

INTRODUCTION

Brahmanism or Hinduism is not only the oldest of the mystery religions, or rather metaphysical disciplines, of which we have a full and precise knowledge from literary sources, and as regards the last two thousand years also from iconographic documents, but also perhaps the only one of these that has survived with an unbroken tradition and that is lived and understood at the present day by many millions of men, of whom some are peasants and others learned men well able to explain their faith in European as well as in their own languages. Nevertheless, and although the ancient and modern scriptures and practises of Hinduism have been examined by European scholars for more than a century, it would be hardly an exaggeration to say that a faithful account of Hinduism might well be given in the form of a categorical denial of most of the statements that have been made about it, alike by European scholars and by Indians trained in our modern sceptical and evolutionary modes of thought.

One would begin, for example, by remarking that the Vedic doctrine is neither pantheistic nor polytheistic, nor a worship of the powers of Nature except in the sense that *Natura naturans est Deus* and all her powers but the names of God's acts; that *karma* is not "fate" except in the orthodox sense of the character and destiny that inhere in created things themselves, and rightly understood, determines their vocation; that *māyā* is not "illusion", but rather the maternal measure and means essential to the manifestation of a quantitative, and in this sense "material", world of appearances, by which we may be either enlightened or deluded according to the degree of our own maturity; that the notion of a "reincarnation" in the popular sense of the return of deceased individuals to rebirth on this earth represents only a misunderstanding of the doctrines of heredity, transmigration and regeneration; and that the six

Diu heilige schrift ruofet alzemäle dar üf, daz
der mensche sîn selbes ledic werden sol. Wan als
vil dū dînes selbes ledic bist, als vil bist dū dînes
selbes gewaltic, und as vil dū dînes selbes
gewaltic bist, als vil dū dînes selbes eigen, und
als vil als dū dîn eigen bist, als vil ist got dîn
eigen und allez, daz got ic geschuof.

(Meister Eckhart, Pfeiffer, p. 598)

darśanas of the later Sanskrit "philosophy" are not so many mutually exclusive "systems" but, as their name implies, so many "points of view" which are no more mutually contradictory than are, let us say, botany and mathematics. We shall also deny in Hinduism the existence of anything unique and peculiar to itself, apart from the local coloring and social adaptations that must be expected under the sun where nothing can be known except in the mode of the knower. The Indian tradition is one of the forms of the *Philosophia Perennis*, and as such, embodies those universal truths to which no one people or age can make exclusive claim. The Hindu is therefore perfectly willing to have his own scriptures made use of by others as "extrinsic and probable proofs" of the truth as *they* also know it. The Hindu would argue, moreover, that it is upon these heights alone that any true agreement of differing cultures can be effected.

We shall try now to state the fundamentals positively: not, however, as this is usually done in accordance with the "historical method" by which the reality is more obscured than illuminated, but from a strictly orthodox point of view, both as to principles and their application; endeavouring to speak with mathematical precision, but never employing words of our own or making any affirmations for which authority could not be cited by chapter and verse; in this way making even our technique characteristically Indian.

We cannot attempt a survey of the religious literature, since this would amount to a literary history of India, where we cannot say where what is sacred ends and what is secular begins, and even the songs of bayadères and showmen are the hymns of the Fidéles de l'Amour. Our literary sources begin with the Rigveda (1200 or more B.C.), and only end with the most modern Vaiṣṇava, Saiva and Tantric theological treatises. We must, however, especially mention the *Bhagavad Gītā* as probably the most important single work ever produced in India; this book of eighteen chapters is not, as it has been sometimes called, a "sectarian" work, but one

universally studied and often repeated daily from memory by millions of Indians of all persuasions; it may be described as a compendium of the whole Vedic doctrine to be found in the earlier Vedas, Brāhmanas and Upaniṣads, and being therefore the basis of all the later developments, it can be regarded as the focus of all Indian religion. To this we must add that the pseudo-historical Krishna and Arjuna are to be identified with the mythical Agni and Indra.

THE MYTH

Like the Revelation (*iruti*) itself, we must begin with the Myth (*itihāsa*), the penultimate truth, of which all experience is the temporal reflection. The mythical narrative is of timeless and placeless validity, true nowhere and everywhere: just as in Christianity, "In the beginning God created" and "Through him all things were made", regardless of the millennia that come between the dateable words, amount to saying that the creation took place at Christ's "eternal birth": "In the beginning" (*agre*), or rather "at the summit", means "in the first cause": just as in our still told myths, "once upon a time" does not mean "once" alone but "once for all". The Myth is not a "poetic invention" in the sense these words now bear: on the other hand, and just because of its universality, it can be told, and with equal authority, from many different points of view.

