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Elements of INDIAN CULTURE

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A. K. MAJUMDAR

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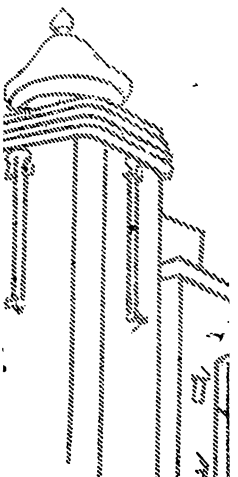

Bharatiya Shiksha must ensure that no promising young Indian of character having faith in Bharat and her culture Bharatiya Vidya should be left without modern educational equipment by reason merely of want of funds.

2, Bharatiya Shiksha must be formative more than informative, and cannot have for its end mere acquisition of knowledge. Its legitimate sphere is not only to develop natural talents but so to shape them as to enable them to absorb and express the permanent values of Bharatiya Vidya.

3. Bharatiya Shiksha must take into account not only the full growth of a student's personality but the totality of his relations and lead him to the highest self-fulfilment of which he is capable.

4. Bharatiya Shiksha must involve at some stage or other an intensive study of Sanskrit or Sanskritic languages and their literature, without excluding, if so desired, the study of other languages and literature, ancient and modern.

5. The re-integration of Bharatiya Vidya, which is the primary object of Bharatiya Shiksha, can only be attained through a study of forces, movements, motives, ideas, forms and art of creative life-energy through which it has expressed itself in different ages as a single continuous process.

6. Bharatiya Shiksha must stimulate the student's power of expression, both written and oral, at every stage in accordance with the highest ideals attained by the great literary masters in the intellectual and moral spheres.

7. The technique of Bharatiya Shiksha must involve—

(a) the adoption by the teacher of the *Guru* attitude which consists in taking a personal interest in the student; inspiring and encouraging him to achieve distinction in his studies; entering into his life with a view to form ideals and remove psychological obstacles; and creating in him a spirit of consecration; and

(b) the adoption by the student of the *Sahitya* attitude by the development of—

(i) respect for the teacher,

(ii) a spirit of inquiry,

(iii) a spirit of service towards the teacher, the institution, Bharat and Bharatiya Vidya.

8. The ultimate aim of Bharatiya Shiksha is to teach the younger generation to appreciate and live up to the permanent values of Bharatiya Vidya which is flowing from the supreme art of creative life-energy as represented by Shri Ramachandra, Shri Krishna, Vyasa, Buddha and Mahavira have expressed themselves in modern times in the life of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, and Swami Vivekananda, Shri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi.

9. Bharatiya Shiksha while equipping the student with every kind of scientific and technical training must teach the student, not to sacrifice an ancient form or attitude to an unreasoning passion for change; not to retain a form or attitude which in the light of modern times can be replaced by another form of attitude which is a truer and more effective expression of the spirit of Bharatiya Vidya; and to capture the spirit afresh for each generation to present it to the world.

DATA ENTERED

Prof. B. B. Das
with Compliments
9 January 1973

आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः।

Let noble thoughts come to us from every side

—Rigveda, I-89-i

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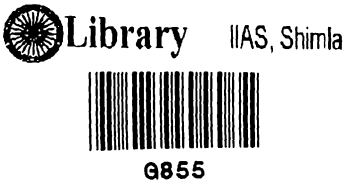

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KULAPATI'S PREFACE

THE Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan—that Institute of Indian Culture in Bombay—needed a Book University, a series of books which, if read, would serve the purpose of providing higher education. Particular emphasis, however, was to be put on such literature as revealed the deeper impulsions of India. As a first step, it was decided to bring out in English 100 books, 50 of which were to be taken in hand almost at once. Each book was to contain from 200 to 250 pages.

It is our intention to publish the books we select, not only in English, but also in the following Indian languages: Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam.

This scheme, involving the publication of 900 volumes, requires ample funds and an all-India organisation. The Bhavan is exerting its utmost to supply them.

The objectives for which the Bhavan stands are the reintegration of the Indian culture in the light of modern knowledge and to suit our present-day needs and the resuscitation of its fundamental values in their pristine vigour.

Let me make our goal more explicit:

We seek the dignity of man, which necessarily implies the creation of social conditions which would allow him freedom to evolve along the lines of his

own temperament and capacities; we seek the harmony of individual efforts and social relations, not in any makeshift way, but within the frame-work of the Moral Order; we seek the creative art of life, by the alchemy of which human limitations are progressively transmuted, so that man may become the instrument of God, and is able to see Him in all and all in Him.

