By LOUIS RENOU

INDIAN STUDIES IN 1952

Indian studies, as other branches of Orientalism, date back to the time when the first decipherings of texts, achieved in Europe, or at any rate by Europeans, made the treasures of Indian antiquity directly accessible to us.

There was of course what we might call a 'prehistoric period' of Indology, which might be placed in the eighteenth, indeed even in the seventeenth century: it is characterised by the efforts made by travellers and missionaries to acquire a certain knowledge of ancient India. The contact established about 1765 between a Tamil scholar, Maridas Pulle, and the French historian de Guignes might have advanced the date of the 'discovery' of Sanskrit by twenty years, as might the discoveries of Fathers Pon and Coeurdoux, who had a presentiment of the as yet unborn science of comparative grammar. But these pieces of work remained little known, and equal obscurity and tardy publication awaited the Latin translation of the *Upanishads* by Anquetil Duperron, itself made from a Persian version; the author, a hero of scholarly exploration, had taken the trouble of going to the spot to investigate the sources.

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It was not, however, till the closing years of the eighteenth century that a succession of important translations, published immediately and brought to the notice of readers by the enthusiasm of German pre-Romantics such as Herder and the young Goethe, revealed to a wide public a civilisation of which it had known nothing.

The start of the movement coincides with the foundation at Calcutta in 1784 of the world's senior Asiatic society. There followed in quick succession the publication, by English scholars in contact with Indian men of letters, of the *Bhagavad-Gîtâ* in 1785, the *Hita-Upadeça* in 1787, *Sakuntala* in 1789, the *Ritu-samhâra* in 1792, and the *Laws of Manu* in 1794.

The first chair of Sanskrit was established in 1814 at the Collège de France; the foundation of the Société Asiatique in Paris dates to 1822, anticipating by some years that of the London Society. In Germany, the first university chair devoted to India was that of Bonn, created in 1818 for August Wilhelm von Schlegel. Since then the impetus has continued, without slackening, down to our own days. All the big universities (except those of the Iberian countries) and many of the lesser ones now offer courses in Indian studies. In India itself, where learning had been kept barely alive in the pandit colleges and in the shadow of the temples, emulation has given rise, since 1870, to an ever-growing volume of erudite work. Today it is India itself, with its hundred learned publications, its innumerable specialised institutes, its museums, its universities where whole departments are devoted to Indian studies, which makes by far the most voluminous contribution in this field.

The reorganisation on modern lines of the Indian archæological services only goes back to the closing years of last century, under Lord Curzon. The extent of the tasks which confronted the archæologists forced them to devote their attention first to the preservation or restoration of existing monuments rather than to digging for new treasures. It is thanks to this work that it is possible to see today, in their original splendour, so many of the temples, palaces, and fortresses, spared by the Moslem tidal wave. But this did not mean that digging was neglected: the old Srâvastî, of the halcyon days of Buddhism, the old 'university' town of Taxila, the monastery of Nâhandâ, near which a Buddhist institute has just been built, bear witness to the extent and quality of the archæological finds.

Indology has opened its doors wide to the methods of scholarship which have already displayed their value in other fields of philology and history. It is true that there was a time when scholars idealised Vedantic and Buddhistic origins, when they attributed a fabulous antiquity (as Indians

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often still do) to the literary monuments of India and sought in them for the traces of primitive humanity. The romantic haze of those early times took a long time to disperse; but those times are gone now, never to return.

India must not be treated differently from Greece or Rome. The fact that it was late in being submitted to the scalpel of scholarship enabled it to profit from experience gained elsewhere. It is true that dilettantism is still rampant, aggravated by the influence of visionaries, by the 'horrible literature' (as Mircea Eliade so rightly calls it) of the neo-Buddhists, the 'traditionalists', and the occultists of one kidney or another. This phenomenon is particularly virulent round the skirts of India, which has always been a happy hunting ground for charlatans. But since the great Burnouf it can safely be said that these fantasies have no more chance of distorting reality than would the outpourings of dilettantes who had chosen integral calculus or nuclear physics as their hobby.

