



THE KASIDAH OF HAJI ABDU EL-YEZDI

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OF
HÂJÎ ABDÛ EL-YEZDÎ

BY
RICHARD BURTON

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CONTENTS

To The Reader

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

Note 1

Note 2

Conclusion

à la vie d'outre tombe, sans renoncer au substratum matériel qu'il croit nécessaire au maintien de l'individualité."

With Hâjî Abdû the soul is not material, for that would be a contradiction of terms. He regards it, with many moderns, as a state of things, not a thing; a convenient word denoting the sense of personality, of individual identity. In its ghostly signification he discovers an artificial dogma which could hardly belong to the brutal savages of the Stone Age. He finds it in the funereal books of ancient Egypt, whence probably it passed to the Zendavesta and the Vedas. In the Hebrew Pentateuch, of which part is still attributed to Moses, it is unknown, or, rather, it is deliberately ignored by the author or authors. The early Christians could not agree upon the subject; Origen advocated the pre-existence of men's souls, supposing them to have been all created at one time and successively embodied. Others make Spirit born with the hour of birth: and so forth.

But the brain-action or, if you so phrase it, the mind., is not confined to the reasoning faculties; nor can we afford to ignore the sentiments, the affections which are., perhaps, the most potent realities of life. Their loud affirmative voice contrasts strongly with the titubant accents of the intellect. They seem to demand a future life, ever, a state of rewards and punishments from the Maker of the world, the *Ortolano Eterno*,²⁸ the Potter of the East, the Watchmaker of the West. They protest against the idea of annihilation. They revolt at the notion of eternal parting from parents, kinsmen and friends. Yet the dogma of a future life is by no means catholic and universal. The Anglo-European race apparently cannot exist without it, and we have lately heard of the "Aryan Soul-land." On the other hand many of the Buddhist and even the Brahman Schools preach Nirwâna (comparative non-existence) and Parinirwâna (absolute nothingness). Moreover, the great Turanian family, actually occupying all Eastern Asia, has ever ignored it; and the 200,000,000 of Chinese Confucians, the mass of the nation, protest emphatically against the mainstay of the western creeds, because it "unfits men for the business and duty of life by fixing their speculations on an unknown

²⁸ The Eternal Gardener: so the old inscription saying:--

Homo locatus est in horto
 damnatus est in
 humatus est in
 renatus est in

moulds clay, and gives the spirit of life to the nostrils of Osiris." Hence the Genesitic "breath." Then we meet him in the Vedas, the Being "by whom the fictile vase is formed; the clay out of which it is fabricated." We find him next in Jeremiah's "Arise and go down unto the Potter's house," etc. (xviii. 2), and lastly in Romans (ix. 20), "Hath not the potter power over the clay?" No wonder that the first Hand who moulded the man-mud is a *lieu commun* in Eastern thought. The "waste of agony" is Buddhism., or Schopenhauerism pure and simple, I have moulded "Earth on Earth" upon "Seint Ysidre" 's well-known rhymes (A.D. 1440):-

Erthe out of Erthe is wondirli wrouzt,
 Erthe out of Erth hath gete a dignity of nouzt,
 Erthe upon Erthe hath sett all his thouzt
 How that Erthe upon Erthe may be his brouzt, etc.

The "Camel-rider," suggests Ossian, "yet a few years and the blast of the desert comes." The dromedary was chosen as Death's vehicle by the Arabs, probably because it bears the Bedouin's corpse to the distant burial-ground, where he will lie among his kith and kin. The end of this section reminds us of:--

How poor, how rich; how abject, how august,
 How complicate, how wonderful is Man!

The Hâjî now passes to the results of his long and anxious thoughts: I have purposely twisted his exordium into an echo of Milton:--

Till old experience doth attain
 To something of prophetic strain.