The world, we feel, is too much with us. Nothing would uplift or inspire us so much as the beauty and aspiration which such books can teach.

In this series, therefore, the literature of India, ancient and modern, will be published in a form easily accessible to all. Books in other literatures of the world, if they illustrate the principles we stand for, will also be included.

This common pool of literature, it is hoped, will enable the reader, eastern or western, to understand and appreciate currents of world thought, as also the movements of the mind in India, which, though they flow through different linguistic channels, have a common urge and aspiration.

Fittingly, the Book University's first venture is the *Mahabharata,* summarised by one of the greatest living Indians, C. Rajagopalachari; the second work is on a section of it, the *Gita,* by H. V. Divatia, an eminent jurist and a student of philosophy. Centuries ago, it was proclaimed of the *Mahabharata:* "What is not in it, is nowhere." After twenty-five centuries, we can use the same words about it. He who knows

it not, knows not the heights and depths of the soul; he misses the trials and tragedy and the beauty and grandeur of life.

The *Mahabharata* is not a mere epic; it is a romance, telling the tale of heroic men and women and of some who were divine; it is a whole literature in itself, containing a code of life, a philosophy of social and ethical relations, and speculative thought on human problems that is hard to rival; but, above all, it has for its core the *Gita,* which is, as the world is beginning to find out, the noblest of scriptures and the grandest of sagas in which the climax is reached in the wondrous Apocalypse in the Eleventh Canto.

Through such books alone the harmonies underlying true culture, I am convinced, will one day reconcile the disorders of modern life.

I thank all those who have helped to make this new branch of the Bhavan's activity successful.

1, Queen Victoria Road,
New Delhi, K. M. MUNSHI
3rd October 1951.

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

The present book is the outcome of the Ramadhyani Memorial lectures delivered by Dr. Asoke Majumdar in 1970 under the auspices of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's Delhi Kendra. The Memorial lectures were instituted in 1966 by Smt. Tara Ramadhyani to perpetuate the memory of her husband and to commemorate his connection with the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

It is usually held that the components of culture are: art, architecture, literature, religion and philosophy, but Dr. Majumdar has added a new dimension by adding social movements as an integral part of culture and identifying it 'with the historic totality of the ways of behaviour, feeling and thinking; the means and instruments which have characterized our adjustments to our environments, through the long period of our history'. (p. 3).

Hence the work begins with a re-appraisal of the ancient Indian society clearly demarcating the social ideals from the realities of everyday life, some of which are found to be strikingly modern. This peculiar phenomenon is explained on the basis of a philosophical category which leads to the unconventional conclusion that 'in society, the effects, good or bad, which we see today, must have been present in some form in our past'.

The characteristic features of Hindu society are the position of women and the caste system, and while dealing with these two topics at some length,

Dr. Majumdar has drawn upon history to show that whatever the ancient legal codes may have laid down, by the early medieval age the social position of *sudras* and women was much better than is generally held.

In a brief survey of Sanskrit and Prakrit literature, Dr. Majumdar has brought out their essential features and limitation, and warns that 'Sanskrit poetry, much less its love poetry with its subtle nuances, is never simple or undisciplined, nor meant for undisciplined enjoyment. Even in a romantic content the expression is severely classic... In those days pleasure with refinement was sought for in life, and pleasure with elegance was demanded in art.' (pp. 20-22).

Describing briefly the achievement of ancient Indian art, Dr. Majumdar has quoted extensively from the appreciative passages of the French savant René Grousset who said that a 'characteristic of Indian sculpture is an anthropomorphism, a representation of divinity in the image of man, equal to that of Hellas. But in this land of luxuriant growth it was translated into works of a cosmic grandeur which no Zeus ever reached'. (p. 29) Dr. Majumdar's conclusion is that there is a qualitative difference between the religious art of classical Europe and ancient India. 'In India the emphasis was on realization of the ideal, while in Europe it was on idealization of the real'. (p. 28).