In this eternal beginning there is only the Supreme Identity of "That One" (*tad ekam*),¹ without differentiation of being from non-being, light from darkness, or separation of sky from earth. The All is for the present impounded in the first principle, which may be spoken of as the Person, Progenitor, Mountain, Tree, Dragon or endless Serpent. Related to this principle by filiation or younger brotherhood, and *after ego* rather than another principle, is the Dragon-slayer, born to supplant the Father and take possession of the kingdom, distributing its treasures to his followers.² For if there is to be a world, the prison must be shattered and its potentialities liberated. This can be done either in accordance with the Father's will or against his will; he may "choose death for his children's sake";³ or it may be that the Gods impose the passion upon him, making him their sacrificial victim.⁴ These are not contradictory doctrines, but different ways of telling one and the same story; in reality, Slayer and

Dragon, sacrificer and victim are of one mind behind the scenes, where there is no polarity of contraries, but mortal enemies on the stage, where the everlasting war of the Gods⁵ and the Titans is displayed. In any case, the Dragon-Father remains a Pleroma, no more diminished by what he exhales than he is increased by what is repossessed. He is the Death, on whom our life depends; and to the question "Is Death one, or many?" the answer is made that "He is one as he is there, but many as he is in his children here": The Dragon-slayer is our Friend; the Dragon must be pacified and made a friend of.

The passion is both an exhaustion and a dismemberment. The endless Serpent, who for so long as he was one Abundance remained invincible,⁶ is disjointed and dismembered as a tree is felled and cut up into logs.⁷ For the Dragon, as we shall presently find, is also the World-Tree, and there is an allusion to the "wood" of which the world is made by the Carpenter.⁸ The Fire of Life and Water of Life (*Agni* and *Soma*), all Gods, all beings, sciences and goods are constricted by the Python, who as "Holdfast" will not let them go until he is smitten and made to gape and pant:⁹ and from this Great Being, as if from a damp fire smoking, are exhaled the Scriptures, the Sacrifice, these worlds and all beings,¹⁰ leaving him exhausted of his contents and like an empty skin.¹¹ In the same way the Progenitor, when he has emanated his children, is emptied out of all his possibilities of finite manifestation, and falls down unstrung,¹² overcome by Death,¹³ though he survives this woe.¹⁴ Now the positions are reversed, for the Fiery Dragon will not and cannot be destroyed, but would enter into the Hero, to whose question "What, wouldst thou consume me?" it replies "Rather to kindle (waken, quicken) thee, that *ibow* mayst eat."¹⁵ The Progenitor, whose emanated children are as it were sleeping and inanimate stones, reflects "Let me enter into them, to awaken them"; but so long as he is one, he cannot, and therefore divides himself into the powers of perception and consumption, extending these powers from his hidden lair in the "cave" of the heart through the doors

of the senses to their objects, thinking "Let me eat of these objects"; in this way "our" bodies are set up in possession of consciousness, he being their mover.¹⁹ And since the Several Gods or Measures of Fire into which he is thus divided are "our" energies and powers, it is the same to say that "the Gods entered into man, they made the mortal their house".¹⁹ His passible nature has now become "ours": and from this predicament he cannot easily recollect or rebuild himself, whole and complete.²⁰

We are now the stone from which the spark can be struck, the mountain beneath which God lies buried, the scaly reptilian skin conceals him, and the fuel for his kindling. That his lair is now a cave or house presupposes the mountain or walls by which he is enclosed, *verborgen* and *verbant*. "You" and "I" are the psycho-physical prison and Constrictor in whom the First has been swallowed up that "we" might be at all. For as we are repeatedly told, the Dragon-slayer devours his victim, swallows him up and drinks him dry, and by this Eucharistic meal he takes possession of the first-born Dragon's treasure and powers and becomes what he was. We can cite, in fact, a remarkable text in which our composite soul is called the "mountain of God" and we are told that the Comprehensor of this doctrine shall in like manner swallow up his own evil, hateful adversary.²¹ This "adversary" is, of course, none but our self. The meaning of the text will only be fully grasped if we explain that the word for "mountain", *giri*, derives from the root *gir*, to "swallow". Thus He in whom we were imprisoned is now our prisoner; as our Inner Man he is submerged in and hidden by our Outer Man. It is now his turn to become the Dragon-slayer; and in this war of the God with the Titan, now fought within you, where we are "at war with ourselves",²² his victory and resurrection will be also ours, *if we have known Who we are*. It is now for him to drink us dry, for us to be his wine.