He boldly declares that there is no God as man has created his Creator. Here he is at one with modern thought:--"En général les croyants font le Dieu comme ils sont eux-mêmes," (says J. J. Rousseau, "Confessions," I. 6): "les bons le font bon: les méchants le font méchant: les dévots haineux et bilieux, ne voient que l'enfer, parce qu'ils voudraient damner tout le monde; les âmes aimantes et douces n'y croient guère; et l'un des étonnements dont je ne reviens pas est de voir le bon Fénélon en parler dans son Télémaque comme s'il y croyoit tout de bon: mais j'espère qu'il mentoit alors; car enfin quelque véridique qu'on soit, il faut bien mentir quelquefois quand on est évêque." "Man depicts himself in his gods,"

says Schiller. Hence the *Natur-gott*, the deity of all ancient peoples, and with which every system began, allowed and approved of actions distinctly immoral, often diabolical. Belief became moralized only when the conscience of the community, and with it of the individual items, began aspiring to its golden age,--Perfection. "Dieu est le superlatif, dont le positif est l'homme," says Carl Vogt; meaning, that the popular idea of a *numen* is that of a magnified and non-natural man.

He then quotes his authorities. Buddha, whom the Catholic Church converted to Saint Josaphat, refused to recognize Ishwara (the deity), on account of the mystery of the "cruelty of things." Schopenhauer, Miss Cobbe's model pessimist, who at the humblest distance represents Buddha in the world of Western thought, found the vision of man's unhappiness, irrespective of his actions, so overpowering that he concluded the Supreme Will to be malevolent, "heartless, cowardly, and arrogant." Confucius, the "Throneless king, more powerful than all kings," denied a personal deity. The Epicurean idea rules the China of the present day. "God is great, but he lives too far off," say the Turanian Santâls in Aryan India; and this is the general language of man in the Turanian East.

Hâjî Abdû evidently holds that idolatry begins with a personal deity. And let us note that the latter is deliberately denied by the "Thirty-nine Articles." With them God is "a Being without Parts (personality) or Passions." He professes a vague Agnosticism, and attributes popular faith to the fact that Timor fecit Deos; "every religion being, without exception, the child of fear and ignorance" (Carl Vogt). He now speaks as the "Drawer of the Wine," the "Ancient Taverner, the "Old Magus," the "Patron of the Mughân or Magians"; all titles applied to the Soofi as opposed to the Zâhid. His "idols" are the eidola (illusions) of Bacon, "having their foundations in the very constitution of man," and therefore appropriately called *fabulæ*. That "Nature's Common Course" is subject to various interpretation, may be easily proved. Aristotle was as great a subverter as Alexander; but the quasi-prophetical Stagyrte of the Dark Ages, who ruled the world till the end of the thirteenth century, became the "twice execrable" of Martin Luther; and was finally abolished by Galileo and Newton. Here I have excised two stanzas. The first is:--

Theories for truths, fable for fact; system for science vex the thought
Life's one great lesson you despise--to know that all we know is nought.

This is in fact:--

Well didst thou say, Athena's noblest son,
The most we know is nothing can be known.

The next is:--

Essence and substance, sequence, cause, beginning, ending, space and
time,

These be the toys of manhood's mind, at once ridiculous and sublime.

He is not the only one who so regards "bothering Time and Space." A late
definition of the "infinitely great," viz., that the idea arises from denying
form to any figure; of the "infinitely small," from refusing magnitude to
any figure, is a fair specimen of the "dismal science"--metaphysics.

Another omitted stanza reads:--

How canst thou, Phenomen! pretend the Noumenon to mete and span?
Say which were easier probed and proved, Absolute Being or mortal
man?

One would think that he had read Kant on the "Knowable and the
Unknowable," or had heard of the Yankee lady, who could "differentiate
between the Finite and the Infinite." It is a common-place of the age, in
the West as well as the East, that Science is confined to phenomena, and
cannot reach the Noumena, the things themselves. This is the scholastic
realism, the "residuum of a bad metaphysic," which deforms the system
of Comte. With all its pretensions, it simply means that there are, or can
be conceived, things in themselves (*i.e.*, unrelated to thought); that we
know them to exist; and, at the same time, that we cannot know what
they are. But who dares say "cannot"? Who can measure man's work
when he shall be as superior to our present selves as we are to the Cave-
man of past time?

