

A YEAR AMONGST THE PERSIANS

IMPRESSIONS

AS TO THE LIFE, CHARACTER, & THOUGHT
OF
THE PEOPLE OF PERSIA

*Received during Twelve Months' Residence
in that Country in the Years*

1887-1888

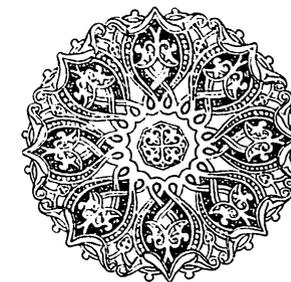
by

EDWARD GRANVILLE BROWNE

With
A Memoir

by

SIR E. DENISON ROSS



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EDWARD G. BROWNE
IN PERSIAN DRESS

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Fandaraskí; if you want mere outward form, go to Sheykh Behá; but if you desire to combine both, then come to me." Mullá Şadrá accordingly attended the lectures of Mír Dámád regularly, but did not fail to profit as far as possible by the teaching of the other professors.

At length it happened that Mír Dámád desired to undertake the pilgrimage to Mecca. He therefore bade each of his pupils compose during his absence a treatise on some branch of philosophy, which should be submitted to him on his return, in order that he might judge of the progress they had made. Acting on this injunction, Mullá Şadrá wrote his first great work, the *Şawáhid-i-Rubúbiyyé* ("Evidences of Divinity"), which he presented to his teacher on his return from the pilgrimage.

Some time afterwards, when Mullá Şadrá was walking beside Mír Dámád, the latter said to him, "*Şadrá ján! Kitáb-i-merá az meyán burdí!*" ("O my dear Şadrá, thou hast taken my work out of the midst"—meaning that he had superseded it by the work which he had just composed). This generous recognition of his merit by his teacher was the beginning of a wide celebrity which has gone on increasing till this day. Yet this celebrity brought him into some danger from the fanatical *mullás*, who did not fail to detect in his works the savour of heterodoxy. It was during his residence at Kúm especially that his life was jeopardised by the indignation of these zealots, but on many occasions he was subjected to annoyances and persecutions. He lived at a time when the clerical power was paramount, and philosophy in disrepute. Had he lived later, he might have been the recipient of favours from the great, and have enjoyed tranquillity, and perhaps even opulence: as it was, his was the glory of once more bringing back philosophy to the land whence it had been almost banished.

Mullá Şadrá gained numerous disciples (some of whom, such as Mullá Muşsin-i-Feyz, attained to great fame), and left behind him a multitude of books, mostly in Arabic, of which the

Şawáhid-i-Rubúbiyyé already mentioned, and a more systematic and voluminous work called the *Asfár-i-arba'a* ("Four treatises"), enjoy the greatest reputation. The three points claimed as original in Mullá Şadrá's teaching¹ are as follows:—

(1) His axiom "*Basitü'l-hakikat kullü'l-ashyá wa leysa bi-shey'in minha*"—"The element of Real Being is all things, yet is none of them."

(2) His doctrine that true cognition of any object only becomes possible by the identification of the knower with the known.

(3) His assertion that the Imagination is independent of the physical organism, and belongs in its nature to the world of the soul: hence that not only in young children, but even in animals, it persists as a spiritual entity after death. In this point he differed from his predecessors, who held that it was only with the development of the Rational Soul that immortality became possible.

I must now pass on to Hájí Mullá Hádí of Sabzawár, the greatest Persian philosopher of the nineteenth century. He was the son of Hájí Mahdí, and was born in the year A.H. 1212 (A.D. 1797-8). He began his studies when only seven years old, under the tuition of Hájí Mullá Huseyn of Sabzawár, and at the early age of twelve composed a small treatise. Anxious to pursue his studies in theology and jurisprudence, he visited Mashhad in company with his teacher, and remained there for five years, living in the most frugal manner (not from necessity, for he was far from poor, but from choice), and continuing his studies with unremitting ardour. When in his seventeenth year he heard of the fame of Mullá 'Alí Núrí, who was then teaching in Isfahán, he was very anxious to proceed thither at once, but was for several years prevented from so doing by the opposition of his

¹ A further account of Mullá Şadrá, differing in some points from that which is here given, will be found in Gobineau's *Religions et Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale*, pp. 80-90.

friends. Ultimately, however, he was enabled to gratify his wishes, and to take up his residence at Işfahán, where he diligently attended the lectures of Mullá 'Alí Núrí. He appears, however, to have received more advantage from the help of one of Mullá 'Alí's pupils, named Mullá Ismá'íl, "the One-eyed." In Işfahán he remained for seven years, devoting himself with such avidity to the study of philosophy that he rarely slept for much more than four hours out of the twenty-four. To combat slothfulness he was in the habit of reposing on a cloak spread on the bare brick floor of the little room which he occupied in the college, with nothing but a stone for his pillow.

The simplicity and indeed austerity of his life was far from being his chief or only merit. Being possessed of private means greatly in excess of what his simple requirements demanded, he used to take pains to discover which of the students stood most in need of pecuniary help, and would then secretly place sums of money varying from one to five or even ten *túmáns* (six shillings to three pounds) in their rooms during their absence, without leaving any clue which could lead to the identification of the donor. In this manner he is said to have expended no less than 100,000 *túmáns* (about £30,000), while he was in Işfahán, leaving himself only so much as he deemed necessary for his own maintenance.