Indology stands out from the other Orientalist disciplines which came to birth at the same period, such as Egyptology and Assyriology, in that it has certain characteristics peculiar to itself. To begin with, in contrast with other related disciplines, it deals with a *living* subject-matter. An uninterrupted tradition of language and thought, probably the longest which history records, links archaic India with the India of today. Many present-day Hindus (to mention only Gandhi) reason in the terms of mediæval scholasticism; others have their connexions with the 'rishis', those seer-poets whose voices were heard when the sacred books were taking form. This fact gives, or should give, Indology its own line of approach. The study of ancient sources had indeed always been capital and must quite legitimately and necessarily remain so. Indology has grown accustomed to think in terms of origins. It has understood that the important thing was to pin down the starting-point of ideas, terms, and styles, from which historical evolution has followed in what may be called a natural and predictable course. Perhaps this attitude has led to an exaggerated lack of interest in later periods, but this disadvantage is less and less felt today, and it will be agreed that the first imperative in the heroic ages of research (which are not yet completely closed) was to lay a solid foundation for the discipline and to dissipate the fringe of darkness that hung about its frontiers.

It is nonetheless true that a knowledge of the living India, an association with its câstrîs and its pandits, gives research a resonance it could never attain in the study of dead civilisations. The difficult texts of the Indian

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Middle Ages would never have been understood without the help of written commentaries; but these commentaries themselves were illuminated by the orally communicated scholarship of specialists who have handed down to our own days, from father to son, from master to pupil, as did the alchemists in other ages, lessons of irreplaceable value.

Indology in the West has not taken all the advantage it should of these bearers of tradition. In the nineteenth century, apart from the little groups of 'Anglo-Indians' or 'Germano-Indians', who worked in the country near some great collection of manuscripts, Indology developed as a science divorced from reality. That is the reason why syntheses, conjectural explanations, and criticism took the lead over the direct search for written or monumental sources, over the publication and translation of works. Many important texts, particularly those subsequent to the tenth century (the crucial period, when India entered on the path of learned commentaries) remain to this day unpublished or at least untranslated. The Indologist does not have the degree of intimacy with his authors that any good Hellenist has with the thought of Plato or the art of Homer. It is true, however, that he finds himself at grips with literatures unlimited in their extent and often obscure in their meaning—sometimes growingly obscure as they approach the modern age.

Indigenous scholarship has assumed yet other aspects. Alongside the specialists of çâstra or of the technical disciplines there exist, particularly in the field of the oldest religious forms, i.e., in the Vedic domain, men who, without bothering about the meaning of which they are sometimes actually unaware, retain in their memory texts of a formidable length. They are capable of reciting them without a fault, using all the artifices of a hieratic pronunciation and the acrobatics of a systematised mnemotechny. In our civilisations, dominated by the written word and the ready-made text-book, it is difficult to imagine the part played by a memory developed to this degree. If we knew how to use these undaunted reciters of the *Veda* (their counterparts are to be found also in Ceylon for the Buddhist literature in Pali) we should observe the persistence of certain variants, of certain phonic or accentual traditions which no manuscript could ever perpetuate. The final form and arrangement of the great religious and epic works had been determined without the help of writing. Writing was not only known in the India of the third century B.C., but the regional variations evidenced in Emperor Açoka's famous engraved inscriptions point to the assumption that it had been known for a long time. It was, however, only used for profane purposes. It is possible that

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religious documents were entrusted to writing from the moment of their oral 'editing', but the authoritative version was certainly the oral one. The Buddhist and Jain canons were also transmitted orally, as their repetitions and enumerative lists show; the first is believed not to have been entrusted to the scribes till the first century B.C., and the second till later still. These documents, which deal with the life of monks in the smallest detail, never make a reference to a manuscript or a pen. When there was some danger of a text getting lost, recourse was had to the neighbouring community to restore the missing portions. The educated man is 'he who has heard much', and in every Buddhist sermon, what is called the sûtra, or the ideal thread on which the sacred recitations are strung, begins with the formula: 'Thus I have heard.' Right down to our days the contempt, or at least the lack of sympathy, felt by Indians for the written word has shown itself in many ways.

