in order smite  
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds  
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths  
Of all the western seas, until I die."

How great a gift God has given us when He made us free!  
It is not in ourselves that we find God, but in so far as we forget ourselves and reach out spontaneously to help others that "God in man finds again God in man". The thought of ourselves in relation to God is expressed in these lines written in the Himalayas:

Father, the morning sings of thee,  
Of all Thy power and majesty;  
The glory of Thy presence fills  
The calm cathedral of the hills.

O lift us up that we may see  
A vision, gracious God, of Thee,  
To yonder snowy mountain peaks,  
Where only silence to us speaks.

As rests the clouds in these blue hills,  
So rest our souls from all life's ills,  
As white and spotless too as they  
When golden sunbeams o'er them stray.

So fill us with Thy mighty love,  
The light that shineth from above  
That we may wear thro' all our days  
The glorious garment of Thy praise.

Shall so yield up our selfish will,  
The dictates of Thy law fulfil,  
That from our lives shall rise to Thee  
The infinite note of harmony.

But the Vedantist like the Sankhyas says that through error the soul has forgotten its true form, and looking upon the body and antakaram as true has identified itself with them. It therefore distinguishes between that which belongs to itself and that which belongs to others; between things which give pain, and things which give pleasure; and so arise desire and hatred, good and evil deeds, from which accrue to it sin and merit. Then to receive the reward of its good and evil deeds it must go to heaven or hell and must repeatedly be born and die again. This transmigration is sometimes spoken of as the "eighty-four". "The mode of that different form verily has a four-fold covering, is fourteen fold, is transformed in eighty-four different ways, is a host of beings." Eighty-four lives would bring one to the end of the age.

The doctrine of transmigration seems to pervade all Hindi literature from the Upanishads down through the ages and the villager to-day knows himself as bound by the law of Karma.

In the Bhagvadgita, when Arjuna looking upon the Kauravs opposing them, who were yet his relatives and had been friends, says in grief, "How, O Madhava, shall we be happy after killing our own relatives?", Krishna replies, "You have grieved for those who deserve no grief.. Learned men grieve not for the living or the dead. Never did I not exist, nor you nor these rulers of men; nor will any one of us hereafter cease to be. As in this body, infancy and youth and old age come to the embodied so does the acquisition of another body; a sensible man is not deceived about that....As a man casting off old clothes puts on other and new ones, so the embodied casting ~~casting~~ off old bodies goes to other and new ones. Weapons do not divide the self; fire does not burn it; waters do not moisten it, the wind does not dry it up... It is everlasting, all-pervading, stable, firm and eternal."

The Shastras maintain that good deeds as well as evil deeds are the cause of bondage, for although the reward of evil deeds

is pain, and that of good deeds is joy, yet the fact that the soul must reap this reward prevents its being liberated. "Either as a worm, or as a moth, or as a fish, or as a bird, or as a lion, or as a wild boar, or as a snake, or as a tiger, or as a person, or as some other, in this or that condition, he is born again according to his deeds (karma), according to his knowledge."

As long as the soul is bound by **ignorance so long desire and hatred will cause it to do good and evil**, and it has no escape from the wheel of births and deaths. Thibaut in his Vedanta-Sutras says:

"At the end of each of the great world periods called Kalpas the Lord(Ishwar) retracts the whole world, i.e., the whole material world is dissolved and merged into non-distinct Maya, while the individual souls, free for the time from actual connection with upadhis (the sheaths of bodily life), lie in deep slumber as it were. But as the consequence of their former deeds are not yet exhausted, they have again to enter on embodied existence as soon as the Lord sends forth a new material world, and the old round of birth, action, death, begins anew to last to all eternity as it lasted from all eternity."

Is there any means of escape then from this Law of Karma? If so, what is it? The answer comes in one word= knowledge. The soul must know that it is distinct from the senses and the body. When I know that I am Brahma and nothing other I am released from all fetters and my sins fall from me like the skin of a snake. Krishna in the Bhagvadgita says, "Even if you are the most sinful of sinful men you will cross over all trespasses by means of the boat of knowledge alone." But is it not true on the other hand that when I get a vision of God I know myself as a sinner, but the knowledge does not save me. It is the surrender of my desires and my will to God by the way of Christ and God's Spirit working through me. To the Vedantist emancipation is not a matter of the emotions, not a matter of the will, it is the boat of knowledge alone, and the "boat of knowledge" can only take a chosen few. Were it the boat of the affections it would take many more.