Having completed his studies at Işfahán, he made a pilgrimage to Mecca, whence he returned by way of Kirmán. There he remained for a while and married a wife, whom he took back to his native town of Sabzawár. Soon after his return he paid another visit to Mashhad, and remained there ten months, giving lectures on philosophy, but soon returned thence to settle in Sabzawár, whither his increasing renown began to draw students from all parts of Persia. During the day he used to give two lectures, each of two hours' duration, on Metaphysics, taking as his text either some of the writings of Mullá Şadrá, or his own notes. The rest of his time was spent for the most part in study

and devotion. In person he was tall of stature, thin, and of slender frame; his complexion was dark, his face pleasing to look upon, his speech eloquent and flowing, his manner gentle, unobtrusive, and even humble. His abstemiousness was such that he would never eat more than the limited number of mouthfuls which he deemed necessary, neither would he accept the invitations which he often received from the great. He was always ready to help the widow, the orphan, and the stranger, and ever exemplified in his demeanour the apophthegm of Bú 'Alí Síná (Avicenna): "*Al-'arifu bashsh^{um}, bashsh^{um}, bassám^{um}; wa kevfá lá, wa huwa farhán^{um} bi'l-hakki wa bi-kulli shay?*" ("The gnostic is gentle, courteous, smiling; and how should it be otherwise, since he rejoices in God and in all things?") The complete course of instruction in philosophy which he gave lasted seven years, at the end of which period those students who had followed it diligently were replaced by others. Many, of course, were unable to complete their education; but, on the whole, nearly a thousand satisfactorily accomplished it. Till within three days of his death Hájí Mullá Hádí never disappointed his eager audience of a single lecture, and he was actually engaged in teaching when struck down by the disease which terminated his life. The eager throng of students surrounded him in a circle, while he was speaking of the Essence and Attributes of God, when suddenly he was overcome by faintness, and laid down the book which he held in his hand, saying, "I have so often repeated the word '*Hú,*' '*Hú*'" ("HE," *i.e.* God; in which sense only the Arabic pronoun is used by the Persians) "that it has become fixed in my head, and my head, following my tongue, seems to keep crying '*Hú,*' '*Hú*'." Having uttered these words, he laid down his head and fainted, and two days later he peacefully passed away in the year A.H. 1295 (A.D. 1878), sincerely mourned by those to whom he had been endeared alike by his learning and his benevolence. He was buried, according to instructions contained in his will, outside the Mashhad gate of Sabzawár.

A handsome tomb has been raised over his grave by orders of the Grand Vizier, and the spot is regarded as one of great sanctity, and is visited by numerous pilgrims¹.

So died, after a noble and useful life, the Sage of Sabzawár. His major works amount to about seventeen in number, including an elementary treatise on philosophy, written in Persian, in an easy style, at the request of the Sháh, and entitled *Asráru'l-Hikam* ("Secrets of Philosophy"). He was a poet as well as a metaphysician, and has left behind him a *Díván* in Persian, as well as two long and highly esteemed versified treatises in Arabic, one on logic, the other on metaphysic. He had three sons, of whom the eldest (who was also by far the most capable) survived him only two years; the other two are still [1893] living at Sabzawár, and one at least of them still teaches in the college on which his father's talents shed so great a lustre.

The pupils of the Sage of Sabzawár entertained for him an unbounded love and veneration. They even believe him to have been endowed with the power of working miracles (*kerámát*), though he himself never allowed this statement to be made before him. My teacher, Mírzá Asadu'lláh, informed me, however, that the following was a well-known fact. Hájí Mullá Hádí's son-in-law had a daughter who had been paralysed for years. One night, a year after the Hájí's death, she saw him in a dream, and he said to her, "Arise, my daughter, and walk." The excessive joy which she experienced at seeing him and hearing these words caused her to wake up. She immediately roused her sister, who was sleeping beside her, and told her what she had dreamed. The latter said, "You had better get up and try if you can walk; perhaps there is more in the dream than a mere fancy." After a little persuasion the girl got up, and found

¹ All these details I obtained from my teacher, Mírzá Asadu'lláh of Sabzawár, who compiled the original memoir, not only from his own recollections of his venerated master in philosophy, but from information supplied by one of Mullá Hádí's sons. It is chiefly by reason of the good authority on which they rest that I have decided to give them almost in full.

to her delight that she really was able to walk quite well. Next day she went to the Hájí's tomb to return thanks, accompanied by a great crowd of people, to whom her former affliction was as well-known as her present recovery was obvious.