All this has not been without its importance. Oral transmission calls for certain forms of fidelity with which a written text can dispense. It finally imposes on thought itself a frame and norms quite distinct from those called for by book-learning.

Indian thought is in any case formalist to a high degree. The cult of grammar provides a striking proof of this. To be faithful to India is to think first of all as a grammarian, it has been justly observed. The grammatical *canons*—for a sacrosanct text is involved—are authoritative, not only on what they teach but on the form in which they teach it. The position and choice of a word in a grammatical proposition, the absence of this or that expected element (absence and silence have a normative value in India) are almost as much a part of the lesson as the content of the rule. Similarly in poetry, the choice of words, their position and their rhythm, the norms which they obey, are much more important than the content of the works, which tirelessly repeats the same conventional narrative themes. The anxiety to suggest rather than to formulate contributed, by the way, to the deliberate abandonment of the rich flexional system once possessed by Sanskrit, which more and more tended to agglutinative formations, by the impact of elements of compound words which had linked up.

At the end of Indian antiquity, when the great profane disciplines were taking shape—the various sciences, grammar and poetry, philosophy, law and medicine—oral teaching had resulted in the constitution of enormous commentaries, at first textual, then with more leeway, which were founded on some anonymous text elevated to the rank of a 'basic text'.

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It was thus that Sanskrit literature became largely a literature of commentaries, the more so as the original layers, the only ones which had embodied any creative effort, had gradually disappeared. The systems of philosophy which are called 'ways of seeing', that is, of envisaging the same reality in different perspectives, arose as the continuation of commentaries piled one upon another and starting from a more or less obscure source which, by its very obscurity, lent itself to divergent interpretations. Occultism is here, if occultism it be—in fact we are faced with mere condensation for pedagogical and mnemotechnic ends—in *statu nascendi*. All the dialectical and sophistical development which follows is devoted to its elucidation; for there is nothing deliberately esoteric in India, not even the *Tantras*. The Buddha gloried in having kept nothing hidden 'in his closed fist', and the 'fist of the master' (âcârayamishti), jealously hoarding truths which he should communicate to his pupil, is the symbol of a state of mind to be stigmatised. The *Upanishad*, which Anquetil called *secretum tegendum*, reached Rome in the third century (St. Hippolytus) and the East Indian archipelago probably about the same time; what was believed to mean 'secret' or 'occult teaching' was nothing but the practice, open to anyone, of the game of symbolical correlations between the terrestrial and the supra-terrestrial spheres. 'This world imitates the other world, the other world imitates this world.' This phrase from the *Altareya-Brâhmana* is a fair summary of the general tendency of speculations in ancient India.

It is not generally appreciated to what point the practice of the commentary, which itself reflects the direct relations of master and pupil (or, transposed to the divine plane, of Çiva and the Goddess) has moulded the Indian mind. Many such works are really dialogues, whose meaning is illuminated when the missing speakers—master, advanced student, possessor of a partial truth, apprentice—are restored. Progress is measured by objections and answers. The reader himself is a pupil who must be given access to the truth by 'awakening' him to it: the aim is to attain, behind every relative *truth*, the inexpressible truth, the dhvani or 'resonance' of the writers on poetics, in such a manner that the reader shall realise it in the sense of identifying himself with it rather than of grasping it rationally. Hence the repetitions which encumber Indian phraseology, the absence of composition in our sense of the word, the tendency to classifications and identifications, the inflation of old texts with new material, with no attempt to harmonise the two.

True knowledge, in the rational as well as in the mystical order, is that

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which is learned at the feet of the master; for, says the Chândogya, 'I have learned from those like you that the knowledge which leads the straightest is that which is received from the master.'

