

Time was when an Asiatic born English poet, perhaps too dogmatically, declared:

East is East and West is West
And ne'er the twain shall meet.

When the impact of Western civilisation was fresh in this country there was little scope for confident prophecy. Nevertheless, however mistaken the above asseveration, it was by no means peculiar to the author of this epigram. Sir Edwin Arnold, whose insight into the East was deeper, penned with equal haste his not less famous quatrain:

The East bowed low before the blast
In patient, deep disdain;
She let the legions thunder past,
And plunged in thought again.

It is not suggested here that there is no element of truth in these two characterisations. Not merely the Orient and the Occident, but every country in both the hemispheres has its own individuality, almost personality. But there is also a fundamental universality which is the common basis of all humanity. One might even venture to liken this unity in duality between East and West to difference in sex, with all its implications, which does not divide essential human nature. It will not be inappropriate to speak of Europe as masculine and Asia as feminine. Such a description, in these days of equality and enlightenment, would not carry with it any stigma. The future of humanity must lie in this common parentage: the new civilisation whose birth-throes the world is now experiencing is going to be neither European nor Asiatic merely, but a synthesis of both.

This was the ideal with which Swami Rama Tirtha was inspired. This is also the vision which our poet-philosopher Rabindranath has constantly been proclaiming. "Why do you import Asiatic laziness into America? Go out and do

some good." This was the arrogant advice gratuitously offered to Swami Rama by a son of the pragmatic West. "Laziness, did you say? *Oriental laziness?*" burst out the orange-robed Sanyasi from the East. "Why, what is laziness? Is it not laziness to keep floundering in the quagmire of conventionality, . . . to practically let others live your life, and have no freedom in dress, eating, walking, sleeping, laughing and weeping—not to speak of talking? What for is this hurry and worry, this break-neck hot haste and feverish rush? No. There is no enjoyment in running after enjoyment.

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;
Little do we see in Nature that's ours.

"Hide-bound in caste are the civilised nations: they separate themselves from fellow beings and exile themselves from free open Nature and fresh fragrant natural life into close drawing-rooms—dens and dungeons. By arrogating to themselves airs of superiority, prestige, respectability, honour, they cut themselves into isolated stagnation. Have mercy, have mercy on yourselves!

"The wealth swept out of the possession of the more needy and added to your property by organised craft will enable you to simply have sickening dinners of hotels and taverns, and furnish you with pallid countenances and conventional looks, will imprison you in boxes called rooms, choked with the stink of artificiality, will keep you all the time in the restlessness of mind excited by all sorts of unnatural stimulants—physical and mental. Why such fuss for mere self-delusion? In the name of such supposed pleasure lose not your hold on real joy; no need of beating about the bush. Come, enjoy the *now* and *here*. Come, lie with me on the grass!"

"Мирское нас обурею, оноеданое, естественное
Забавы и игры, на нас похороше
Мало в природе мы будем естественное
нам."