About half the book is devoted to religion and philosophy, and Dr. Majumdar has fully explained

the reason for characterizing ancient Indian culture as 'religious'. He then delineates the essential features of Indian religion and philosophy from the Vedic age to the resurgence of Hinduism under Sankara and Ramanuja, after having given a resumé of Buddhism. He then answers such common questions as what is mysticism, what is *yoga,* who are fit for *jnana-yoga, bhakti-yoga,* and *karma-yoga* respectively and similar problems. His conclusion is that that the quintessence of Indian Culture is the consciousness that super-conscious reality is bliss—*ananda* and it is through this aspect of reality that the finite can be linked with the infinite.

The contents of the book, delivered as memorial lectures, were intended for non-specialists, but the specialist readers too will find here some information not easily available elsewhere, and their refreshingly new interpretation.

CONTENTS

1

IN MEMORIAM

I thank you very sincerely for honouring me by inviting me to deliver this course of lectures. This gives me an opportunity to pay my tribute to the memory of my late friend Mr. R. K. Ramadhyani.

When I came here in 1957 as the Director of this institute, Mr. and Mrs. Ramadhyani were the first to invite me to their house, and it was at their house that I had my last farewell dinner before I left Delhi in 1964. During all these years I enjoyed the privilege of coming into close contact with Mr. Ramadhyani and his wife, Srimati Tara Ramadhyani, and I shall always remember their unfailing courtesy and charming manners which proceeded from genuine kindness and inborn generosity. Mr. Ramadhyani was Secretary to the Government of India, and I was, as I still am, a very unimportant person. But this difference in our stations of life never mattered with him.

Mr. Ramadhyani and I had one common interest viz., study of Indian culture, and it is appropriate, that in this series of lectures dedicated to his memory, I should speak on some aspects of it.

2

CULTURE

Definition of culture is almost a futile exercise and I shall not attempt it. It reminds me, however, of an international seminar held before the inauguration of the UNESCO in an attempt to define culture. Almost all the western intellectuals contributed their ideas but failed to arrive at any agreed definition. One negative definition, however, received the greatest amount of approbation, which I still remember: 'Culture is not politics', a French writer concluded. The idea was that it is the business of a man of politics to win over others to his views, by persuasion, arguments or other methods, such as promises for a better future, etc. That is not the way of a man of culture: he is content to state his views. And this is what I propose to do—to state certain facts and my interpretation of them without any attempt to convert you to my views.

If it is not possible to define culture, so it must be the case when we qualify it with the word 'Indian'. Therefore my attempt will be to try to identify it, but with what? Here I have to fall back on a set of symbolism adopted in a far off land, in Barabudur in Java. Barabudur, as you probably know, consists of nine successive terraces of which the six lower ones are square and the rest circular crowned by a bell-shaped *stupa*. The peculiarity is that while the basement and the six square terraces are heavily

sculptured, the upper three terraces form a striking contrast not only by their round shapes, but also by the total absence of any sculpture or ornamentation of any kind.

In the lowest series of sculptures, there are scenes from daily life, including scenes of the capture and killing of animals, fighting, and even murder. Then comes a series of panels depicting the horrors of hell and pleasures of heaven. These are surmounted by panels depicting incidents from the lives of Buddha, and as I have said, beyond the sixth gallery there is no sculpture.

This scheme is deliberate. Beginning his ascent from the every-day realities of life, the pilgrim ascends to the contemplation of the life of Buddha, the saviour; as he rises to the sixth terrace the pilgrim has a vision of Dhyani-Buddhas, whose figures are partially visible through the lattice work of the series of *stupas*. But beyond that state—that is the state of contemplation—all visible forms disappear, and there is the state of *śūnyatā*, which cannot be expressed in form.

It is important to remember that in this religious edifice, the stern realities of every-day life with all its cruelties have been represented. For that also is a part of life, and therefore of culture, which we may identify with the historic totality of the ways of behaviour, feeling and thinking; the means and instruments which have characterized our adjustments to our environments, through the long period of our history. In a sense, therefore, it becomes necessary to re-evaluate our history in order to appreciate our culture.

3

SOCIETY: POSITION OF WOMEN

In the scheme which I have adopted, the base of our culture has to be sought in society. But the history of our society is imperfectly known. We have, it is true, a large number of *smṛiti* texts, which consist of legal codes, fundamental laws, and social ideals. The question naturally arises as to how far those ideals were realized in practice. For example, two of the most cherished virtues of all writers were chastity and courage. As I shall cite a few erotic verses later, I may quote here the ideal conduct of a widow as prescribed by Manu (V. 157-160): 'A woman when her husband is dead', says Manu, 'may, if she chooses, emaciate her body by subsisting on flowers, roots and fruits, but she should not even take the name of a strange male. Till her death she should be forbearing, observe vows, should be celibate and should strive after that superbly eminent code of conduct that is prescribed for women devoted to their husbands. On her husband's death, if a virtuous woman abides by the rule of celibacy, she goes to heaven though she be sonless.'