How is this knowledge to be gained that the soul is Brahma and nothing other? With this question you come out upon the great quest of India- Mukti, Salvation. The man bowing with clasped hands before the image of the bull, representing Shiva, is seeking mukti; the woman pouring her lota of water on a red-painted god by the wayside, or bringing an offering of flowers to the foot of the peepul tree, is seeking mukti; The ascetic with his wooden clogs laid aside, standing on a deer-skin, his brown body erect, a wreath of marigolds around his neck and yellow smeared on his brow, his eyes towards the rising sun, is seeking mukti; the pilgrims on their long weary march to the Ganges or to Kedarnath in the heights of the Himalayas are seeking mukti. The yellow robe is always the sign of the great quest. Thousands of ascetics- sadhus- gathered at the great mela at Ujjain in 1921, weird figures, their bodies powdered with ashes and on their heads pyramids of matted hair. They were not all sincere- some faces were repulsive- but there they were that great class who practise austerities and penances that they may gain mukti, and Sankaracharya approves of their methods. The means to be employed to attain knowledge given in the Vedanta-Sara are those set forth in the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali:

1. Forbearance- not killing, not lying, not stealing, chastity.
2. Religious observances- purification, tranquillity of mind, penances, concentration upon the sacred syllable "Om".
3. Postures, as for instance the lotus posture. The right foot should be placed on the left thigh, and the left foot on the right thigh. The hands should be crossed, and the two great toes should be firmly held thereby. The chin should be bent down to the chest and in this posture the eyes should be directed to the tip of the nose.
4. Suppression of the breath by closing the mouth and closing both nostrils with the fingers of the right hand.

5. Restraint of the senses from their respective objects.
6. Attention- dwelling without interruption upon the Real.
7. Contemplation- the spontaneous flowing forth of the understanding towards the Real to the exclusion of the notion of the body.
8. Meditation- the continuance of the understanding modified so as to mirror the Real, sinking all distinction between the knower, the knowledge and the known- absorption.

"Thus will you attain to the knowledge 'Aham Brahmasmi'".  
I am Brahma.

How does all this compare with Sir Ernest Shackleton's favourite quotation from Browning:-

And so I live, you see,  
Go through this world, try, prove, reject-  
Prefer still struggling to effect  
My warfare, happy that I can  
Be crossed and thwarted as a man,  
Not left in God's contempt apart,  
With ghastly smooth life, dead at heart,  
Tame in earth's paddock as his prize.

Written how large is the word "Activity". No wonder that in these days Bucken should give us a philosophy of Activism.

But the Bhagvadgita opposes inaction. Krishna says to Arjuna:

"Looking on pleasure and pain, on gain and loss, on victory and defeat as the same, prepare for battle, and thus you will not incur sin. Let not the fruit of action be your motive. Let not your attachment be on action. Action is far inferior to the devotion of the mind. In that devotion (bhakti) seek shelter... The man who, casting off all desires, lives free from attachments, who is free from egoism and from the feeling that this or that is mine, obtains tranquillity. This, O son of Pritha, is the Brahmic state; attaining to this one is never deluded; and remaining in it in one's last moments one attains the Brahmic bliss."

It is not action that binds us but desire for the fruit of action. But why chain up our desires! Let us turn them into the right channels and grow heart and soul and body, "happy that I can be crossed and thwarted as a man- not left with ghastly smooth life."

The man who has attained knowledge must while he has a body do good and evil works, but he gains neither merit nor demerit

from them. All the good and evil which were done previously are obliterated— all except what are called the fructescent works. For there are three kinds of works, accumulated, current and fructescent. They are compared to seed-grain. The seed that is in the granary is accumulated, *संचित*. It has not yet borne fruit. Knowledge destroys it. The seed that the farmer is sowing now is current *क्रियमान*, that is, the works which are being done now in the present life. They have no effect on the man who has knowledge. "As water adheres not to the leaf of the lotus flower, so evil action adheres not to him who knows this." But the seed which he sowed in a former birth and which is now bearing fruit is fructescent, *फलदायक*. This can not be ~~destroyed~~ until its recompense is fulfilled. The soul must remain in the body and bear joy and sorrow. But when this experience is ended he leaves the body and is not born again. He enters into Brahma by "the way of the gods".