Indian studies as they have developed in the course of 150 years of exertions are a group of disciplines which are distinct though naturally linked by much internal overlapping. These disciplines embrace almost all that classical antiquity has to offer, in addition to some other branches of learning which have no parallel in the West. Thus Yoga, in its authentic meaning, not in the travesties which usurp its name today, is a precise technique (inevitably capped with a piece of philosophical speculation) for attaining mastery of the mystic. Mîmânsâ, again, is a sort of hermeneutics of the ancient liturgy on the basis of a reinterpretation of it on juridical lines. A bird's-eye view of the various disciplines gives a fascinating impression of unity. Though the methods of study enjoined are the most diverse, the practices and recipes recommended of an infinite variety, the aim of these learned 'actions', whether they be concerned with poetry or legislation, ascesis or pleasure, is always the same: the search for symbolic filiations, the pursuit, in short, of a kind of magic. The more or less explicit goal is to attain Deliverance, the key word which dictates every Indian activity. Failing the attainment of this end, the accumulation of merit which will shorten the road to it is also a desirable objective. As late as the eighteenth century Nâgojî, the great grammarian, was explaining that religious merit may be acquired by employing words with grammatical correctness and, even more subtly, that phonemes which might appear redundant in the statement of a rule are designed to permit the student who concentrates his mind on them to progress on the path of Deliverance. In poetics, the perception of the rasa or 'savour' aroused in the reader by a work of art, has the effect of destroying the 'envelopes' which enclosed a mind impregnated with virtualities and prevented it from enjoyment: the being is liberated from its chains, like the apprentice mystic arrived at the terminal rapture of Yoga. In the field of law, the essential injunctions are those whose infraction or observance sets off an 'unheard of effect', this being the point of impact towards which the human act fatally tends at the end of its trajectory: a metaphysical fiction designed to explain the persistence of karman between the moment of an act and that when its effect is detonated.

It goes without saying that few of the Indian logical articulations correspond with ours. The arrangement and the form both differ. Thought moves in a circle, tracing a sort of virtual 'mandala', zigzagging through

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the formulable zones before taking off for the 'fourth step', the hidden step, the step which in the distant past was called the 'that', or the 'so', or the 'who?', when it was not desired to give it its real name, brahman, 'spiritual energy condensed in a pregnant formula', or (in the mythified zone of the vocabulary) the god Prajâpati.

Amidst this group of disciplines, historical research is laggard. Ancient India had neither chronicles nor annals, and it has often been said that Indians have no head for history. It is a fact that none of their exceedingly prolix poems has preserved the memory of the great tribal movements which at the dawn of the historic period shaped the definitive ethnical structure of the peninsula.

Yet India always thought it was recording its history. The *Purânas*, those huge repositories of 'antiquities', were conceived as treatises on universal history: they start with the cosmogony to end with the dynasties of the future. In other words, the periods of real history form only an episode in the cosmic cycle, and even they are generally transformed into mystical or legendary themes. Already the Hymns of the *Veda* conveyed mere scraps of history engulfed by mythological phraseology. The anecdotes explaining the origin of the monastic rules among the Buddhists have sloughed off so many skins of fiction as have those which, in the *Brâhmanas*, set out to account for the ancient liturgy. The narratives on the Councils have been systematically distorted and travestied. But the great Epic has now firmly established its character as a record of historical fact. Indian scholars are still lavishing their energies on the effort to fix the exact date when the great war which the *Mâhabârata* describes began and to identify the route of the military expedition which the *Râmâyana* recounts. The teophany of the *Gîtâ* is placed in a historical setting. Krishna was the head of a clan before becoming a universal deity. But, with his innate tendency towards subversion, the Indian instantly transposes one into the other, as Blake did when he recognised in the French Revolution the reflection of the struggles between cosmic demons. Kalhana, the author of the only chronicle which comes near satisfying our historical canons, writes in verse, as did his compeers. 'Who except a poet', he asks, 'could bring the past of men back to life?'

But the poet was subject to strict conventions, to those rules which fettered Indian learning in its every manifestation. His hero must have the virtues of an epic character, he must himself be faithful to the exigencies of the panegyric which at the dawn of time set the key for the duties of the kavi, the 'poet-champion' of religious tournaments. History was thus

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an occasional work, born fortuitously and dying with the death of the dynast.