The "Chain of Universe" alludes to the Jain idea that the whole,
consisting of intellectual as well as of natural principles, existed from all
eternity; and that it has been subject to endless revolutions, whose
causes are the inherent powers of nature, intellectual as well as physical,

without the intervention of a deity. But the Poet ridicules the "non-human," *i.e.*, the not-ourselves, the negation of ourselves and consequently a non-existence. Most Easterns confuse the contradictories, in which one term stands for something, and the other for nothing (*e.g.*, ourselves and not-ourselves), with the contraries (*e.g.*, rich and not-rich = poor), in which both terms express a something. So the positive-negative "infinite" is not the complement of "finite," but its negation. The Western man derides the process by making "not-horse" the complementary entity of "horse." The Pilgrim ends with the favourite Soofi tenet that the five (six?) senses are the doors of all human knowledge, and that no form of man, incarnation of the deity, prophet, apostle or sage, has ever produced an idea not conceived within his brain by the sole operation of these vulgar material agents. Evidently he is neither spiritualist nor idealist.

He then proceeds to show that man depicts himself in his God, and that "God is the racial expression"; a Pedagogue on the Nile, an abstraction in India, and an astrologer in Chaldæa; where Abraham, says Berosus (Josephus, Ant. I. 7, §2, and II. 9, §2) was "skilful in the celestial science." He notices the Akârana-Zamân (endless Time) of the Guebres, and the working dual, Hormuzd and Ahriman. He brands the God of the Hebrews with pugnacity and cruelty. He has heard of the beautiful creations of Greek fancy which, not attributing a moral nature to the deity, included Theology in Physics; and which, like Professor Tyndall, seemed to consider all matter everywhere alive. We have adopted a very different Unitarianism; Theology, with its one Creator; Pantheism with its "one Spirit's plastic stress"; and Science with its one Energy. He is hard upon Christianity and its "trinal God": I have not softened his expression (### = a riddle), although it may offend readers. There is nothing more enigmatical to the Moslem mind than Christian Trinitarianism: all other objections they can get over, not this. Nor is he any lover of Islamism, which, like Christianity, has its ascetic Hebraism and its Hellenic hedonism; with the world of thought moving between these two extremes. The former, defined as predominant or exclusive care for the practice of right, is represented by Semitic and Arab influence, Korânic and Hadîsic. The latter, the religion of humanity, a passion for life and light, for culture and intelligence; for art, poetry and science, is represented in Islamism by the fondly and impiously-

cherished memory of the old Guebre kings and heroes, beauties, bards and sages. Hence the mention of Zâl and his son Rostam; of Cyrus and of the Jâm-i-Jamshîd, which may be translated either grail (cup) or mirror: it showed the whole world within its rim; and hence it was called Jâm-i-Jehân-numâ (universe-exposing). The contemptuous expressions about the diet of camel's milk and the meat of the Susmâr, or green lizard, are evidently quoted from Firdausi's famous lines beginning:--

Arab-râ be-jâi rasîd'est kâr.

The Hâjî is severe upon those who make of the Deity a Khwân-i-yaghmâ (or tray of plunder) as the Persians phrase it. He looks upon the shepherds as men,

--Who rob the sheep themselves to clothe.

So Schopenhauer (*Leben, etc.*, by Wilhelm Gewinner) furiously shows how the "English nation ought to treat that set of hypocrites, imposters and money-graspers, the clergy, that annually devours £3,500,000."

The Hâjî broadly asserts that there is no Good and no Evil in the absolute sense as man has made them. Here he is one with Pope:--

And spite of pride, in erring nature's spite
One truth is clear--whatever is, is right.

Unfortunately the converse is just as true:--whatever is, is wrong. Khizr is the Elijah who puzzled Milman. He represents the Soofi, the Bâtini, while Musâ (Moses) is the Zâhid, the Zâhiri; and the strange adventures of the twain, invented by the Jews, have been appropriated by the Moslems. He derides the Freewill of man; and, like Diderot, he detects "pantaloon in a prelate, a satyr in a president, a pig in a priest, an ostrich in a minister, and a goose in a chief clerk." He holds to Fortune, the {Greek *Túxh*} of Alcman, which is, {Greek *Eu?nomías te kai Peiðoûs a?delfà kai Promaðeías ðugáthr*},--Chance, the sister of Order and Trust, and the daughter of Forethought. The Scandinavian Spinners of Fate were Urd (the Was, the Past), Verdandi (the Becoming, or Present), and Skuld (the To-be, or Future). He alludes to Plato, who made the Demiourgos create the worlds by the Logos (the Hebrew Dabar) or Creative Word, through the Æons. These {Greek *Ai?w^nes*} of the Mystics were spiritual emanations from {Greek *Ai?w'n*}, lit. a wave of