Another event, less marvellous, however, than the above, was related to me as follows. When a detachment of the army was passing through Sabzawár, a soldier, who had been given a requisition for corn for the horses drawn on a certain *mullá*, brought the document to Hájí Mullá Hádí and asked him in whose name it was drawn, as he himself was unable to read. The Hájí looked at it, and, knowing that the *mullá* who was therein commanded to supply the corn was in impoverished circumstances, and could ill support the loss, replied, "I must supply you with what you require; go to the storehouse and take it." Accordingly the soldier carried off as much corn as he needed, and gave it to the horses. In the morning, however, on entering the stable, the soldiers found that the corn was untouched. Enquiries were made whence it came, and on its being discovered that it was the property of the Hájí, it was returned to him. This story soon gained currency and credence amongst officers and men alike, and added not a little to the Hájí's reputation, notwithstanding that he himself continued to make light of it, and even to deny it.

It may not be amiss to give some details as to the course of study which those who desired to attend the Hájí's lectures were expected to have already pursued, and the subjects in which they had to produce evidence of proficiency before they were received as his pupils. These preliminary studies were as follows:—

- I. Grammar, Rhetoric, etc. (*Edebiyyé*), also called "Preliminaries" (*Mukaddamát*).—Under this head is included a competent knowledge of Arabic and its grammar, with ability to read such works as *Jámi's* commentary, *Suyúti*, and the *Mutawwal*.
- II. Logic (*Manzik*), as contained in such treatises as the *Kubrâ*, the *Shamsiyyé*, and the *Sharh-i-Matâli'*.
- III. Mathematics (including Euclid and Astronomy), which is studied *pari-passu* with Logic.

IV. Elements of Jurisprudence (*Fikḥ*).

V. Scholastic Theology (*ʿIlm-i-Kelām*), as set forth in the following works:—

1. The *Hidáye* of Meybudí, a concise but knotty compendium of the elements of this science in Arabic.
2. The *Tajrid* of Náṣíru'd-Dín of Ṭús, with the commentary of Mullá 'Alí Kúshjí.
3. The *Shawárik* of Mullá 'Abdu'r-Razzák Láhijí, the son-in-law of Mullá Šadrá.

Those students who were able to show that they had acquired a satisfactory knowledge of these subjects were allowed to enroll themselves as the pupils of Ḥájí Mullá Hádí, and to commence their study of Metaphysic proper (*Ḥikmat-i-Iláhí*), as set forth in his works and in those of Mullá Šadrá.

I trust that I have succeeded in making it sufficiently clear that the study of Persian philosophy is not a thing to be lightly undertaken, and that proficiency in it can only be the result of diligent application, combined with good natural capacity. It is not a thing to play with in a dilettante manner, but is properly regarded by its votaries as the highest intellectual training, and the crown and summit of all knowledge. It was not long ere I discovered this fact; and as it was clearly impossible for me to go through a tenth part of the proper curriculum, while at the same time I was deeply desirous of becoming, in some measure at least, acquainted with the most recent developments of Persian thought, I was fain to request my teacher, Mírzá Asadu'lláh, to take compassion on my infirmities, and to instruct me as far as possible, and in as simple a manner as possible, concerning the essential practical conclusions of the doctrines of which he was the exponent. This he kindly exerted himself to do; and though any attempt at a systematic enunciation of Ḥájí Mullá Hádí's philosophy, even were I capable of undertaking it, would be out of place here, I think that it may not be uninteresting if I notice briefly some of its more remarkable features—not as derived from his writings, but as orally expounded to me, with explanations and illustrations, by his pupil and disciple.

As in the Šúfí doctrine, Being is conceived of as one: "*Al-vujúdu ḥakīkat^{un} vāhidat^{un} basiṭat^{un} va labu marátib^{un} mutafáḍila*"—“Being is a single simple Reality, and it has degrees differing in excellence.” Poetically, this idea is expressed in the following quatrain:—

“*Majmí'a-i-kawn-rá bi-ḵánin-i-sabak*
Kardím tašaffuh varak^a ba'da varak:
Ḥakḳá ki na-ḵwándím í na-didím dar-í
Juz Dhát-i-Ḥakḳ, u šifát-i-dhātíyyé-i-Ḥakḳ.”

“Like a lesson-book, the compendium of the Universe
We turned over, leaf after leaf:
In truth we read and saw therein naught
Save the Essence of God, and the Essential Attributes of God.”

The whole Universe, then, is to be regarded as the unfolding, manifestation, or projection of God. It is the mirror wherein He sees Himself; the arena wherein His various Attributes display their nature. It is subsequent to Him not in sequence of *time* (for time is merely the medium which encloses the phenomenal world, and which is, indeed, dependent on this for its very existence), but in sequence of *causation*; just as the light given off by a luminous body is subsequent to the luminosity of that body *in causation* (inasmuch as the latter is the source and origin of the former, and that whereon it depends and whereby it subsists), but not subsequent to it in *time* (because it is impossible to conceive of any time in the existence of an essentially luminous body antecedent to the emission of light therefrom). This amounts to saying that the Universe is co-eternal with God, but not co-equal, because it is merely an Emanation dependent on Him, while He has no need of it.

Just as the light proceeding from a luminous body becomes weaker and more diffuse as it recedes from its source, so the Emanations of Being become less real, or, in other words, more gross and material, as they become farther removed from their focus and origin. This gradual descent or recession from the Primal Being, which is called the *Ḳaws-i-Nuzú'l* (“Arc of Descent”), has in reality infinite grades, but a certain definite number (seven) is usually recognised.