The inscriptions, engraved on metal or stone, have in part filled this gap. The work carried out in epigraphy in the last century, though it may not have been so thorough as that accomplished in the field of Greek or Latin, has nonetheless resurrected, fragment by fragment, whole centuries of lost history. It was the Sanskrit inscriptions of Cambodia, of the ancient kingdom of Champâ, which led to the discovery of a fact barely suspected eighty years ago: the profound Hinduisation of South-East Asia, the peaceful penetration into these distant lands, over a period of twelve centuries, of the Buddhism of the 'Lesser Vehicle' and of the central ideas of Brahmanism, its regalian doctrine, its legislation, and its social framework.

Starting as a special discipline, Indology has thus tended to become the link between widely diverse studies: it is, with Islam, the necessary basis for any serious understanding of Asia, from Afghanistan to the Pacific. The India which had been regarded as turned in on itself had in fact been animated by a great expansive force, and the expansion was the more admirable in that it was accomplished without conquest or violence. Buddhism (to a certain extent also Brahmanism) was the vehicle of a universal culture, just as Christianity was in the West.

Indology is sometimes thought of as a more or less settled and static science. It is true that the discoveries made in its field have not been as spectacular as those in Egypt or Palestine, for example. Really early documents have either been lacking or undecipherable (as at Mohenjo-Daro); then suddenly there has come an overwhelming flood of texts, like those figurines that pit the stone of the temples in the south. We are at the opposite pole from Persia, where a few fragmentary texts wrested from the earth have compelled the rethinking of an entire problem. The accumulation of already known and identified monuments and documents is such that any new find takes its place in the whole without introducing any significant change. There has been no repetition of the luck of 1909, when there were discovered in quick succession an important text dealing with economics and politics and a series of comedies which probably represented a pre-Kalidasian school of drama. The Gilgit manuscripts disappointed more than one hope, and the progressive discovery of more *Tantras* confirms rather than changes the spiritual conditions which had long been suspected. Any chance of getting new texts on the remoter periods, which would be far more important, seems now to be ruled out.

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If, however, discovery seems to be at a standstill in some of the fields covered by Indian studies, it is because there are not enough workers. Active Indology has always been the work of a handful of men with small means. In France, Burnouf for twenty years shouldered the responsibility almost alone, then for a time there was the triumvirate of Roth, Böhtlingk, Weber in Germany and that of Sylvain Lévi, Finot, Foucher in France. It is a poor science, whose utility is even today unappreciated by those whose duty it is to draw up its programmes and lay down its curricula. In this respect, we have gone a long way back from the romantic days when Ballanche demanded that Latin should be replaced in elementary education by Oriental languages, and particularly by Sanskrit. Indologists would be content with a lot less now. All they wish is that it should no longer be possible to write general histories of philosophy without mentioning the Indian philosophers, or text-books on alchemy or astrology (like the two otherwise excellent volumes which recently appeared in the French 'Que Sais-je?' series) that passed over the important Indian contribution to these subjects, to which Berthelot and Biot paid deserved tribute in the past.

How many specialists are there in the world on Indian law or poetics? Yet these subjects have been the source of an uninterrupted flow of didactic treatises for fifteen or twenty centuries. The tools at the disposal of the Indologist, text-books and reference books, become obsolete faster than in other fields. Yet they are replaced more slowly. The French student of Sanskrit has to rely on a dictionary whose first volume was compiled more than a century ago, and conditions are even worse for other Indian languages and literatures.

Yet points of view change from generation to generation; sometimes, it is true, by the mere resurrection of old theses which had fallen into unmerited discredit. Chronological and archæological hypotheses succeed each other rapidly. There is perhaps no field in which so many have been constructed as on the subject of India. That is perhaps the inevitable price to be paid by a discipline dealing with elusive and ill-defined literary and symbolic traditions, which lend themselves to a number of equally plausible interpretations. In archæology, the symbolic view has resumed its precedence over positive research. We are back at the position of Creuzer, as in mythology we are at that of Adalbert Kuhn and Max Müller. In Buddhistic studies, chopping and changing from one dogma to another has been continuous. And meanwhile a really modern linguistic description of India still remains to be made, and a country eminently

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religious has not inspired a single history of religions worthy of the name.

