



Photo. Johnston & Hoffmann, Calcutta

DANCING GIRLS

LIVING INDIA

BY

SAVEL ZIMAND

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

By A.E.

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ZIMAND
LIVING INDIA

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To
G. F. Z.

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I WISH to express the debt I owe to numerous persons in all walks of life, both Indian and English, for helping me to vision India as a living country.

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SAVEL ZIMAND

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INTRODUCTION

I HAVE never been in India, but I know Savel Zimand. He was in Ireland when political passions were most intense and I remember what integrity of mind he brought to his study of our affairs, how he listened to all sides and allowed all a voice. So I am willing to take his hand when he brings me to India and to see India through his eyes, for I am certain that with him there is no religion higher than truth.

My own interest in India began forty years ago when I read the Upanishads, the Bagavadgita, the Buddhist Suttas and other sacred books. But my reverence for the noble imagination in the Upanishads or the wisdom of the Bagavadgita has never led me to assume that India could be divined from its sacred literature, or that its life could possibly be as idealistic or mystic as the thoughts of its greatest sages.

I was prepared rather to find that the nation which had the loftiest spiritual imagination must have states of spiritual degradation balancing its highest vision, and this I think might be inferred from that Brahmanical psychology which opposes The Lokas to the Talas, the spiritual states of our being to the sensual states, and from which I infer that with every ascent to spirit a

new abyss opens which is the dark opposite of the heaven into which the soul has climbed.

So when Savel Zimand tells about the pariahs, the sensuality, the religious taboos, the jungle of popular superstitions which choke life I am not surprised. There may be nothing like it in Europe or America. But we must not be too proud comparing West with East, for if we have not this dark sorcery of superstition neither has Europe or America ever gone with such exultation into the divine world. The depths are the hells of their heavens. Almost all the evils spoken of by this latest writer on India have a religious root. Their devilry is the dark inversion of their spirituality.

I do not know of any country which has such heights and such depths in its being. Even to-day in what some observers have called "a degenerate India" its great teachers Gandhi and Tagore exhibit a spirituality not paralleled by any leaders of thought in the Occident. Men like these I have mentioned in Europe or America would be the heroes of little groups, but with us there is not any widespread spirituality which would have made them great national figures adored by the multitude as these are in India. I am not sure that that foreign domination which Indian nationalism deplures may not prove to be the very cause of an Indian renaissance. All cultures, however high, tend to decay, and I doubt if there could be any resurrection unless the culture was crossed by another.

In Sir Flinder Petrie's "Revolutions in Civilisation"

he notes nine waves of civilisation in Egypt. Every wave had its period of initial energy, a culmination of power and a descent into decadence. After every period of decadence there was an invasion. This crossing of the culture of one race by the culture of another seems to be the necessary precedent to a new resurrection. China as well as India seems to be stirred at present by the crossing of their own cultures with the thought and science of Europe. Their own culture probably is the Mendelian dominant and they will absorb into themselves the culture of Europe and renew with vigour their own spiritual and cultural life.

It is possible that Indian historians writing a century or two from to-day may be more philosophical about the alien domination of India than Indian nationalists are to-day. My own country, Ireland, has had a renaissance in my own time, and I think it was due to the crossing of the original Gael with the Saxon, the Dane and the Norman. We came to a new intellectual life and at last could declare intellectual as well as political independence.

I have no doubt out of the ferment in India will come a new renaissance. It is not natural to expect that those fighting for that independence to-day should be philosophical as I looking at the struggle from a distance. I feel certain that, in spite of the fact that India is in the trough of one of its waves of civilisation, there are in it the spiritual elements which will lead to a great resurrection. It may be the labour of a century or

more, but I am inspired to believe that a people who had so marvellous a spiritual life in the past must have it requickened once more under cyclic law.

AE.

Dublin, 10th August, 1928

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