Man finds himself in the lowest of these grades—the Material World; but of that world he is the highest development, for he contains in himself the potentiality of re-ascent, by steps corresponding to those in the “Arc of Descent,” to God, his Origin and his Home. To discover how this return may be effected, how the various stages of the *Kaws-i-Su'ud* (“Arc of Ascent”) may be traversed, is the object of philosophy.

“The soul of man is corporeal in origin, but spiritual in continuance” (“*An-nafsu fi'l-huduthi jismāniyya, wa fi'l-baqā'i tekūnu rūhāniyya*”). Born of matter, it is yet capable of a spiritual development which will lead it back to God, and enable it, during the span of a mortal life, to accomplish the ascent from matter to spirit, from the periphery to the centre. In the “Arc of Ascent” also are numerous grades; but here again, as in the “Arc of Descent,” seven are usually recognised. It may be well at this point to set down in a tabular form these grades as they exist both in the Macrocosm, or Arc of Descent, and in the Microcosm, or Arc of Ascent, which is man:—

I. ARC OF ASCENT. SEVEN PRINCIPLES IN MAN (<i>Laṭā'if-i-sab'a</i>).	II. ARC OF DESCENT. SERIES OF EMANATIONS.
1. The most subtle principle (<i>Akhfā</i>).	1. Exploration of the World of Divinity (<i>Seyr dar 'alam-i-Lāhūt</i>) ¹ .
2. The subtle principle (<i>Khafā</i>).	2. The World of Divinity (<i>'Alam-i-Lāhūt</i>) ¹ .
3. The secret (<i>Sirr</i>).	3. The World of the Intelligences (<i>'Alam-i-Jabarūt</i>).
4. The heart (<i>Qalb</i>).	4. The World of the Angels (<i>'Alam-i-Malakūt</i>).
5. The spirit (<i>Rūh</i>).	5. The World of Ideas (<i>'Alam-i-Ma'nā</i>).
6. The soul (<i>Nafs</i>).	6. The World of Form (<i>'Alam-i-Ṣīrat</i>).
7. The nature (<i>Ṭab'</i>).	7. The Material World (<i>'Alam-i-Ṭabī'at</i>).

¹ I do not think that these first two should stand thus, for at most they only

A few words of explanation are necessary concerning the above scheme. Each stage in either column corresponds with that which is placed opposite to it. Thus, for instance, the mere matter which in the earliest stage of man's development constitutes his totality corresponds to the material world to which it belongs. In the material world the “Arc of Descent” has reached its lowest point; in man, the highest product of the material world, the ascent is begun. When the human embryo begins to take form it rises to the World of Soul, thus summing up in itself two grades of the Arcs. It may never ascend higher than this point; for, of course, when the upward evolution of man is spoken of, it is not implied that this is effected by all, or even by the majority of men. These “seven principles” do not represent necessarily co-existing components or elements, but successive grades of development, at any one of which, after the first, the process of growth may be arrested. The race exists for its highest development; humanity for the production of the Perfect Man (*Insān-i-Kāmil*), who, summing up as he does all the grades of ascent from matter—the lowest point of the series of emanations—to God, is described as the Microcosm, the compendium of all the planes of Existence (*ḥaẓrat-i-jāmi'*), or sometimes as the “sixth plane” (*ḥaẓrat-i-sādisa*), because he includes and summarises all the five spiritual planes.

It has been said that some men never rise beyond the second grade—the World of Soul or Form. These are such as occupy themselves entirely during their lives with sensual pursuits—

mark two different phases in the experience of the soul—an attaining unto the World of Divinity, and a journeying therein. My impression is that they should be replaced thus:—1. The World of Divinity (*i.e.* the Divine Essence, *'Alam-i-Lāhūt*); 2. The World of the Attributes (*'Alam-i-Rāḥūt*). This corresponds to the views given in the commentaries on the *Fuṣūṣ* of Sheykh Muḥyi'd-Dīn ibnū'l-'Arabī and other similar works, where the “Five Planes” (*Ḥaẓrat-i-ḫams*), which coincide with the first five grades given here (*i.e.* those which belong to the Spiritual World), are discussed. I have not, however, considered myself justified in making any alteration in Mīrzā Asadu-'llāh's scheme.

eating, drinking, and the like. Previously to Mullá Şadrá it was generally held by philosophers that these perished entirely after death, inasmuch as they had not developed any really spiritual principle. Mullá Şadrá, however, took great pains to prove that even in these cases where the "Rational Soul" (*Nafs-i-nāţika*) had not been developed during life, there did exist a spiritual part which survived death and resisted disintegration. This spiritual part he called "Imaginations" (*Khiyālāt*).