"Now whether they perform the cremation obsequies in the case of such a person or not, they pass over into a flame; from a flame into the day; from the day, into the half-month of the waxing moon; from the half-month of the waxing moon, into the six months during which the sun moves northward; from the months into the year; from the year into the sun; from the sun into the moon; from the moon into lightning. There there is a Person who is non-human. He leads them on to Brahma. This is the way to the gods, the way to Brahma. They who proceed by it return not to the human condition here— yea, they return not!"

It is what man has done then in a previous birth that has determined his present condition. In this way Vyas and his commentators have explained that which was to Job such a problem— why the wicked seem to prosper and the just upright man is laughed to scorn. God is not unjust, nor is He just. He is devoid of qualities. We are what

a former life has made us. If I am a Ballai and cannot draw water from the wells of the Rajputs, it is because of my sin in a former birth. If calamities come upon me it is karma. But I have no remembrance of that former birth. If I punish a child do I not explain to him why he is being punished, otherwise what moral benefit would the punishment be? If I remember nothing of my former birth and do not know why I was born low-caste, what benefit is my punishment? But I do not really know whether I am receiving the recompense of sin. Perhaps I am progressing. Perhaps I was only a decent frog before, hopping in out of the rain.

There is no room for God's mercy on my behalf. I am bound. If I am an outcaste I must remain an outcaste during this life. A Vedantist can not consistently seek to uplift the lower castes. They are bound by karma.

No wonder an atmosphere of pessimism accompanies their pantheism. Man has no freedom. It is a creed of determinism, and it permeates the thought of those who know nothing of an abstract Brahma, but they know they are bound by the law of karma. Jō hō sō hō. What is to be will be.

"In this sort of cycle of existence what is the good of enjoyment of desires, when after a man has fed on them there is seen repeatedly his return here to earth?

Be pleased to deliver me. In this cycle of existence I am like a frog in a waterless well." This from the Maitri Upanishad.

If we turn from the impersonal Brahma, the world as illusion, the law of karma, to the Christian conception of God it is like getting home after struggling along a road in a great, wide, desert where a mirage has lured us on and on and we have spent

ourselves in a fruitless quest, and after hours upon this lonely expanse we see at last the twinkling light of home, and we enter in to its warmth and love and we meet with "Our Father God".

"The fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

What is the fruit of the spirit of those who have imbibed from their gurus the teaching of the Vedanta? **There is a proverb, "As is the god so is the worshipper"**. But Brahma has no qualities, and though he is called ~~sat-chit-ananda~~, existence, knowledge and bliss, we have seen that his joy is that of dreamless sleep. Brahma then is no inspiration to a wide-awake soul. He is like a Rajah who lives idly in solitary grandeur in his palace, and takes no notice of the subjects whom he has deluded into thinking they are awake. Is it not the fact that we have always felt that God was watching us, hearing us, searching our hearts, that we have been restrained, guided and kept from the evil that lingers so alluringly near us? And we find that there is a theistic strain in some of the Upanishads- God, the Inner Controller. God has indeed sought to manifest himself to these earnest seekers after truth, seated in the solitary forest, their faces towards heaven. But pantheism has prevailed.

One of the highest qualities of a Christian is selflessness. "Unless a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die it will bear no fruit." In regard to this quality, the high-water mark, as Dr. Urquhart calls it, of the Upanishads is reached when

Yajnavalkya says:- "Lo, not for love of the wife is a wife dear, but for love of the soul a wife is dear. Lo, verily, not for love



of the sons are sons dear but for love of the soul sons are dear." Here he looks upon himself and upon all as the one world-soul. But the general level of their ethic is reached in the same Upanishad:- "Oneself is to be made happy here on earth. Oneself is to be waited upon. He who makes merely himself happy here on earth, who waits upon himself, obtains both worlds, this world and the yonder."