We have realised that the deity is implicitly or explicitly a willing victim; and this is reflected in the human ritual, where the agreement of the victim, who must have been originally human, is always

formally secured. In either case the death of the victim is also its birth, in accordance with the infallible rule that every birth must have been preceded by a death: in the first case, the deity is multiply born in living beings, in the second they are reborn in him. But even so it is recognized that the sacrifice and dismemberment of the victim are acts of cruelty and even treachery;²³ and this is the original sin (*kuibija*) of the Gods, in which all men participate by the very fact of their separate existence and their manner of knowing in terms of subject and object, good and evil, because of which the Outer Man is excluded from a direct participation²⁴ in "what the Brahmans understand by Soma". The form of our "knowledge", or rather "ignorance" (*avidyā*), dismembers him daily; and for this *ignorantia divisiua* an expiation is provided for in the Sacrifice, where by the sacrificer's surrender of himself and the building up again of the dismembered deity, whole and complete, the multiple selves are reduced to their single principle. There is thus an incessant multiplication of the inexhaustible One and unification of the indefinitely Many. Such are the beginnings and endings of worlds and of individual beings: expanded from a point without position or dimensions and a now without date or duration, accomplishing their destiny, and when their time is up returning "home" to the Sea in which their life originated.²⁵

worshippers".³⁰ The trinitarian names—Agni, Vāyu and Āditya or Brahmā, Rudra and Vishnu—"are the highest embodiments of the supreme, immortal, bodiless Brahma . . . their becoming is a birth from one another, partitions of a common Self defined by its different operations . . . These embodiments are to be contemplated, celebrated, and at last recanted. For by means of them one rises higher and higher in the worlds; but where the whole ends, attains the simplicity of the Person".³⁰ Of all the names and forms of God the monogrammatic syllable Om, the totality of all sounds and the music of the spheres chanted by the resonant Sun, is the best. The validity of such an audible symbol is exactly the same as that of a plastic icon, both alike serving as supports of contemplation (*dhīyāmba*); such a support is needed because that which is imperceptible to eye or ear cannot be apprehended objectively as it is in itself, but only in a likeness. The symbol must be naturally adequate, and cannot be chosen at random; one infers (*aveśyati, āvāśyati*) the unseen in the seen, the unheard in the heard; but these forms are only means by which to approach the formless and must be discarded before we can become it.

Whether we call him Person, or Sacerdotium, or Magna Mater, or by any other grammatically masculine, feminine or neuter names, "That" (*tat, tad ekam*) of which our powers are measures (*tanmātrā*) is a syzygy of conjoint principles, without composition or duality. These conjoint principles or selves, indistinguishable *ab initio*, but respectively self-sufficient and insufficient *ab extra*, become conjuncts only when we envisage the act of self-manifestation (*svaprakāśyam*) implied when we descend from the silent level of the Non-duality to speak in terms of subject and object and to recognize the many separate and individual existences that the All (*sarvam = to āv*) or Universe (*visvam*) presents to our physical organs of perception. And since this finite totality can be only logically and not really divided from its infinite source, "That One" can also be called an "Integral Multiplicity"³¹ and "Omniform Light".³² Creation is exemplary. The conjoint principles, for example, Heaven and

THEOLOGY AND AUTOLOGY

The Sacrifice (*yajña*) undertaken here below is a ritual mimesis of what was done by the Gods in the beginning, and in the same way both a sin and an expiation. We shall not understand the Myth until we have made the Sacrifice, nor the Sacrifice until we have understood the Myth. But before we can try to understand the operation it must be asked, What is God? and What are we?