influx, an age, period, or day; hence the Latin *ævum*, and the Welsh *Awen*, the stream of inspiration falling upon a bard. Basilides, the Egypto-Christian, made the Creator evolve seven *Æons* or *Pteromata* (fulnesses); from two of whom, Wisdom and Power, proceeded the 365 degrees of Angels. All were subject to a Prince of Heaven, called Abraxas, who was himself under guidance of the chief *Æon*, Wisdom. Others represent the first Cause to have produced an *Æon* or Pure Intelligence; the first a second, and so forth till the tenth. This was material enough to affect Hyle, which thereby assumed a spiritual form. Thus the two incompatibles combined in the Scheme of Creation.

He denies the three ages of the Buddhists: the wholly happy; the happy; mixed with misery, and the miserable tinged with happiness,--the present. The Zoroastrians had four, each of 3,000 years. In the first, Hormuzd, the good-god, ruled alone; then Ahriman, the bad-god, began to rule subserviently: in the third both ruled equally; and in the last, now current, Ahriman has gained the day.

Against the popular idea that man has caused the misery of this world, he cites the ages, when the Old Red Sandstone bred gigantic cannibal fishes; when the Oolites produced the mighty reptile tyrants of air, earth, and sea; and when the monsters of the Eocene and Miocene periods shook the ground with their ponderous tread. And the world of waters is still a hideous scene of cruelty, carnage, and destruction.

He declares Conscience to be a geographical and chronological accident. Thus he answers the modern philosopher whose soul was overwhelmed by the marvel and the awe of two things, "the starry heaven above and the moral law within." He makes the latter sense a development of the gregarious and social instincts; and so travellers have observed that the moral is the last step in mental progress. His Moors are the savage Dankali and other negroid tribes, who offer a cup of milk with one hand and stab with the other. He translates literally the Indian word *Hâthî* (an elephant), the animal with the *Hâth* (hand, or trunk). Finally he alludes to the age of active volcanoes, the present, which is merely temporary, the shifting of the Pole, and the spectacle to be seen from Mushtari, or the planet Jupiter.

The *Hâjî* again asks the old, old question, What is Truth? And he answers himself, after the fashion of the wise Emperor of China, "Truth hath not

an unchanging name." A modern English writer says: "I have long been convinced by the experience of my life, as a pioneer of various heterodoxies, which are rapidly becoming orthodoxies, that nearly all truth is temperamental to us, or given in the affections and intuitions; and that discussion and inquiry do little more than feed temperament." Our poet seems to mean that the Perceptions, when they perceive truly, convey objective truth, which is universal; whereas the Reflectives and the Sentiments, the working of the moral region, or the middle lobe of the phrenologists, supplies only subjective truth, personal and individual. Thus to one man the axiom, *Opes irritamenta malorum*, represents a distinct fact; while another holds wealth to be an incentive for good. Evidently both are right, according to their lights.

Hâjî Abdû cites Plato and Aristotle, as usual with Eastern songsters, who delight in Mantik (logic). Here he appears to mean that a false proposition is as real a proposition as one that is true. "Faith moves mountains" and "Manet immota fides" are evidently quotations. He derides the teaching of the "First Council of the Vatican" (cap. v.), "all the faithful are little children listening to the voice of Saint Peter," who is the "Prince of the Apostles." He glances at the fancy of certain modern physicists, "devotion is a definite molecular change in the convolution of grey pulp." He notices with contumely the riddle of which Milton speaks so glibly, where the Dialoguists,

--reasoned high

Of providence, foreknowledge, will and fate,
Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute.