If it is the same world-soul in us as in the Sudras, it has not moved the Vedantist to make brothers of the low-caste. In the Bhagvadgita the keeping of caste is made one of the rules of life. To obtain salvation for himself the ascetic gives up all his earthly responsibilities and retires into solitude, seeking to get back into that realm that touches on dreamless sleep. Kalu, a Ballai, is baptized as a Christian and he goes from village to village on fire with the desire to bring his relatives and his friends to know Christ, "happy that he can be crossed and thwarted as a man". Jesus does not call us to dreamless sleep. He gives us a basin of water and a towel to wash weary feet. He gives us a scourge of whips to cleanse the temple. He gives us a cross to bear for others. "Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends."

But if the world is illusion then sin is nothing and merit is nothing. The Vedantist does enjoin chastity, but is he consistent in that in a world of no-reason? When a man has obtained knowledge he cannot be stained by evil action. "As water adheres not to a lotus leaf so evil action adheres not to him who knows this".

"Him these two do not overcome= neither the thought 'Hence I did wrong', nor the thought 'Hence I did right! Verily he overcomes them both. What he has done and what he has not done do not affect him."

That is freedom, if you like, but it is the freedom of casting aside moral obligations as a snake its skin. If the Vedantist had struck a high moral note there would be no such festivals as Holi with its sin as vivid as the red colour they throw on one another= a turmoil of licentiousness. For the effect of the Vedanta philosophy is <sup>upon</sup> all the thought of India. *But they need something more.*

I am resting in a village and a young man is sitting on a door-step reading by the light of a little oil lamp. His voice rises and falls with an intonation that is pleasing to the ear. Some men are sitting on the ground listening, their arms clasped about their knees. What is he reading? Not the Vedas; not the Brahmanas; not the Upanishads; not the Vedanta Sutras nor Sankara's commentary. It is either the Ramayan or the Bhagvadgita, or perchance the Bhagvata or Vishnu Purana. And why are these books so popular? Because in the Ramayan Vishnu is incarnate in Ram and in the Bhagvadgita Vishnu is incarnate in Krishna. There are stories about Vishnu and Krishna in the Bhagvata and Vishnu Puranas. Bhagvat is another name for Vishnu, and Vishnu has become identical with Brahma. These writings have always been open to all, both to women and to Sudras.

The Bhagvadgita, <sup>as we have said</sup> reconciles in itself the Vedanta, the Sankhya and the Yoga Shastras. But how could an impersonal God become incarnate, and is it consistent with the thought of the

one world=soul? Just how the thought of incarnation came to the minds of the Indian thinkers, whether it came through Christianity or originated in their own thought, no one is able to say definitely, but it has entered in to give warmth and life to the bleakness of a consistent Vedantism.

There are two great sects in India, the Vishnuites who worship Vishnu, and the Shivaitees who worship Shiva. One can distinguish them by their tilak. The Vishnuites wear three vertical lines on their foreheads, the inner one red, and the Shivaitees, three horizontal white lines.

Vishnu is one of the Vedic gods and is said to have measured the earth in three strides. He is kind and benevolent, the protector of men. Shiva is the Rudra of the Vedas, who like Thor "urged his loud chariot over the mountain tops".

He was the god of the destroying storm. The Maruts were his companions. In the Brahmanas both Vishnu and Rudra are spoken of, but Brahma has the highest place. Then while in the secret doctrine of the Upanishads Brahma is being taught as the World-all, we find that Vishnu and Shiva have become the popular gods of the common people. Influenced by the surrounding people, the early inhabitants of India who were animists and idol-worshippers, images began to be largely used, and the temples that were built were open to all.

To that early period belong the Ramayana of Valmiki and the Mahabharat. There is as yet no trace of the incarnation theory. Then arose Buddhism about 600 B.C., and in this system as taught by Buddha there were no individual souls and no supreme soul. But as though to prove that man has a soul and must worship something, Gautama himself after his death became a god in his followers' eyes, and gradually came to be looked upon as one in a succession of Buddhas. When the Maurya line of the Magadha Empire in north-east India became Buddhist a great impetus was given to this faith. Missionaries were sent by the Emperor Asoka to Ceylon and to China.