God is an essence without duality (*advaita*), or as some maintain, without duality but not without relations (*visiṣṭādvaita*). He is only to be apprehended as Essence (*asti*),³³ but this Essence subsists in a two fold nature (*dvaitābhāva*),³⁴ as being and as becoming. Thus, what is called the Entirety (*krīṣṇam, pūrṇam, bhūman*) is both explicit and inexplicit (*nirukānirukta*), sonant and silent (*śabdāśabda*), characterised and uncharacterised (*saṅga, nirṅa*), temporal and eternal (*kālakāla*), partite and impartite (*śakāśakāla*), in a likeness and not in any likeness (*mūrtāmūrta*), shewn and unshewn (*vyakāśavyakāśa*), mortal and immortal (*martyāmartya*), and so forth. Whoever knows him in his proximate (*para*) aspect, immanent, knows him also in his ultimate (*para*) aspect, transcendent;³⁵ the Person seated in our heart, eating and drinking, is also the Person in the Sun.³⁶ This Sun of men,³⁶ and Light of lights,³¹ "whom all men see but few know with the mind",³⁸ is the Universal Self (*ātman*) of all things mobile or immobile.³⁹ He is both inside and outside (*babir antas ca bhūtanām*), but uninterruptedly (*anantaram*), and therefore a total presence, undivided in divided things.³⁴ He does not come from anywhere, nor does he become anyone,³⁵ but only lends himself to all possible modalities of existence.³⁶

The question of his names, such as Agni, Indra, Prajāpati, Siva, Brahma, etc., whether personal or essential, is dealt with in the usual way: "they call him many who is really one",³⁷ "even as he seems, so he becomes",³⁸ "he takes the forms imagined by his

Earth, or Sun and Moon, man and woman, were originally one. Ontologically, their conjugation (*mithunam, sambhava, eko bhava*) is a vital operation, productive of a third in the image of the first and nature of the second. Just as the conjugation of Mind (*manas= vōṣ*) with the Voice (*vāc=δύσσοια*) gives birth to a concept (*saṃkalpa*) so the conjugation of Heaven and Earth kindles the Bambino, the Fire, whose birth divides his parents from one another and fills the intervening Space (*ākāśa, antarikṣa, Midgard*) with light; and in the same way microcosmically, being kindled in the space of the heart, he is its light. He shines in his Mother's womb,⁴³ in full possession of all his powers.⁴⁴ He is no sooner born than he traverses the Seven Worlds,⁴⁵ ascends to pass through the Sun-door, as the smoke from an altar or central hearth, whether without or within you, ascends to pass out through the eye of the dome.⁴⁶ This Agni is at once the messenger of God, the guest in all men's houses, whether constructed or bodily, the luminous pneumatic principle of life, and the missal priest who conveys the savour of the Burnt-offering hence to the world beyond the vault of the Sky, through which there is no other way but this "Way of the Gods" (*devayāna*). This Way must be followed by the Forerunner's foot-prints, as the word for "Way"⁴⁷ itself reminds us, by all who would reach the "farther shore" of the luminous spatial river of life⁴⁸ that divides this terrestrial from yonder celestial strand; these conceptions of the Way underlying all the detailed symbolism of the Bridge, the Voyage and the Pilgrimage.

Considered apart, the "halves" of the originally undivided Unity can be distinguished in various ways according to our point of view; politically, for example, as Sacerdotium and Regnum (*brahman-kṣatras*), and psychologically as Self and Not-self, Inner Man and Outer Individuality, Male and Female. These pairs are disparate; and even when the subordinate has been separated from the superior with a view to productive cooperation, it still remains in the latter, more eminently. The Sacerdotium, for example, is "both the Sacer-

dotium and the Regnum"—a condition found in the *mixta persona* of the priest-king *Mitravaruna*, or *Indrāgnī*—but the Regnum as a separated function is nothing but itself, relatively feminine, and subordinated to the Sacerdotium, its Director (*neti=ήγεμὼν*). The functional distinction in terms of sex defines the hierarchy. God himself is male to all, but just as *Mitra* is male to *Varuna* and *Varuna* in turn male to Earth, so the Priest is male to the King, and the King male to his realm. In the same way the man is subject to the joint government of Church and State; but in authority with respect to his wife, who in turn administers his estate. Throughout the series it the noetic principle that sanctions or enjoins what the aesthetic performs or avoids; disorder arising only when the latter is distracted from her rational allegiance by her own ruling passions and identifies this submission with "liberty".⁴⁹

The most pertinent application of all this is to the individual, whether man or woman: the outer and active individuality of "this man or woman, So-and-so" being naturally feminine and subject to its own inner and contemplative Self. On the one hand, the submission of the Outer to the Inner Man is all that is meant by the words "self-control" and "autonomy", and the opposite of what is meant by "self-assertion": and on the other, this is the basis of the interpretation of the return to God in terms of an erotic symbolism, "As one embraced by a darling bride knows naught of 'I' and 'thou', so self embraced by the foreknowing (solar) Self knows naught of a 'myself' within or a 'thyself' without",⁵⁰ because, as Sankara remarks, of "unity". It is this Self that the man who really loves himself or others, loves in himself and in them; "all things are dear only for the sake of the Self".⁵¹ In this true love of Self the distinction of "selfishness" from "altruism" loses all its meaning. He sees the Self, the Lord, alike in all beings, and all beings alike in that Lordly Self.⁵² "Loving thy Self", in the words of Meister Eckhart, "thou lovest all men as thy Self".⁵³ All these doctrines coincide with the Ṣūfi, "What is love? Thou shalt know when thou becomest me".^{54, 155}

