

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

SEVEN YEARS IN THE INDIAN MISSION FIELD.

(Continued.)

To the wise and thoughtful of these times there began to arise many problems needful to be solved. The Aryan communities were small and comparatively isolated from one another, they were plunged into the midst of a new and conquered people, superior to them in numbers, but, as has already been shown, vastly inferior in culture, with whom as a serving class they mingled freely in every-day life.

As might readily be supposed, intermarriages not unfrequently took place between the conquerors and the daughters of the conquered, and from this half-caste stock sprang many of the greatest of the Indian philosophers, sages and poets. It is to this class that Vyasa belonged, to whom is commonly attributed the compilation of the Vedic hymns. Influenced by these new circumstances, changes in opinion, faith and ritual were continually going on, and the danger seemed imminent that the haughty Aryans would sooner or later sink to the grosser level of their own slaves, and lose their ancient faith altogether. It was also a felt weakness, that there was no common bond of union between these village communities throughout the land save that of a common origin which was daily becoming weaker among the masses. To consider such matters, a grand council of pandits, selected from the various chieftainships, was delegated to convene at one of the leading centres and act on behalf of the people. These pandits were to be such as were noted for their wisdom, learning and virtue. By them a code was drawn up and adopted, denominated the code of "menu" or "the wise." Menu is supposed by some to have been a pandit of renown; others, perhaps more justly, judge him to have been a myth.

The laws of usage, religion and government now became fixed, under penalties often to be inflicted in the next life, and the threats of which exercised a powerful influence over all classes in those early days, and reaching downward are quite as potent with the Hindoo of the present time. The country now became generally known by a distinctive Aryan name, it was no longer "Bhartha," but "Aryavarta," the abode of the Aryans.

In the deliberations of this council there seems not to have been much order in the arrangement of subjects discussed, and yet little escaped their notice which was of real moment to the nation. It was wisely anticipated by these far-sighted Aryan statesmen that customs would change with time, and modes of civil government would, in a measure, drift from the old lines, and that in religion alone was the real bond of union and the only one which would prove itself strong and enduring, and results shew us they indeed judged wisely. They lived their religion daily; it entered into all the details of their common home-life. No project of any importance was ever undertaken without religious observances being connected with it, and hence all their subsequent wars, whether intestine or of invasion, have largely partaken of a religious character. They were led to battle by gods incarnated for their special defence, against demons commanded by their distinctive devils as generals. Their successes were greatly exaggerated and their prowess extolled. This is a very prominent feature in the heroic poetry of this early period, their two great epics the Mahabharata and Ramayana being filled with the details of the conflicts of the deified with the satanic.

Aryavarta now divided itself into two great kingdoms, or more likely a great branch split off from the main body of the people. This greater portion had its military capital with its raja at Ayodhya, in Oude. They styled themselves the Suraj Bansi, or children of the sun, while the offshoot had its capital in Prayag—the present Allahabad—and called themselves the Chandra Bansi, or children of the moon.

The great seats of learning and religion were never one with the military capital. In the kingdom of the Suraj Bansi we find Kanouj, the great home of the Brahmin, it is situated about thirty miles from Cawnpore, inland on the Ganges, and the ruins of which still remain. That of the Chandra Bansi was at Benares which is still a favourite city of the gods and the resort of pilgrims from all parts of India. The story goes that the sun and the moon were the sons

of one of the goddesses who was very fond of visiting. One day she went away leaving the two lads to prepare their own food. The eldest son made more than sufficed for himself, saying he would set aside a portion for his mother, who, no doubt, would be greatly fatigued on her return. The second son prepared only enough for himself and ate it all. When the mother arrived the elder brought the food to her and with much kindness requested her to partake. She was greatly pleased, and, turning, inquired of the second brother whether he also had done as much for her. With shame he was obliged to confess his selfishness. The goddess then, to shew her appreciation of conduct, rewarded the elder by enveloping him in a garment of perpetual light, thereby causing him to dwell forever in the day time, while the other was condemned to dwell always in the darkness of night, shrouding himself in a black mantle. The generous elder brother pleaded for the younger and finally was allowed to transfer a portion of his own light, and so in a measure to mitigate the awful sentence of perpetual darkness. Such is the popular legend of the sun and moon, and from them these two Aryan nations are said to be descended.

Incessant petty wars of aggression at this time were waged between the various clans, and now the householders and chiefs committed the fatal error of installing Brahmin priests in the office of performing the religious rites of the household during their absence, especially the sacrifices by fire. Then the priest remained an honoured inmate of the house to which he was attached, and it soon became the fashion for a family of any pretension to keep one of these holy men as a regular member of the household, and the ceremonial of worship fell at last entirely into his hands through the indolent unsuspectingness of the soldiery.

Not many generations had passed, however, when the Aryan world awoke to the fact that the Brahmin was king; he was the real master in the home, having complete control of the women and children, riveting fast their chains by means of superstitious teachings and trickery, and this power they have never lost. The soldiery were not so to be outdone, and a tremendous struggle began, which fairly convulsed Aryavarta, but in vain; they could not regain their lost ground. Arms were resorted to, but the Brahmins, nothing daunted, shewed themselves equal to the occasion. Headed by Parsaram, one of their own order, they gained battle after battle, and victorious Brahminism firmly settled itself upon the necks of the people; intelligence, learning, and cunning having completely mastered the sword.