Work was for a long time concentrated on Vedism, a privileged field in that it permitted a link to be established between the Indo-European and the strictly Indian traditions: the 'Sanskrit and Comparative Grammar' schools of the older universities stem from this preference. In former days, the way for an Indologist to win his spurs was to edit some Vedic treatise. This type of study has been slowly losing ground in the last quarter century, though it has quite recently experienced a certain revival. In the meantime attention had been turned to Buddhism, first in the Pali traditions, then in those of Northern Buddhism. The latter had been opened up to scholars since the dawn of research by the genius of Burnouf. Under the inspiration of Sylvain Lévi, Buddhology has adopted the comparative method (Sanskrit-Tibetan-Chinese) which seems today to be the definitively established approach.

As a result the centre of gravity of Indology has tended to shift from India proper. Scientific access to India from the outside has, indeed, always been an easy matter; the manuscripts which pagodas and cloisters had been powerless to preserve in the tropics have been revealed to us in the sands of Central Asia. More than one problem has been successfully tackled by thus by-passing India. The network of connexions established with the Indian periphery, from the expedition of Alexander (and even at a yet earlier date) to the Moslem conquest, has always been closer and more ramified. It is no longer possible today to believe in an 'Indian miracle', any more than it is in what was formerly called the 'Greek miracle', or to see in India, as men did a hundred years ago, 'the schoolmistress of the human race'. Archæology bears witness to the presence of a Greek influence which, probably by way of Persia, helped to form the Gandhara style. The Roman remains recently found at Pondicherry explain certain Greco-Latin characteristics of the art of Amarâvatì. Later, very probably, came an Alexandrian influence on astronomy and astrology, and much later a probably Persian influence on mysticism. But all this happened at a period when autonomous Indian thought had already yielded the fruit it had to give. Kaye, to prove the Indian indebtedness to Greece, did not hesitate to invent the contents of lost Greek works: so tenacious was the prejudice according to which India *could* not have discovered anything.

To be realistic we must take into account, if not the chimera of a 'primitive tradition', at least the plausibility of convergences and

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coincidences, as in the case of Buddhist quietism in China, which so closely resembles that which our seventeenth century elaborated in the teachings of the Fathers of the Church. After all, the number of speculative solutions at the disposal of mankind is limited. It is hardly sensible to search in Persia or some questionable Anatolia for the origin of this or that Indian conception, as has been attempted even recently. It is idle to maintain today that the basis of Indian religion and thought are 'anârian', a convenient hat-rack on which to hang our ignorance. If we exert ourselves to explain things from the inside, we soon see that there is a logic and a predictability about the evolution of Indian facts. Influence and borrowing, after all, have little meaning when what is in question is doctrinal themes which have undergone a process of profound rethinking. We must not 'historicise' to the excess when dealing with India, where very often thinking is not individual but peculiar to a group or school, therefore impersonal and, by its very nature, outside time.

In any case, India has given more than it has received. If the analogies between Greek and Indian medicine, between Plotinism and *Vedânta*, Pyrrhonism and Mâdhyamika demand (which is not proved) a genetic solution, one should suppose that the first impulse came from India. The same could be said about the similarities between Taoism and Yoga.

However important these researches are, they should not make us forget the heart of the matter, which is the direct and profound understanding of the great texts. Shortly after Athens and Rome, long before our modern civilisation, India had created a classicism. If the word classic has any sense, where can it be better applied than in India which, during a certain period, experienced from every side such an influx of norms, canons, and models that all subsequent activity consisted in reproducing or in extolling them? 'Law' and 'being' have come to be expressed by the same word. In most of the learned or artistic techniques an attempt has been made to think in terms of rules, of 'given standards'. Even today a mystic like Aurobindo, who turns his back (without being aware of it) on tradition, is striving to rethink the *Gîtâ* and the *Upanishads*, indeed, even the *Veda*, under the headings laid down by the old masters.