But it is apparent that even in Manu's time this was an ideal not wholly attained, for elsewhere (IX, 159-160) he makes provision for *sahoḍa* and *punarbhava* sons, which respectively mean a son born to a maiden before her marriage, and the son of a remarried widow. Instances from other *smṛiti* texts

can be cited which recommend widow marriage. But there is no doubt that Manu's ideals of a widow's proper conduct was accepted by the society; till 1856, a Hindu widow could not remarry, and widow marriages are rare even now. Standards have now changed, but I feel that the survival of the Hindu society depended to a large extent on the fulfilment of such rigorous ideals of self-denial.

Like chastity in woman, the greatest virtue in man was considered to be courage and unflinching devotion to duty. The *dharma* of Kshatriyas, the *Gītā* says, is not to run away from a battle-field. But they have run away times and again and the country has fallen a prey to the conquerors. Yet, under the same conquerors, the British for example, Indian soldiers fought gallantly in two European wars, and today they are serving as the guardians of our freedom. Can it be doubted that the old ideals had always been a living tradition, and persisted through repeated failures to live up to it?

This conflict between ideal and practice is also reflected in the position of women. Manu's dictum is:

> *yatra nāryas tu pūjyante ramante tatra devatāḥ*
> *yatr-aitās tu na pūjyante sarvās tatr-āphalāḥ*
> *kriyāḥ* (III, 56).

(Where women are worshipped, gods are pleased; where they are neglected all rituals become fruitless). Later on, however, Manu puts the women absolutely under the control of their male relatives and denounces them as fickle and of uncertain character and morals (IX. 1-18), and according to the *Mīmāṁsā* rules of interpretation, which is operative here, the 'ruling' which comes later overrides the previous one. It is, therefore, possible to conclude that according to

Manu, women had an inferior status in society. That this view was widely shared and struck deep roots in Hindu thought is shown by the observation on women by the 12th century Brahmin Kalhaṇa in his *Rājataraṅgiṇī* (VI. 75) where he remarks 'since in women's hearts, there is no room for good conduct, the creator in his mercy guarded them with their rounded breasts'.

But what was the real position of women? In Sanskrit literature no trace is found of this attitude towards woman and it will be difficult to find in world's literature another poet declaring his love for his wife in the words of Jayadeva: *'Padmāvatī-charaṇa-chāraṇa-chakravartī'*, a sentiment which, though beautifully expressed, is unfortunately not susceptible to translation. The little that we know of our political history also shows quite a different picture. Prabhavatī-guptā, the daughter of the Gupta Emperor, Chandra-gupta II, controlled for a long period the destiny of the Vākāṭaka kingdom during the minority of her sons, and five generations of queens ruled over the Kara kingdom of Orissa. The date of the Kara dynasty is disputed but the queens probably ruled during the 9th and 10th centuries.

Queen Nāikādevī of Gujarat led her army and defeated Muhammad Ghuri in 1178 A.D. Many Rāshṭrakūṭa princesses are known to have acted as provincial governors and then there was the Kākatīya Queen Rudrāmbā (*c.* A.D. 1216-1293).

There is, however, one aspect of women's family life, which seems to have persisted, that is the relation between the mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law. The Buddhist *Therī-gāthās* relate the tortures which a young bride had to suffer at the hands of her

mother-in-law. The young daughters-in-law some time had their revenge, and there is a story that four of them drove their father-in-law out of the house. Another story relates how a crafty young girl caused the death of her mother-in-law by sending her to bathe in a pond infested with crocodiles. Similar sentiments are expressed by a woman in a late Jain text, the *Jñānapañcamī Kathā,* (I.45) when she declares: 'Blessed are the women who have no mother-in-law, sisters-in-law, or brothers-in-law to find their fault, for then they can live as they like'.