In opposition to the orthodox Mohammedan tenets which make Man's soul his percipient Ego, an entity, a unity, the Soofi considers it a fancy, opposed to body, which is a fact; at most a state of things, not a thing; a consensus of faculties whereof our frames are but the phenomena. This is not contrary to Genesitic legend. The Hebrew Ruach and Arabic Ruh, now perverted to mean soul or spirit, simply signify wind or breath, the outward and visible sign of life. Their later schools are even more explicit. "For that which befalls man befalls beasts; as the one dies, so does the other; they have all one death; all go unto one place" (Eccles. iii 19). But the modern soul, a nothing, a string of negations, a negative in chief, is thus described in the Mahâbhârat: "It is indivisible,

inconceivable, inconceptible: it is eternal, universal, permanent, immovable: it is invisible and unalterable." Hence the modern spiritualism which, rejecting materialism, can use only material language.

These, says the Hâjî, are mere sounds. He would not assert "Verba gignunt verba," but "Verba gignunt res," a step further. The idea is Bacon's "idola fori, omnium molestissima," the twofold illusions of language; either the names of things that have no existence in fact, or the names of things whose idea is confused and ill-defined.

He derives the Soul-idea from the "savage ghost" which Dr. Johnson defined to be a "kind of shadowy being." He justly remarks that it arose (perhaps) in Egypt; and was not invented by the "People of the Book." By this term Moslems denote Jews and Christians who have a recognized revelation, while their ignorance refuses it to Guebres, Hindus, and Confucians.

He evidently holds to the doctrine of progress. With him protoplasm is the Yliastron, the Prima Materies. Our word matter is derived from the Sanskrit ### (mâtrâ), which, however, signifies properly the invisible type of visible matter; in modern language, the substance distinct from the sum of its physical and chemical properties. Thus, Mâtrâ exists only in thought, and is not recognizable by the action of the five senses. His "Chain of Being" reminds us of Prof. Huxley's Pedigree of the Horse, Orohippus, Mesohippus, Meiohippus, Protohippus, Pleiohippus, and Equus. He has evidently heard of modern biology, or Hylozoism, which holds its quarter-million species of living beings, animal and vegetable, to be progressive modifications of one great fundamental unity, an unity of so-called "mental faculties" as well as of bodily structure. And this is the jelly-speck. He scoffs at the popular idea that man is the great central figure round which all things gyrate like marionettes; in fact, the anthropocentric era of Draper, which, strange to say, lives by the side of the telescope and the microscope. As man is of recent origin, and may end at an early epoch of the macrocosm, so before his birth all things revolved round nothing, and may continue to do so after his death.

The Hâjî, who elsewhere denounces "compound ignorance," holds that all evil comes from error; and that all knowledge has been developed by overthrowing error, the ordinary channel of human thought. He ends

this section with a great truth. There are things which human Reason or Instinct matured, in its undeveloped state, cannot master; but Reason is a Law to itself. Therefore we are not bound to believe, or to attempt belief in, any thing which is contrary or contradictory to Reason. Here he is diametrically opposed to Rome, who says, "Do not appeal to History; that is private judgment. Do not appeal to Holy Writ; that is heresy. Do not appeal to Reason; that is Rationalism."

He holds with the Patriarchs of Hebrew Holy Writ, that the present life is all-sufficient for an intellectual (not a sentimental) being; and, therefore, that there is no want of a Heaven or a Hell. With far more contradiction the Western poet sings:--

Hell hath no limits, nor is circumscribed
 In one self-place; but when we are in hell,
 And where hell is there must we ever be,
 And, to be short, when all this world dissolves,
 And every creature shall be purified,
 All places shall be hell which are not heaven.

For what want is there of a Hell when all are pure? He enlarges upon the ancient Buddhist theory, that Happiness and Misery are equally distributed among men and beasts; some enjoy much and suffer much; others the reverse. Hence Diderot declares, "Sober passions produce only the commonplace . . . the man of moderate passion lives and dies like a brute." And again we have the half truth:--

That the mark of rank in nature
 Is capacity for pain.

The latter implies an equal capacity for pleasure, and thus the balance is kept.

Hâjî Abdû then proceeds to show that Faith is an accident of birth. One of his omitted distichs says:--

Race makes religion; true! but aye upon the Maker acts the made,
 A finite God, and infinite sin, in lieu of raising man, degrade.