Yet even in this low state of development, where no effort has been made to reach the plane of the reason, a man may lead an innocent and virtuous life. What will then be the condition after death of that portion of him which survives the body? It cannot re-enter the material world, for that would amount to Metempsychosis, which, so far as I have been able to ascertain, is uncompromisingly denied by all Persian philosophers. Neither can it ascend higher in the spiritual scale, for the period during which progress was possible is past. Moreover, it derives no pleasure from spiritual or intellectual experiences, and would not be happy in one of the higher worlds, even could it attain thereto. It desires material surroundings, and yet cannot return to the material world. It therefore does what seems to it the next best thing: it creates for itself subjective pseudo-material surroundings, and in this dream-dwelling it makes its eternal home. If it has acted rightly in the world according to its lights, it is happy; if wrongly, then miserable. The happiness or misery of its hereafter depends on its merit, but in either case it is purely subjective and absolutely stationary. There is for it neither advance nor return: it can neither ascend higher, nor re-enter the material world either by Transmigration or Resurrection, both of which the philosophers deny.

What has been said above applies, with slight modifications, to all the other grades, at any rate the lower ones. If a man has during his life in the world attained to the grade of the spirit (the third grade in order of ascent) and acquired rational or

intellectual faculties, he may still have used these well or ill. In either case he enters after death into the World of Ideas, where he is happy or miserable according to his deserts. But, so far as I could learn, anyone who has during his life developed any of the four highest principles passes after death into a condition of happiness and blessedness, since mere intellect without virtue will not enable him to pass beyond the third grade, or World of the Spirit. According to the degree of development which he has reached, he enters the World of the Angels, the World of the Intelligences, or the World of Divinity itself.

From what has been said it will be clear that a bodily resurrection and a material hereafter are both categorically denied by the philosophers. Nevertheless, states of subjective happiness or misery, practically constituting a heaven or hell, exist. These, as has been explained, are of different grades in both cases. Thus there is a "Paradise of Actions" (*Jannatu'l-Af'āl*), where the soul is surrounded by an ideal world of beautiful forms; a "Paradise of Attributes" (*Jannatu's-Şifāt*); and a "Paradise of the Essence" (*Jannatu'dh-Dhāt*), which is the highest of all, for there the soul enjoys the contemplation of the Divine Perfections, which hold it in an eternal rapture, and cause it to forget and cease to desire all those objects which constitute the pleasure of the denizens of the lower paradises. It is, indeed, unconscious of aught but God, and is annihilated or absorbed in Him.

The lower subjective worlds, where the less fully developed soul suffers or rejoices, are often spoken of collectively as the '*Ālam-i-Mithāl*' ("World of Similitudes"), or the '*Ālam-i-Barzakh*' ("World of the Barrier," or "Border-world"). The first term is applied to it because each of its denizens takes a form corresponding to his attributes. In this sense 'Omar Khayyám has said¹—

"*Rūzi ki jezā-yi-har şifat khwāhad būd*
Qadr-i-tū bi-qadr-i-ma'rifat khwāhad būd;

¹ Ed. Whinfield, London, 1883, p. 155, No. 228.

*Dar husn-i-şifat kúsh, ki dar rúx-i-jezá
Hashr-i-tú bi-şírat-i-şifat kbwábad búd."*

"On that day when all qualities shall receive their recompense
Thy worth shall be in proportion to thy wisdom.
Strive after good qualities, for in the Day of Recompense
Thy resurrection shall be in the *form of the attribute*."

Thus a greedy gluttonous man takes the form of a pig, and it is in this sense only that metempsychosis (*tanásukh*) is held by the Persian philosophers. On this point my teacher was perfectly clear and definite. It is not uncommon for Şúfís to describe a man by the form with which they profess to identify him in the "World of Similitudes." Thus I have heard a Şúfí say to his antagonist, "I see you in the World of Similitudes as an old toothless fox, desirous of preying upon others, but unable to do so." I once said to Mírzá Asadu'lláh that, if I rightly understood his views, hell was nothing else than an eternal nightmare: whereat he smiled, and said that I had rightly apprehended his meaning.

Although a soul cannot rise higher than that world to which it has assimilated itself during life, it may be delayed by lower affinities in the "World of the Barrier" on its way thither. All bad habits, even when insufficient to present a permanent obstacle to spiritual progress, tend to cause such delay, and to retard the upward ascent of the soul. From this it will be seen that the denizens of the "World of the Barrier" are of three classes, two of these being permanent, and abiding for ever in the state of subjective happiness or misery which they have merited, and the third consisting of souls temporarily delayed there to undergo a species of probation before passing to the worlds above.

On one occasion I put the following question to Mírzá Asadu'lláh:—"Two persons, *A* and *B*, have been friends during their lifetime. The former has so lived as to merit happiness hereafter; the latter, misery. Both die and enter the 'World of the Barrier,' there receiving forms appropriate to their attributes; the one,

moreover, is happy, the other wretched. Will not *A* have cognisance of *B*'s miserable condition, and will not this knowledge tend to mar his felicity?"

To this question my teacher replied as follows:—" *A*'s world is altogether apart from *B*'s, and the two are entirely out of contact. In *A*'s world are present all things that he desires to have in such form as he pleases, for his world is the creation of his Imaginative Faculty freed from the restraints of matter and the outward senses, and endowed with full power to see what it conceives. Therefore if *A* desires the presence of *B* as he knew him formerly, *B* will be present with him in that form under which he was so known, and not in the repulsive form which he has now assumed. There is no more difficulty in this than in a person dreaming in ordinary sleep that he sees one of his friends in a state of happiness when at that very time his friend is in great pain or trouble."