The cause of this distressing situation may have been the increasing popularity of the joint family system partly due to economic factors. It appears that in the Vedic days a newly married couple set up their own household, to light their own *gṛihya* fire for as the *Āśvalāyana Gṛihya Sūtra* says '*pāṇi-grahanād gṛihyaṁ paricaret*'. This is echoed by Manu (IX. 111) when he says that it is preferable for the father and sons to separate, for in a joint family there is only a single performance of the five rituals (*pañcha-mahāyajñas*) while the number of such rituals would be multiplied if the sons set up their own households. As the reasoning was based on the performance of Vedic rituals, it may be imagined that it lost its validity when such rituals were no longer observed, mainly due to the impact of Buddhism and Jainism.

In this connection, I give another illustration of typical women's conduct related by Damodara-gupta, a minister of Jayāpīḍa, the king of Kashmir (*c.* A.D. 770-800) in his work, the *Kuṭṭanīmatam.*

In the *Kuṭṭanīmatam,* one Guṇapālita, while opposing his friend Sundarasena's project of travel tried do dissuade the latter with a description of the discom-

forts of a wandering life and said, as translated by Prof. Peterson: "A man like me is naturally ashamed to press a request overmuch, but listen while I tell what befell the wayfarer.

"Clad in tattered garments, dusty and travel-sore he seeks at fall of day where he may lay his head.

" 'Mother, sister, take pity on me. Do not be so cruel. Have you not brothers and sons whom hard necessity compels to roam from home.

" 'I will not break your house down before I go away in the morning; and do good people call that a house in which wayfarers do not rest as if they were inmates of it.'

" 'I will rest here but one night as best as I can, and then go on my way. The sun is set, where else pray can I go'.

" 'With such piteous words in his mouth the wretch goes from door to door, and is upbraided by the housewives, who answer thus:—

" 'My husband is not at home. Why do you prate thus? Can you not go to the temple? He will not take a telling. How obstinate the man is?'

"And if by good luck some man yields to repeated entreaty and scornfully points out a corner of the house, saying, 'Sleep there', then the wife quarrels all night with her husband and says, 'why have you given shelter to this stranger?'

"And her neighbour, fearing in her heart that she in her turn may be asked to find food and the like for the stranger, comes and condoles with her.

" 'My dear, it is not your fault, your husband is too good natured, but keep a good look out, for there are rogues about. I speak as your friend'.

"And after presenting himself at a hundred doors,

the traveller at last gets a mess of porridge thrown to him by way of alms.

"His food is at another's will: the earth is his bed and the temple is his resting place; such is the lot of traveller; and for pillow he has a brick".

This vivid portrayal of a domestic scene is strikingly modern and does little credit to the charitable instincts of the ladies in ancient India. It shows however that the temples were the place where one would get shelter.

This imaginary episode may be taken as typical of the attitude of women towards beggars and their position in the household, and proves the *Mahabharata* adage (*Śānti*, 144.6) that the lady of the house is indeed the house itself (*gṛihiṇī gṛiham ucyate*).

4

FACETS OF SOCIETY

Here at the risk of a little digression, I would like to refer to the attitude of ancient Indians to physi cians which is strikingly modern. In almost all Sanskrit anthologies, there is a section devoted to physicians, and in a popular verse the physician is said to be worse than Yama, because while Yama takes away one's life, his brother the physician takes away one's life and property. The great mediaeval scholar Hemachandra (1088-1172 A.D.) has also passed severe strictures on physicians because they did not heed to the lamentations of poor needy patients, but like harlots had to be satisfied with their fees first. And even more curious is the remark by Śaṅkarācharya, who in explaining *pratyavāya* in the *Gita* (II.40) states *na api chikitsāvat pratyavāyaḥ,* that is *yoga* does not produce untoward repercussions as is usual in medical treatment.

But far more sweeping is Hemachandra's criticism of the morals and manners of Brāhmaṇas, merchants, women, and princes, as he unequivocally stigmatizes them in his work *Trishashṭi-śalākā-purusha-charita,* where he writes: 'A Brāhmaṇa's relatives free from animosity, a merchant who is not a cheat, a lover who is not jealous, a body free from disease, a learned man who is rich, a meritorious person free from pride, a woman who is not fickle, and a prince with good morals—these are seldom seen.' It would

indeed be difficult to find even today an honest merchant, a well-to-do scholar, or possibly a lover who is not jealous, and a body free from disease. It is, however, only fair to add that there are evidences, attesting to the honesty and integrity of Indian merchants, like the statements of Marco Polo for example. But Hemachandra was born in the Bania community, and may be relied upon not to have made such a statement unless he was sure of his facts.