In a manner of dialogue he introduces the various races each fighting to establish its own belief. The Frank (Christian) abuses the Hindu, who

retorts that he is of Mlenchha, mixed or impure, blood, a term applied to all non-Hindus. The same is done by Nazarene and Mohammedan; by the Confucian, who believes in nothing, and by the Soofi, who naturally has the last word. The association of the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph with the Trinity, in the Roman and Greek Churches, makes many Moslems conclude that Christians believe not in three but in five Persons. So an Englishman writes of the early Fathers, "They not only said that $3 = 1$, and that $1 = 3$: they professed to explain how that curious arithmetical combination had been brought about. The Indivisible had been divided, and yet was not divided: it was divisible, and yet it was indivisible; black was white and white was black; and yet there were not two colours but one colour; and whoever did not believe it would be damned." The Arab quotation runs in the original:--

Ahsanu `l-Makâni l` il-Fatâ 'l-Jehannamu

The best of places for (the generous) youth is Gehenna.

Gehenna, alias Jahim, being the fiery place of eternal punishment. And the second saying, *Al-nâr wa lâ `l-`Ar*--"Fire (of Hell) rather than Shame,"--is equally condemned by the Koranist. The Gustâkhi (insolence) of Fate is the expression of Umar-i-Khayyam (St. xxx):--

What, without asking hither hurried *whence?*

And, without asking *whither* hurried hence!

Oh many a cup of this forbidden wine
Must drown the memory of that insolence.

Soofistically, the word means "the coquetry of the beloved one," the *divinæ particula auræ*. And the section ends with Pope's:--

He can't be wrong whose life is in the right.

CONCLUSION

HERE the Hâjî ends his practical study of mankind. The image of Destiny playing with men as pieces is a view common amongst Easterns. His idea of wisdom is once more Pope's:--

And all our knowledge is ourselves to know.

(Essay IV--398.)

Regret, i.e., repentance, was one of the forty-two deadly sins of the Ancient Egyptians. "Thou shalt not consume thy heart," says the Ritual of the Dead., the negative justification of the soul or ghost (Lepsius "Alteste des Todtenbuchs"). We have borrowed competitive examination from the Chinese; and, in these morbid days of weak introspection and retrospection, we might learn wisdom from the sturdy old Khemites. When he sings "Abjure the Why and seek the How," he refers to the old Scholastic difference of the *Demonstratio propter quid* (why is a thing?), as opposed to *Demonstratio quia* (i.e. that a thing is). The "great Man" shall end with becoming deathless, as Shakespeare says in his noble sonnet:--

And Death once dead, there's no more dying then!

Like the great Pagans, the Hâjî holds that man was born good, while the Christian, "tormented by the things divine," cleaves to the comforting doctrine of innate sinfulness. Hence the universal tenet, that man should do good in order to gain by it here or hereafter; the "enlightened selfishness," that says, Act well and get compound interest in a future state. The allusion to the "Theist-word" apparently means that the votaries of a personal Deity must believe in the absolute foreknowledge of the Omniscient in particulars as in generals. The Rule of Law emancipates man; and its exceptions are the gaps left by his ignorance. The wail over the fallen flower, etc., reminds us of the Pulambal (Lamentations) of the Anti-Brahminical writer, "Pathira-Giri yâr." The allusion to Mâyâ is from Dâs Kabîr:--

Mâyâ mare, na man mare, mar mar gayâ, sarîr.
Illusion dies, the mind dies not though dead and gone the flesh.

Nirwâna, I have said, is partial extinction by being merged in the Supreme, not to be confounded with Pari-nirwâna or absolute annihilation. In the former also, dying gives birth to a new being, the embodiment of *karma* (deeds), good and evil, done in the countless ages of transmigration.

Here ends my share of the work. On the whole it has been considerable. I have omitted, as has been seen, sundry stanzas, and I have changed the order of others. The text has nowhere been translated verbatim; in fact, a familiar European turn has been given to many sentiments which were judged too Oriental. As the metre adopted by Hâjî Abdû was the Bahr Tawîl (long verse), I thought it advisable to preserve that peculiarity, and to fringe it with the rough, unobtrusive rhyme of the original.

Vive, valeque!