People think that they can talk of Indian values just because they have read a few translations. These are no more than crutches for the real interpretation, which cannot be reached except by strictly adhering to an original text, learned literally, I should be inclined to say even, grammatically. Many an amateur who does not even know whether Nâgarî was written from left to right or reversely, believes he has discovered

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the deeper meaning of the myths and discourses on the *Advaita*. Guénon, whose knowledge of the ancient sources was limited to the little he had learned from a Hindu student temporarily in Paris, claimed to lay down the law on Indology. In reality, no translation, not even the best, is good enough. Each phrase is a function of the context. Everything hangs together in these speculations in which it would be vain to interpret a single detail without having access to the whole. We do not know even today the precise sense of some of the most important terms of ancient thought, some of which are decisive for the articulations of Indian reasoning. How is it possible under these conditions to make a valid generalisation?

We are no longer back in the time of Lamartine or Michelet, to whom lyrical passages excerpted from a miserable version of the *Râmâyana* sufficed to reveal the unfathomable beauty of Indian speculations. We are living in a period of difficult research work, of specialisations painfully acquired. The often considerable differences of view which characterise the work of scholarship and draw the scorn of the ignorant, mark, in the long run, a line of progress whose setbacks have been only temporary: most of the positions which were fashionable in the last century have now been definitively abandoned.

It would be an error to believe that ancient India was entirely devoted to metaphysics, or that every Indian would share the outlook of the modern *Veda* scholar who said, as quoted by O. Lacombe, 'We do not explain the world, we explain it away.' Even in the philosophical field there have been thinkers attached to a rigorous reality, such as Abhinavagupta, who built up a system of poetics on a psychological basis; or Çancara himself, who was above everything an exegetist, I should almost say, a philologist. The basis of the teaching delivered by the mathematicians, musicians, and doctors was no less precise and positive than that of the Greeks or the scholars of the western Middle Ages; at certain points it may have penetrated deeper. Like Greece, India diffused that spirit of scientific positivism whose laws were later to be formulated by Descartes. It devoted itself, if in an often disconcerting fashion, to defining principles and justifying axioms.

Harmonious co-existence between direct observation and systematisation can be seen in the juridical domain. Caste, for instance, is distinguished and described, and long lists of castes are furnished which coincide with the facts of today. But the reality has been masked by an apparatus of classification. From an unequal marriage, children of a certain inferior

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caste will be born. But just which caste it will be depends on a whole series of conditions: the social distance between the parents; whether the marriage was normal (the man of superior rank to the woman) or abnormal (the reverse); finally, whether the union was legitimate or not. And the members of these new castes, if they in their turn make mixed marriages, give birth to yet more intercrossings and yet further castes. Be that as it may, the juridical structure of ancient and mediæval India is the only one which, at least in its fulness, bears comparison with that of Rome.

As far as economics is concerned, classical antiquity offers nothing even comparable to the treatise of Kautilya, the materials of which may date to the third century B.C. The descriptions of the fixing and collection of taxes, the organisation of monopolies and governmental undertakings, the distribution of private and public enterprises, the classified lists of sources of royal revenue, with the rate at which each paid, come near the ideas of the eighteenth-century economists.

Ambiguity, simultaneous plurivalence, are of the domain of the myth, of religious or artistic symbolism. Elsewhere the Hindu can be as rational as anyone else, an acute observer (except when theory blinds him to reality), even, should occasion arise, a cynic. So considerable have been the achievements of Indian grammar that a contemporary linguist, Leonard Bloomfield, could say that the work of Pânini represents 'one of the greatest monuments of human intelligence'.

What the western Indologist needs to do is to renounce his Aristotelian forms of thought, which have become so natural to him that he finds it difficult to believe they are not valid for everybody. He must resolutely unlearn a part of what European humanism has bequeathed to him—the heritage of the Mediterranean world which he vaingloriously translated into universal terms.

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