

MAHA-PRALAYA AND LAST JUDGMENT¹

VEDIC tradition envisages the voyage of the individual after death as a passing *on* from one plane of being to another; and though there is the possibility of perpetuity on any given plane until the End of Time, when all Determinations are resolved, there is no conception of the possibility of a return to any past state. The later doctrine of reincarnation, in which the possibility of a return to a previous condition is conceived, seems to reflect an edifying tendency of the religious and psychological extensions, perhaps incorporating popular, non-Vedic elements.

The voyage has its end on the Farther Shore of the Sea of Life. When land is made there, the contingent Self knows itself as the Súpreme Self, absolute space in the heart is known as the absolute space body of Being and Non-Being, and the Sea of Life is counter-seen by the Self as the multiplicity of its own identity. Voyaging, we are given intimations of that Paradise in Union consummating Thought, in Ecstasy consummating Will, and in the Consent of Art; knowledge, love, and work becoming Pure Act. There is in fact an ever present possibility of Immediate

¹ The John Company attitude to the East is past. The partitions are going, and Europe and Asia pour into one another. The new world-form is a matter for fear, and for hope. Two Internationals are engaged, Communism and the Catholic Church. The names suggest their difference.

Communism may extend, it cannot deepen human life. Modern science has diminished Space, it cannot break through the framework of time into eternity. Materialism unites by aggregation and repetition; monotony is the price of its unity.

Freshness is our closest sense of the eternal, and Catholicism unites by the intercourse of values. It can displace the fear of the simplification which is the goal of mechanical technique, superficially so complex, with the hope of a synthesis preserving and developing the variety it finds. It is not committed to the tight little Europe of the Middle Ages. In everything noble it can see the movement of grace; its missionary spirit is not sectarian; it does not recoil before the prospect of a World State, still less of Eurasia. The world-view and action of the present Pope make the old accusation of 'Vaticanism' singularly inapt.

Enfranchisement by return to the Centre of our Being, to the Eternal Now, one and the same wherever and whenever we may be, in Heaven or on Earth. But as we are speaking in terms of Time, the possibility of severing in this way at one stroke all the knots of the heart remains only virtual. What we foresee is an Enfranchisement reached by a process of ripening and preparation; our ado is not with the Comprehensor, but the Wayfarer.

If then the possibility of a Gradual Enfranchisement is open to the Voyager, there is also the possibility for him whose ship is rudderless, or wrongly steered, to wander on uncharted courses toward an unknown landfall, farther and ever farther from the Quay: so far and so long that he may not be in sight of Yonder Shore when every hither shore and every vessel is dissolved at the End of Time. So at the End of Time there is a departing of the Freed and the Ego-bound. In Christian tradition this is called the Last Judgment.

Save and except the highest Angels, Devas, whose being is from Eternity *in principio*, all beings, whether 'quick or dead,' are 'judged' at this Last Day. The Self of those who have already achieved a Total Realisation is already a

'Not that Asia can have importance for Europe as a model—in hybrid styles, authentic forms are merely caricatured, whereas a genuine assimilation of new cultural ideas should and can only result in a development formally altogether different from that of the original mode. What Asia signifies for Europe is means to the enlargement of experience, means to culture in the highest sense of the word, that is to an impartial knowledge of style; and this implies a better understanding of the nature of man, a prerequisite condition of co-operation.' These are words from Mr. A. K. Coomaraswamy's *Introduction to the Art of Eastern Asia*, which discovers an affinity between the Christian art of Europe and the art of Asia, and even considers the principles enunciated in the aesthetics of M. Jacques Maritain and Mr. Eric Gill as adequate introductions to its subject. The author prefers complements to alternatives.

May the following brief article be taken in this spirit. It offers a theological contact between the West and the East. It is easy to notice the difference of mode—the unacceptable proposition; but better to discern the correspondence.

THOMAS GILBY, O.P.

conscious identity with the Supreme Identity; and now for those whose Realisation has been 'by degrees' and 'qualified' there ensues the last death of the categorised Ego, a death absolutely *Mors janua vitae*, an enlargement from every possible contingency. The Gates of Heaven are opened to the contingent Self, now 'perfected' Self, so that he becomes again in his Own Form, Imageless, Pure Intelligence and Unalloyed Delight.

But for those lost beings who have not in Time achieved even a partial Realisation, and are still altogether involved in the net of delusion, deeming that the Ego is the Self, for these there can be no present possibility of an Enlargement at the End of Time: having thought, still thinking that to act 'for the sake of the Self' means nothing but to satisfy every desire of the Ego, by serving the body here and now, and those who live by such a 'devilish scripture' as this, 'shall perish.' These are the 'damned.' Their damnation is a Self-adjudged condemnation to an endless, though not eternal, latency, a relative, though not absolute, annihilation; to a Hell below the silent glassy sea of the Untime that divides Time from Time, there by Necessity, 'God's justice,' to await their mortal rebecoming in another Time, when the possibility of achieving or not achieving an Immediate or Gradual Enfranchisement will again present itself.

The Ego-complex then is 'Original Sin.' Satan's claim to equality with God, his assertion of the independence and self-subsistence of the Ego, is the occasion of his Fall and theirs who follow him. Man's Fall, the same in kind, has been described traditionally as an eating of the Fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, Duality in every aspect. This Tree is none other than the Tree of Life, planted by the Self itself, by God himself in the Garden of Life, as a fair thing and a delight of the eyes for His own and Man's pleasure. But to eat of the fruit is Mortal Sin against the Spirit, 'forbidden' to man as individual Ego; for 'eating' is an assimilation to and a self-identification with things as they are in themselves, not as they are in God, therefore a taking on of what is nothing in itself, a venom that death is from the standpoint of Eternal Life, a closing of the Gates of Paradise.

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None but the Self can swallow such a bane and yet Live: as Siva does when by another image the venom of duality is produced at the Churning of the Sea of Milk: the wound and signatures of this bane being the blue-black stain on his throat as Nilakantha, Visnanipa, his taking of the serpent to his breast, and his addiction to drugs. That apparent subjection of the Self to the tragedy of Life, that accepted Pain, is the Passion of God and Everyman.

ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY.

ξείνη γυμνός ἐπ' ἠϊόνι

HOW shall I be when the bleak wind of Death
Has torn these leaves of fancy from my soul
And all song-birds take flight with my last breath?
When this flesh-tongue that fair words uttereth
Seeking all things to enstole
With cinquefold investiture of sense,
Lies like a leaf among the rotting leaves;
When unto clay clay cleaves,
Finally one with earth's cold innocence
Texture of flowers its feet once loved and trod,
How shall my naked soul stand up before the naked God?

ROBERT TOLLAST.