The power of Buddhism stimulated the Brahmins to opposi-

tion and the Ramayana was rewritten by Tulsi Das and Ram was no longer a mortal only but the partial incarnation of Vishnu, and this a personal appeal was made to men's hearts, which has never lost its hold. Ram and Sita are names beloved. In the Ramayana Brahma is spoken of as the creator and Shiva is the great god Mahadeva whose neck is stained with blue from drinking the poison at the churning of the ocean of milk. The River Ganges flowed down from heaven upon his head.

About that time also, about the beginning of the Christian era the Bhagvadgita was added to the Mahabharat, and Krishna too was a partial incarnation of Vishnu. In the Puranas, written about the sixth century A.D., the stories of Vishnu and Krishna are of a much lower level than the Bhagvadgita. Indian thought reaches its height in this beautiful poem.

The influence of Vedantic thought was gradually spreading all over India "its roots above, its branches below, this eternal fig-tree", and in time Vishnu and Shiva were identified with Brahma, the Brahma of the Upanishads. Ram and Krishna became full incarnations of Vishnu, Ram being the first. Thus they were incarnations of Brahmas. The Buddhists also mingling their thought with the Vedanta, taught that Buddha was also an incarnation of Brahma. Is it any wonder that the Pundit Kuluram, holding fast to his old faith, yet impressed by the beauty of Christ, asked, "Is it not possible that Jesus too was an incarnation of Vishnu?"

Shiva has no incarnations. He is often represented as dancing in the air with his eyes closed and his arms folded, thus typifying Brahma who created the world in sport.

We have followed the main lines of thought in India, but let us look for a moment at the worship of India in its common form. Is it for the most part an abstract pondering upon the

the syllable "Om"? On the contrary for the millions of common people it is idol-worship. Shiva is worshipped in the images of the bull and the linga by those who see nothing beyond the image. His wife Parvati or Kali was worshipped by the Thugs who slew their victims to appease her taste for blood. Saiva gurus are worshipped as Shiva himself. Images of Krishna may be bought in the bazar. There are innumerable gods and they are worshipped with a reverence that is pathetic.

Why has not Vedantism put an end to polytheism as Christianity swept away the gods of the West? Because they have really never set their faces against it. Nehemiah Goreh in his Rational Refutation of the Six Hindu Systems says:- "Whoever, therefore, hearing that the Vedanta believe in Brahma without qualities, infer that they reject Vishnu, Shiva, and the rest of the pantheon, and that they discountenance idolatry and such things, and that they count the Puranas and similar writings false, labours under gross error."

There is a virtue, they think, in the worship of the gods for the common people when it is all they know. And the fact that even enlightened men worship images is because of that frailty of human nature which seeks something tangible, something to help in time of need that one cannot get from an impersonal abstraction. It is that same feeling of need that makes the man driving his oxen along the quiet roads at night repeat the name "Ram, Ram; Ram, Ram." to keep away the evil spirits. But Ram was not divine. In the ancient poem by Valmiki he is a hero, the son of King Dasratha of Ayodhya. It is this cry of need to which Jeremiah the prophet replies: "For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil to give you an expected end." We have a God that thinketh upon us.

Pantheism itself too is the cause of the polytheism that runs side by side with it. God is in all things, therefore a stone, a snake, a peepul tree, a peacock, a river- are Brahma.

In worshipping them I worship Brahma.

Modern writers like Rajah Ram Mohan Roy, the founder of the Brahmo-Samaj, have protested against idolatry. His aim was to restore Hinduism to its primitive purity as given in the Upanishads. He believed that they were theistic, but he never got away from the deism which he had acquired at the famous Muhammadan school at Patna. He was strongly influenced, however, by Christian Ethics and took a prominent part with Alexander Duff in the agitation against Sati, the burning of widows, consummated by the passing of Lord William Bentinck's famous order prohibiting it. Ram Mohan Roy did not believe in transmigration, and that was his break with Hinduism, for it is of its very essence.