The sacred marriage, consummated in the heart, adumbrates the deepest of all mysteries.⁶⁵ For this means both our death and beatific resurrection. The word to "marry" (*eko bhū*, become one) also means to "die", just as in Greek, *τελέω* is to be perfected, to be married, or to die. When "Each is both", no relation persists: and were it not for this beatitude (*ānanda*) there would be neither life nor gladness anywhere.⁶⁶ All this implies that what we call the world-process and a creation is nothing but a game (*kriyā*, *filā*, *παύδι*, *dolce gioco*) that the Spirit plays with itself, and as sunlight "plays" upon whatever it illuminates and quickens, although unaffected by its apparent contacts. We who play the game of life so desperately for temporal stakes might be playing at love with God for higher stakes—our selves, and his. We play against one another for possessions, who might be playing with the King who stakes his throne and what is his against our lives and all we are: a game in which the more is lost, the more is won.⁶⁷

By the separation of Heaven and Earth the "Three Worlds" are distinguished; the in-between World (*antarikṣa*) provides the etherial space (*ākāśa*) in which the inhibited possibilities of finite manifestation can take birth in accordance with their several natures. From this first etherial substance are derived in succession air, fire, water and earth; and from these five elemental Beings (*bhūtaṇi*), combined in various proportions, are formed the inanimate bodies of creatures;⁶⁸ into which the God enters to awaken them, dividing himself to fill these worlds and to become the "Several Gods", his children.⁶⁹ These Intelligences⁷⁰ are the host of "Beings" (*bhūta-gaṇa*) that operate in us, unanimously, as our "elemental soul" (*bhūtātman*), or conscious self;⁷¹ our "selves", indeed, but for the present mortal and unspiritual (*anāmya*, *anāmāna*), ignorant of their immortal Self (*ātmanam ananuvīdya*, *anāmajñā*),⁷² and to be distinguished from the Immortal deities who have already become what they are by their "worth" (*arhata*) and are spoken of as "Arhats" (= "Dignities").⁷³ Through the mundane and perfectible deities, and just as a King receives tribute (*balim ābr*) from his

subjects,⁷⁴ the Person in the heart, our Inner Man who is also the Person in the Sun, obtains the food (*anna*, *āhāra*); both physical and mental, on which he must subsist when he proceeds from being to becoming. And because of the simultaneity of his dynamic presence in all past and future becomings,⁷⁵ the emanated powers at work in our consciousness can be regarded as the temporal support of the solar Spirit's timeless providence (*prajñāna*) and omniscience (*sarvajñāna*). Not that this sensible world of successive events determined by mediate causes (*karma*, *adriṣṭa*, *apūrva*) is the source of his knowledge, but rather that it is itself the consequence of the Spirit's awareness of "the diversified world-picture painted by itself on the vast canvas of itself".⁷⁶ It is not by means of this All that he knows himself, but by his knowledge of himself that he becomes this All.⁷⁷ To know him by this All belongs only to *om* inferential manner of knowing.

You must have begun to realise that the theology and the autology are one and the same science, and that the only possible answer to the question, "What am I?" must be "That art thou".⁷⁸ For as there are two in him who is both Love and Death, so there are, as all tradition affirms unanimously, two in us; although not two of him or two of us, nor even one of him and one of us, but only one of both. As we stand now, in between the first beginning and the last end, we are divided against ourselves, essence from nature, and therefore see him likewise as divided against himself and from us. Let us describe the situation in two different figures. Of the conjugate birds, Sunbird and Soulbird, that perch on the Tree of Life, one is all-seeing, the other eats of its fruits.⁷⁹ For the Comprehensor these two birds are one;⁸⁰ in the iconography we find either one bird with two heads, or two with necks entwined. But from our point of view there is a great difference between the spectator's and the participant's lives; the one is not involved, the other, submerged in her feeding and nesting, grieves for her lack of lordship (*anīśa*) until she perceives her Lord (*īśa*), and recognizes her Self in him and in his majesty, whose wings have never been clipped."