But even more perceptive is Hemachandra's statement in the same work, that women in poor families bear children very frequently. Here he seems to be indirectly corroborated by an unknown Sanskrit poet whose stanza has been translated by Prof. Keith as: 'Within the house is the kitchen, there the mortar, there too the crockery, there the children, there his own study. He has put up with all that, but what can we say of the condition of the wretched householder when his wife who today or tomorrow will present him with a new addition to his family must spend there her time of labour?' This apprehension it may be noted is irrespective of the sex of the unborn child, a far cry from the *smṛiti* texts which enjoined a man to procreate as many sons as possible.

In another aspect too, the reality sometimes failed to reach the ideal, if we take into consideration a statement by Śaṅkarācharya in his famous hymn *Bhaja-Govindam,* where he bluntly states: 'A man's family is attached to him so long as he is able to earn money; otherwise no one in the house even speaks to him.' Śaṅkara was a stern realist, and always went to the core of the problem. There may be some exaggeration, for a general statement of this nature can never be applicable to each and every individual, but

it should be remembered that pious Hindus have chanted this hymn without demur for more than a thousand years.

We may add here that there are quite a few known cases of parricide in ancient India, of which the most well-known is that of the murder of Bimbisāra by his son Ajātaśatru, famous in Buddhist and Jaina annals.

It is evident that the few examples I have cited do not give a complete picture of social life in ancient India in all its aspects. I have quoted these examples to illustrate that the ideals which were preached, were not necessarily the reality, that is, more or less the modern situation confronted the ancients.

There is a doctrine in Indian philosophy known as the *sat-kārya-vāda,* which means that if the effect was not present in the material cause it could never have been produced. By adding suitable agents, one may get curd from milk, but not from water, because curd is present in milk in a latent form, but not in water. Similarly in society, the effects, good or bad, which we see today, must have been present in some form in our past, and the examples which I have cited confirm this theory.

5

CASTE SYSTEM

The most peculiar feature of the Hindu society is the caste system, and its worst aspect is the position assigned to the Śūdras. The attitude of the *smṛitiṁ* writers towards the Śūdras is well-known, and need not be repeated. It is, however, somewhat surprising to find Śaṅkarāchārya and Kumārila, both of whom probably lived in the 8th to the 9th century, referring to the admixture of castes. Śaṅkara in his commentary on the *Brahma-sūtras* (I.3.33) states that in his days *varṇas* and *āśramas* had become disorganized. Kumārila in his *Tantravārtika* (p. 580) observes that persons of all the four *varṇas* are seen as rulers of kingdoms. It is therefore easy to understand why Medhātithi, who came after Śaṅkara and Kumārila, in his commentary on Manu differed so significantly from the text; Manu (IV-61) directs a Brāhmaṇa not to stay in a country where the ruler was a Śūdra. Medhātithi explains this passage by stating that the prohibition applies only to a country where all the high functionaries such as the chief minister, commander-in-chief, etc. were Śūdras. Evidently Manu's dictum could be followed in an age when there was hardly any Śūdra king, but the march of time had rendered Manu's dictum impracticable, and Medhātithi had to twist its meaning to suit the necessities of the period which indeed was the prime duty of a commentator. The most notable example of

a Śūdra king is of Divya, who was a high official of the Pālas but Kaivarta by caste, and Kaivartas have been described by the contemporary Bengali *smṛiti* writer, Bhaṭṭa Bhavadeva, as *antyajas*, that is, belonging to the lowest caste. Divya murdered the Pāla king Mahīpāla II (A. D. 1070-1075) and having ascended the throne, managed to make his position quite secure, and after his death his brother Rudoka succeeded him. Rudoka was succeeded by his son Bhīma, and Mahīpāla's brother Rāmapāla managed to regain his throne after defeating Bhīma in a contested battle, which shows that to the end Bhīma enjoyed considerable support.

Even more striking is the leadership assumed by Prolaya Nāyaka and Vema Reḍḍi, both Śūdras, after Andhra had been conquered by the Tughluqs. The inscription which records the heroic fight of Prolaya Nāyaka in freeing his country from the *Yavanas*, states that he was a Śūdra, but a partial incarnation of Vishṇu. Vema Reḍḍi, the founder of the house of the Reḍḍis of Koṇḍaviḍu, helped Prolaya Nāyaka in this struggle for freedom, and is praised in his inscription as the primal Boar, that is, the incarnation in which Vishṇu rescued Earth after she had been inundated.