Such, in outline, are the more remarkable features of this philosophy as expounded to me by Mírzá Asadu'lláh. That it differs considerably from the ideas formed by most European scholars of the philosophy current in Persia, as represented in the books, I am well aware. I can only suppose that Gobineau is right as to the extent to which the system of "*ketmán*" (concealment of opinions) prevails in Persia—a view which my own experience strongly tends to confirm. He says, for example, in speaking of Mullá Şadrá (*Religions et Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale*, p. 88), in whose footsteps Hájí Mullá Hádí for the most part followed:—

"Le soin qu'il prenait de déguiser ses discours, il était nécessaire qu'il le prît surtout de déguiser ses livres; c'est ce qu'il a fait, et à les lire on se ferait l'idée la plus imparfaite de son enseignement. Je dis à les lire sans un maître qui possède la tradition. Autrement on y pénètre sans peine." Such a system of concealment may seem strange to those accustomed to the liberty of thought enjoyed in Europe, but it is rendered necessary in the

East by the power and intolerance of the clergy. Many a philosopher like Sheykh Shihábu'd-Dín Suhrawardí, many a Şúfí like Mañşúr-i-Halláj, has paid with his life for too free and open an expression of his opinions.

For the rest, many of the ideas here enunciated bear an extraordinary similarity to those set forth by Mr Sinnett in his work entitled *Esoteric Buddhism*. Great exception has been taken to this work, and especially it has been asserted that the ideas unfolded in it are totally foreign to Buddhism of any sort. Of this I am not in a position to judge: very possibly it is true, though even then the ideas in question may still be of Indian origin. But whatever the explanation be, no one, I feel sure, can compare the chapters in Mr Sinnett's book, entitled respectively, "The Constitution of Man," "Devachan," and "Kama Loca," with what I have written of Hájí Mullá Hádí's views on the Nature of Man and his Hereafter, without being much struck by the resemblance.

Certain other points merit a brief notice. The physical sciences as known to Persian philosophy are those of the ancients. Their chemistry regards earth, air, fire, and water as the four elements: their astronomy is simply the Ptolemaic system. Furthermore they regard the Universe as finite, and adduce many proofs, some rather ingenious, others weak enough, against the contrary hypothesis. Of these I will give one only as a specimen.

"Let us suppose," they say, "that the Universe is infinite. Then from the centre of the earth draw two straight lines, diverging from one another at an angle of 60° , to the circumference, and produce them thence to infinity. Join their terminal points by another straight line, thus forming the base of the triangle. Now, since the two sides of the triangle are equal (for both were drawn from one point to infinity), therefore the angles at the base are equal; and since the angle at the apex is 60° , therefore each of the remaining angles is 60° , and the triangle is equilateral. Therefore, since the sides are infinite in length, the base is also

infinite in length. But the base is a straight line joining two points (viz. the terminal points of the sides); that is to say, it is limited in both directions. Therefore it is not infinite in length, neither are the sides infinite in length, and a straight line cannot be drawn to infinity. Therefore the Universe is finite. Q.E.D."

This theorem scarcely needs comment. It, along with the endless discussions of a similar nature on the "Indivisible Atom" (*Jawhar-i-fard*) and the like, is an inheritance from the scholastic theology (*Ilm-i-Kelám*), the physics of which have been retained by all Persian metaphysicians up to the present day.

A few words may be said about the psychology of the system in question. Five psychic faculties (corresponding to the five senses) are supposed to exist. These, with their cerebral seats, are as follows:—

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| FORE-BRAIN | { | 1. The compound perception (<i>Hiss-i-mushtaraké</i>), which has the double function of receiving and apprehending impressions from without. It is compared to a two-faced mirror, because on the one hand it "reflects" the outward world as presented to it by the senses, and on the other, during sleep, it gives form to the ideas arising in the <i>Mutaşarrifa</i> , which will be mentioned directly. |
| MID-BRAIN | { | 2. The Imagination (<i>Khiyál</i>), which is the storehouse of forms. |
| MID-BRAIN | { | 3. The Controlling or Co-ordinating Faculty (<i>Mutaşarrifa</i>), which combines and elaborates the emotions or ideas stored in the <i>Vábimé</i> , and the images stored in the Imagination. It is therefore sometimes called the "keeper of the two treasuries." |
| MID-BRAIN | { | 4. The Emotional Faculty (<i>Vábimé</i>), which is the seat of love, hate, fear, and the like. |
| HIND-BRAIN | { | 5. The Memory (<i>Háfiza</i>), which is the storehouse of ideas. |

All these faculties are partial percipients (*Mudrikát-i-juz'iyé*), and are the servants of the Reason (*Akl-i-kull-i-insáni*, or *Nafs-i-nátika*), which is the General Percipient (*Mudrik-i-kullí*). Of these faculties the Imagination would appear to be regarded as the highest, since, as we have seen, in those cases in which the Reason or Rational Soul (*Nafs-i-nátika*) is not developed, it

constitutes that portion of the individual which survives death and resists disintegration. Indeed these five faculties are better regarded as different stages in the development of the Reason. Nothing below the plane of the Imagination, however, survives death: *e.g.* in the lowest animals, whose culminating faculty is a sense of touch (like worms), death brings about complete disintegration.