The priesthood, however, seldom assumed royalty or its outward fashions; it was modest enough to be content with a dictation, which was tantamount to command. Depreciating all visible means of support, such as lands or invested moneys, they yet assured themselves of a bountiful living. They taught the people that to them the Brahmin was in the place of god, and was, therefore, virtually god. All things belong to god, therefore all things belong to the Brahmin; whatever is the desire of a Brahmin he does not ask for nor give thanks for, but demands, and utters in return blessing or cursing upon lofty or lowly alike, as they satisfy or disappoint him. We can now better understand how it occurs that we hear so frequently of Brahminism and Hinduism in the religious life of the nation. The creed of Brahminism is "one without a second." Brahman is; all else is māyā, or illusion. "The reason we do not know we are god is because god desires for a time to ignore himself. When this māyā ends all will be oneness." Men, animals, plants, and stones, after many existences, may rise to be gods, but gods, men, animals, plants, and stones will be finally absorbed into Brahma. This is true philosophical Brahminism. Its doctrines are based upon the teachings of the "Upanishads," which we will consider further on.

Hinduism, or the popular religion, rests upon the "Puranas," and is practical polytheism, but denying it, gets over the difficulty by using the word "emanation." In Brahminism everything is Brahma; in Hinduism everything emanates from Brahma. "As drops of water from the ocean, as sparks from fire, and men emanate in fixed classes."

The Vedas consist of four books, the oldest of which is said to have been written before the Aryans entered India, somewhere between 1,500, B.C., and 1,000, B.C. The others date later. In this most ancient record we have an acknowledged triad, viz.:

Indra, or the atmosphere personified; Agni, on fire; Surya, on the sun. Hinduism has its triad also: Brahma, or the creator; Vishnu, or the preserver; Rudra Siva, or the dissolver. This last triad leads us to the doctrine of the incarnation. Vishnu enters man to deliver from the power of demons. He is best known in the incarnation of Krishna and Rama. As Krishna he is celebrated in the poem called the Mahabharata, and as Rama in the Ramayan. Krishna is also represented as trampling on the head of the serpent Kalliga. He was incarnated the son of Devaki and nurtured among cow herds; many attempts were made by demons to destroy him but he miraculously escaped them all. While an infant the wicked goddess Putani tried to suckle him from poisoned breasts but he drew the life blood from her so that she died and he escaped alive. As a lad he was very mischievous, he stole the butter and bewitched the cattle; and grown to manhood he was an acknowledged libertine and thief, but is defended by the Hindus because, they say, being an incarnation of god all things were lawfully his, and whatever he did was right. It is not for mortals to say what a god should or should not do. He had six wives, eight acknowledged consorts, and sixteen thousand milk-maids. He was related to the royal house of Hastinapura and hence declined to join in the civil war with the Mahabharata celebrates, but at length consents to be charioteer to one of the princes, named Arjuna. Just on the eve of the conflict a conversation takes place between Krishna and the prince while both armies wait in silence the revelation which the god condescends to make to men. This dialogue is called the "Bhagviltgita" or "divine song," and is by far the most important part of the Mahabharata. The prince was doubtful as to the right or wrong of destroying human life; Krishna shews him the sovereignty of spirit over matter, of soul over body, and that death has no real power over mankind. That duty faithfully performed is living to life's highest—and crowns the performer with immortal bliss. "This song covers the whole ground," says Samuel Johnson, in his "Oriental Religions," "of Hindu religion, philosophy and ethics, and is better known to modern scholars than any other production of Oriental genius." It is the bible of the Hindu of the advanced school, and it is chiefly with this that we, as missionaries, have to struggle in our work among the upper classes at Indore. You ask a Hindu whether he understands it, and how he accounts for its repeated self-contradictions, and its violation in certain places of all common sense? He answers readily enough and quite cheerfully too, "God knows what it means; I do not." He thinks it is not to be expected of him to understand it all, for he will tell you the book is ancient and he is not; the book was written in Sanscrit and he does not know that language, and no man can trust a translation not his own. Then in all revelations of god there is to be expected much of mystery. You inquire how he can reconcile an intelligent god giving a revelation of truth to his children which it is necessary to their happiness to understand, and yet giving it in such a form that they cannot reach it and therefore cannot obey? They again reply there is mystery in religion. You cannot explain everything in your own Book. You acknowledge there is much of mystery in regard to what you call the Godhead. The incarnation and prophecy is not all plainly read. Our book is older than yours, therefore, perhaps, less plain. We must do the best we can with the gleanings of truth we can gather from either, and be satisfied, leaving the rest with God. M. FAIRWEATHER.

QUESTIONS CONCERNING "BAPTIZED INFANTS," ANSWERED.

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In a recent number of the CANADA PRESBYTERIAN some one, over the signature of "Inquirer," desires "light" on several questions concerning "baptized infants." I will attempt to reply.

He asks,—"(1) Are all baptized children in a state of saving grace? If not, why are they baptised?" I reply, (1) it is difficult to tell what "Inquirer" means by "a state of saving grace." "Grace" signifies "favour to the undeserving." "Saving grace" would evidently mean the "favour of God extended to those naturally undeserving, for their salvation." "To be in a state of saving grace" would then signify that such persons were in a saved state or condition—or were already regenerated by the Spirit of God. In this sense I do not believe that "all baptized infants"