Possibly the caste regulations had become looser among the Kshatriyas, Vaiśyas and the Śūdras, than among the Brāhmaṇas, for Śaṅkara in his commentary on the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* (III.5. and IV. 5.15) restricted the right of *sannyāsa* only among the Brāhmaṇas, though according to older texts only the Śūdras were ineligible to become *sannyāsins*. However, Śaṅkara's favourite disciple Sureśvarāchārya in his *vārtika* (sub-commentary) on Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka* (III.5.1) differed from

him on this point. This is very significant, because for a disciple to differ from his *guru* is practically unheard of, and when that guru is Śaṅkarāchārya, Sureśvara's views can only be explained as based on social realities which forced Medhātithi to practically alter Manu's precept. But in the 16th century Madhusūdana Sarasvatī in his commentary on the *Gītā* (III.20) summarily rejected Sureśvarāchārya's view, and accepted Śaṅkara's opinion as infallible.

An inscription of the 3rd century records the grant by the Śālaṅkāyana king Nandivarman (*c.* A.D. 265-275) of an *agrahāra* (village) to a certain *chatuvejja* of the Rathakāra caste. *Chatuvejja* literally means 'one who has studied the four Vedas'; and it is so unusual for a non-Brāhmaṇa to have studied the sacred texts that the Editor of the *Epigraphia Indica* has remarked in a footnote (XXXI, p. 4. f.n. 1) that it is difficult to believe that Rathakāras or carpenters, even if they claimed to be Brāhmaṇas like so many other aspirants to a higher social status, could have ever enjoyed such a position in the Brāhmanical society and been specially noted for their mastery over the four Vedas as well as devotion to *tapah-svādhyāya.* It is therefore necessary to recall that Jaimini in his *Pūrvamīmāṁsā-sūtra* (VI. 1. 44-50) recommends that the Rathakāra is a member of a caste other than the three higher *varṇas,* and that he has on account of the express words in the Śruti the privilege to consecrate sacred fires with Vedic *mantras.* It is apparent, therefore, that the qualified rights which the Rathakāra enjoyed under the Śrutis were expanded by them till they established their right to study the entire Vedas, and were recognized by the king. During the course of time, however, they lost this privilege, and at present

their past accomplishment has become open to doubt, though established on the unimpeachable testimony of an inscription.

The fact seems to be that in ancient India the kings enjoyed many powers which are not known to us. For example, among Shivaji's eight ministers was the Panditrao, who supervised over religious and social matters. Several times under instructions from Shivaji and Shambhuji, the Panditrao induced the Brāhmaṇas to take back into their fold several Brāhmaṇas who had been forcibly converted to Islam, one of them being Shivaji's famous commander Raje Netaji Palkar, who had been converted by Aurangzib while a prisoner in the Mughal camp.

The Brāhmaṇas approved these reconversions only due to the intervention by Shivaji and Shambhuji, who could take a broad view of social needs. And it can hardly be doubted that ancient kings took the initiative in admitting foreign tribes into the folds of Hinduism. The Śaka Rudradāman's daughter married a Sātavāhana prince, Kalacuri Karṇa married a Hūṇa princess and gave his daughter in marriage to the Buddhist Vigrahapāla II of Bengal.

It is difficult to determine as to when the fluidity of the caste system gave way to the rigorous caste structure, but all the indications are that the process started with the advent of the Turks, when the Hindus for the first time had to face a situation in which absorption was not only impossible but conversion to an alien faith posed the greatest danger to their culture. The powerful kings who could have exercised a moderating influence were gone, and the Brāhmaṇas were left alone to devise means to protect their ancient culture. It is no wonder, therefore, that the Brāhma-

ṇas should have redefined their dogmas, and have remoulded their institutions within the steel frame of caste structure which during the succeeding centuries became more and more exact and rigid. As we have seen, Sureśvarāchārya in the 9th century differed from Śaṅkara on the caste problem, but in the 17th century Madhusūdana supported the conservative position of the Master undoubtedly because it accorded with the popular attitude of his time.

The diminishing social mobility and flexibility seems to have had a stunting effect on literature as shown by the absence of any worthwhile *kāvya* after the 13th century. Henceforth creative urge flowed along with religious revival which became during the mediaeval ages, that is roughly from the 13th to the middle of the 19th century, the only vehicle of expression. But different schools of philosophy went on producing their polemical literature, often of the highest merit, because the authors being usually monks were not seriously affected by social or political changes.