Finally, a few words may be added concerning the view taken of the occult sciences. I was naturally desirous to learn to what extent they were recognised as true, and accordingly questioned Mírzá Asadu'lláh on the matter. His reply (which fairly represents the opinion of most thoughtful Persians of the old school) was briefly to this effect:—As regards Geomancy (*‘Ilm-i-raml*) and Astrology (*‘Ilm-i-nujúm*) he had no doubt of their truth, of which he had had positive proof. At the same time, of the number of those who professed to understand them the majority were impostors and charlatans. Their acquisition was very laborious, and required many years' patient study, and those who had acquired them and knew their value were, as a rule, very slow to exhibit or make a parade of their knowledge. As regards the interpretation of dreams, he said that these were of three kinds, of which only the last admits of interpretation. These three classes are as follows:—

I.—DREAMS DUE TO DISORDERED HEALTH.—

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| Due to predominance of— | { | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Blood</i>. Red things, such as fire, etc., are seen. 2. <i>Bile</i>. Yellow things, such as the sun, gold, etc., are seen. 3. <i>Phlegm</i>. White things, such as water, snow, etc., are seen. 4. <i>Melancholy</i>. Black things, such as ink, etc., are seen. |
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II.—DREAMS ARISING FROM IMPRESSIONS PRODUCED DURING WAKING HOURS.

III.—DREAMS NOT ARISING FROM THE EXTERNAL OR INTERNAL CAUSES ABOVE ENUMERATED.—These are reflections obtained during sleep from the World of Similitudes (*‘Alam-i-Mithál*). In some rare cases

they indicate events as they actually will occur. Generally, however, they show them forth in a symbolical manner, and require interpretation. Just as every man has his appropriate "form" in the World of Similitudes, so also has everything else. *Knowledge*, for instance, is symbolised by *milk*; an *enemy* by a *wolf*, etc.

I discussed the occult sciences with several of my friends, to discover as far as possible the prevailing opinion about them. One of them made use of the following argument to prove their existence:—"God," he said, "has no *bukhl* (stinginess, avarice): it is impossible for Him to withhold from anyone a thing for which he strives with sufficient earnestness. Just as, if a man devotes all his energies to the pursuit of spiritual knowledge, he attains to it, so, if he chooses to make occult sciences and magical powers the object of his aspirations, they will assuredly not be withheld from him."

Another of my intimate friends gave me the following account of an attempt at conjuration (*ihzár-i-jinn*) at which he had himself assisted:—"My uncle, Mírzá —," he said, "whose house you may perhaps see when you visit Shíráz, was a great believer in the occult sciences, in the pursuit of which, indeed, he dissipated a considerable fortune, being always surrounded by a host of magicians, geomancers, astrologers, and the like. On one occasion something of value had disappeared, and it was believed to have been stolen. It was therefore determined to make an attempt to discover the thief by resorting to a conjuration, which was undertaken by a certain Seyyid of Shíráz, skilled in these matters. Now you must know that the operator cannot himself see the forms of the *jinnis* whom he evokes: he needs for this purpose the assistance of a young child. I, being then quite a child, was selected as his assistant. The magician began by drawing a talismanic figure in ink on the palm of my hand, over which he subsequently rubbed a mixture of ink and oil, so that it was no longer visible. He then commenced his incantations; and before long I, gazing steadily, as I had been instructed to do, into the palm of my hand, saw, reflected in it as it were,

a tiny figure which I recognised as myself. I informed the magician of this, and he commanded me to address it in a peremptory manner and bid it summon the 'King of the *jinnis*' (*Maliku'l-jinn*). I did so, and immediately a second figure appeared in the ink-mirror. Then I was frightened, and began to cry, and hastily rubbed the ink off my hand. Thereupon another boy was brought, and the same process was repeated till the 'King of the *jinnis*' appeared. 'Tell him to summon his *vazir*,' said the magician. The boy did so, and the *vazir* also appeared in the ink-mirror. A number of other *jinnis* were similarly called up, one by one, and when they were all present they were ordered to be seated. Then the magician took a number of slips of paper, wrote on each of them the name of one of those resident in the house, and placed them under his foot. He then drew out one without looking at it, and called out to the boy, 'Who is here?' The boy immediately read off the name in question in the ink-mirror. The same process was repeated till the name of one of the servants in the house was reached. 'Well,' said the magician, 'why do you not tell me what you see in the mirror?' 'I see nothing,' answered the boy. 'Look again,' said the magician; 'gaze more fixedly on the mirror.' After a little while the boy said, 'I see no name, but only the words *Bismi'llahi'r-Rahmani'r-Rahim*' ('In the name of God, the Merciful, the Clement'). 'This,' said the magician, 'which I hold in my hand is the name of the thief.' The man in question was summoned and interrogated, and finally confessed that he had stolen the missing article, which he was compelled to restore."