His successor as leader of the Brahmo-Samaj, Debendra Nath Tagore, was known as the great Rishi or Seer. He did not believe that India had anything to gain from Christianity and drew up for the public worship of the Samaj a series of extracts from ancient Hindi literature, chiefly from the Upanishads. He was jealous for his ancient faith and never quoted from the Bible. But the influence of Christ was spreading like the leaven which a woman hid in three measures of meal. We find in Keshub Chander Sen, his young friend, a great love for Christ and appreciation for the purity of his life and his service for others. In his lecture on Jesus Christ he says:-

"What moral serenity and sweetness pervade his life! What extraordinary tenderness and humility- what lamb-like meekness and simplicity! His heart was full of mercy and forgiving kindness; friends and foes shared his charity and love. And yet, on the other hand, how resolute, firm, and unyielding in his

adherence to truth! He feared no mortal man, and braved even death itself for the sake of truth and God. Verily when we read his life, his meekness like the soft moon, ravishes the heart and bathes it in a flood of serene light; but when we come to the grand consummation of his career, his death on the cross, behold he shines as the powerful sun in its meridian splendour!"

But although he was carried away by the beauty of the character of Christ, he was never consistent. The Vedanta still ran rival in his veins. His last prayer is said to have been, "Mother of Buddha, Mother of the Sakyan, grant me Nirvana." *He loved to think of God as mother.*

We have come at last to our own day, and we have before us one of that long line of Indian thinkers, Indian seers, the current of whose thought we have tried to follow from its source beyond the hills of time - Sir Rabindranath Tagore. We see in him how the Vedantism of India has altered. If it had remained as set forth in the Vedanta Sutras with all streams running into it and none out, it would have been by now as dry and arid as the salt desert in Persia where there was once a lake. But into the waters that were embittered Jesus threw his gift of love and gave them an outlet and they are very gradually being transformed <sup>though</sup> but many are unconscious yet of the cause that has made the waters taste more sweet.

To Sir Rabindranath Tagore the world is not a mirage, nor does he believe that the soul is Brahma, but God limits himself that man may have freedom of will, and our personality as it grows and expands will be an answer to the love of

God and will widen more and more towards the universal.

"Thy love for me still waits for my love! Our love must flow to the awaiting sea of God's love. He sees in man the onward march of the divine purpose and it is in activity not in the restraint of all his powers that man co-operates with God. It is in our work that we find God.

"Leave thy chanting and singing and telling of beads. Open thy eyes and see thy God is not before thee. He is where the tiller is tilling the hard ground, and where the path-maker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and shower, and His garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy mantle and even like Him come down on the dusty soil."

In distinguishing between Western and Eastern thought he points out that the Western thinker has directed his attention outward and of the Indian he says:-

"We would realize Brahma in meditation only in his aspect of completeness. We have determined not to see him in the commerce of the universe in his aspect of evolution. That is why in our seekers we often find the intoxication of the spirit and its consequent degradation. Their faith would acknowledge no bondage of law, their imagination soars unrestricted, their conduct disdains to offer any explanation to reason. Their intellect in its vain attempts to see Brahma inseparable from his creation works itself stone-dry, and their heart, seeking to confine him within its own outpourings, swoons in a drunken ecstasy of emotion. They have not even kept within reach of any standard whereby they can measure the loss of strength and character which manhood sustains by thus ignoring the bonds of law and the claims of action in the external universe."

It is true that while they have given themselves wholly to seeking God within themselves neglecting the great field for action God had spread about them, we of the West can get from their very pantheism a new conception of the immanence of God- of God in us and we dwelling in Him that we have never had before. For though Christians are theists in name there are many that are really deists, that is, they think of the world as created by God and God as transcendent. Is it not so?



But think of God in our very being- realizing himself through us. To have this conception of the nearness, the immanence of God is to be raised out of the materialism that drags at our heels and to be uplifted into that spiritual kingdom which is our inheritance from Christ.

Rabindranath Tagore is not a Christian, for he does not see the need of the redeeming blood of Jesus, his optimism does not let him linger on the true heinousness of sin, but he understands the oneness of Jesus with the Father. "Man's deepest joy is in growing greater and greater by more and more union with the all."

From the East then with its striving after spirituality and oneness with God there comes to us of the West a voice that makes us pause at the throne of God:-

"From the Unreal lead me to the Real;  
From Darkness lead me to Light.  
From Death lead me to Immortality."

- Brihadaranyaka Upanishad