In this connection it may not be out of place to give the experiences of another experimenter in the occult sciences, who, although at the time sufficiently alarmed by the results he obtained, subsequently became convinced that they were merely due to an excited imagination. My informant in this case was a philosopher of Işfahán, entitled *Aminu'sh-Shari'at*, who came to Teherán in the company of his friend and patron, the *Banání'l-*

Mulk, one of the chief ministers of the *Zillu's-Sultán*. I saw him on several occasions, and had long discussions with him on religion and philosophy. He spoke somewhat bitterly of the vanity of all systems. "I have tried most of them," he said. "I have been in turn Musulmán, Şúfi, Sheykhí, and even Bábi. At one time of my life I devoted myself to the occult sciences, and made an attempt to obtain control over the *jinnis* (*Taskhir-i-jinn*), with what results I will tell you. You must know, in the first place, that the *modus operandi* is as follows:—The seeker after this power chooses some solitary and dismal spot, such as the Hazár-Déré at Işfahán (the place selected by me). There he must remain for forty days, which period of retirement we call *chillé*. He spends the greater part of this time in incantations in the Arabic language, which he recites within the area of the *mandal*, or geometrical figure, which he must describe in a certain way on the ground. Besides this, he must eat very little food, and diminish the amount daily. If he has faithfully observed all these details, on the twenty-first day a lion will appear, and will enter the magic circle. The operator must not allow himself to be terrified by this apparition, and, above all, must on no account quit the *mandal*, else he will lose the results of all his pains. If he resists the lion, other terrible forms will come to him on subsequent days—tigers, dragons, and the like—which he must similarly withstand. If he holds his ground till the fortieth day, he has attained his object, and the *jinnis*, having been unable to get the mastery over him, will have to become his servants and obey all his behests. Well, I faithfully observed all the necessary conditions, and on the twenty-first day, sure enough, a lion appeared and entered the circle. I was horribly frightened, but all the same I stood my ground, although I came near to fainting with terror. Next day a tiger came, and still I succeeded in resisting the impulse which urged me to flee. But when, on the following day, a most hideous and frightful dragon appeared, I could no longer control my terror, and rushed from the circle.

renouncing all further attempts at obtaining the mastery over the *jinnís*. When some time had elapsed after this, and I had pursued my studies in philosophy further, I came to the conclusion that I had been the victim of hallucinations excited by expectation, solitude, hunger, and long vigils; and, with a view to testing the truth of this hypothesis, I again repeated the same process which I had before practised, this time in a spirit of philosophical incredulity. My expectations were justified; I saw absolutely nothing. And there is another fact which proves to my mind that the phantoms I saw on the first occasion had no existence outside my own brain. I had never seen a real lion then, and my ideas about the appearance of that animal were entirely derived from the pictures which may be seen over the doors of baths in this country. Now, the lion which I saw in the magic circle was exactly like the latter in form and colouring, and therefore, as I need hardly say, differed considerably in aspect from a real lion."

In Teherán I saw another philosopher of some reputation, Mírzá Abú'l-Hasan-i-Jilvé. The last of these names is the *takballuṣ* or *nom de guerre* under which he writes poetry—for he is a poet as well as a metaphysician. Unfortunately I did not have the advantage of any prolonged conversation with him, and even such as I had chiefly consisted in answering his questions on the different phases of European thought. He was greatly interested in what I told him about the Theosophists and Vegetarians, and was anxious to know whether the Plymouth Brethren were believers in the transmigration of souls!

Although, as will have already appeared, I acquired a considerable amount of information about certain phases of Persian thought during my sojourn in Teherán, there was one which, notwithstanding my most strenuous efforts and diligent enquiries, had hitherto eluded all my attempts to approach it. This one was Bábíism, of the history of which I have already had occasion to speak more than once, and to which I shall have to

refer repeatedly in the course of subsequent chapters. Although I exerted to the utmost all the skill, all the tact, and all the caution which I had at my command, I was completely foiled in my attempts to communicate with the proscribed sect. I heard something about them, it is true, and what I heard served only to increase my desire to know more. I was told tales of their unflinching courage under torture, of their unshakable faith, of their marvellous skill in argument. "I once met one of them," said a man of great learning to me, "as I was returning from Kerbelá, and he succeeded in drawing me into a discussion on religious matters. So completely was I worsted by him at every turn, so thorough was his knowledge of the *Ḳur'án* and Traditions, and so ingenious was the use he made of this knowledge, that I was finally compelled to effect my escape from his irresistible logic by declaring myself to be *lá-madhhab* (a free-thinker); whereupon he left me, saying that with such he had nothing to do."

But whether my friends could not give me the knowledge I sought for, or whether they did not choose to do so, I was unable during my stay in Teherán to become acquainted with any members of the sect in question. Some, indeed, of those with whom I was acquainted at that time were, as I subsequently discovered, actually Bábís; yet these, although at times they asked me about the course of my studies, commended my devotion to philosophy, and even tantalised me with vague promises of introductions to mysterious friends, who were, as they would imply, endowed with true wisdom (*ma'rifat*), would say nothing definite, and appeared afraid to speak more openly. After arousing my curiosity to the highest pitch, and making me fancy that I was on the threshold of some discovery, they would suddenly leave me with an expression of regret that opportunities for prolonged and confidential conversation were so rare. I tried to obtain information from an American missionary, with similar lack of success. He admitted that he had fore-