In this connection it may be noted that in ancient India the king was not only the head of the civil administration and the fountain of justice, but he was also the final controlling authority in preserving the religious and spiritual institutions. 'In short' as MM. Kane has observed 'he was also the Defender of the Faith'. (*History of Dharmaśāstra*, II, part 2, p. 965). MM. Kane has also observed that 'in modern times, the British government being neutral in matters religious or ecclesiastical, the ascetic heads of the various *maṭhas* have been in the habit of assuming to themselves powers to regulate matters affecting their followers'.

We need not go into this problem, but the reason I touch upon the subject is the growing tendency among monks to participate in politics. I do not know whether there is any Dharmaśāstra rule which allows a monk to compete with a householder, though it is open to the monks to inspire the householders to follow an ideal conduct in day-to-day life. But nothing can be more subversive to our traditional culture than for the monks to take part in politics. In a sense, State in ancient India was secular, and I cannot recall a single instance in our past history when a monk took up the duties of a politician however grave the provocation. Politics is Rājadharma, and a monk should stay as far away from it as possible.

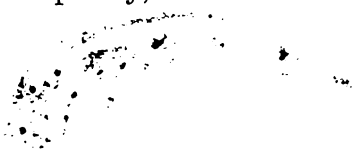
6

LITERATURE

Sanskrit and Prakrit literature can be broadly divided into religious and secular, and Sanskrit poetics was exclusively concerned with secular literature. Sanskrit poetics is a technical subject, and the critics elaborately developed various criteria for judging the merits of a *kāvya,* but for the most part it can be said that a *kāvya* had to produce *rasa,* which is usually translated as sentiment. The number of *rasas* were usually eight—*śṛiṅgāra, hāsya, karuṇā, raudra, vīra, bhayānaka, bībhatsa* and *adbhuta,* which mean respectively erotic, comic, pathetic, wrathful, heroic, fearful, loathsome, and marvellous. To these were sometimes added *śānta* or quietistic, and rarely *vātsalya,* maternal or paternal affection. It will be observed that *bhakti* or devotion was not one of the *rasas; bhakti* was actually introduced as a *rasa* in Sanskrit poetics by Bopadeva in the middle of the 13th century, but besides being a grammarian he was also the author of the *Muktāphala* and the *Harilīlāvivaraṇa* both based on the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa.* It is no wonder that though Bopadeva was born in Berar and became the protégé of Hemādri, the famous minister of the Yādavas of Devagiri, that is Daulatabad, his grammar became popular only in Bengal, the stronghold of mediaeval Vaishṇavism, particularly of the school which developed the study of *bhakti* as a *rasa.*

All the eight *rasas* were developed by Sanskrit authors, but for the purpose of finding the socio-cultural attitude of the period, it is necessary to refer to only two of them, namely *vīra-rasa* and *śṛṅgāra* or *ādi-rasa*. Throughout Sanskrit literature, the unmistakable emphasis is on manly prowess, and to a certain extent on glorification of war. The hero, usually a king, is also a great warrior. This seems to be one of the main reasons for selecting the plot from the epics or the Purāṇas, for the prowess of the epic or Puranic heroes were known all over India. Non-violence as a moral creed or principle does not seem to have had any adherent among Sanskrit authors of secular literature, or even of religious literature. People who counted were definitely not pacific by nature, and to them timidity was not a virtue except in a young maiden. In a beautiful Prakrit distich composed by the Jaina monk Hemachandra, a damsel rejoices that her lover has fallen bravely in the field; hers would have been the shame, had he returned dishonoured. Peaceful life was meant for hermits, not for kings or soldiers; of course the hermits and monks were expected to be entirely non-violent in their attitude and outlook, which is also in accord with the teachings of the Dharmaśāstras.

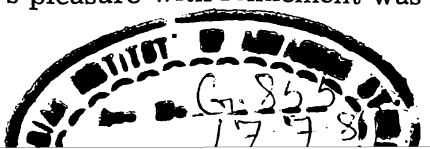
About *śṛṅgāra-rasa* it should be emphasised that, though this sentiment is rarely absent in a *kāvya*, it was seldom if ever developed to the exclusion of the other sentiments. But it has an important bearing on the attitude of the man of culture towards sex which seems to be quite modern, and is sharply different from the Puritanical attitude towards sex of 19th century England. But it should be clearly recognized that Sanskrit poetry, much less its love poetry with



its subtle nuances, is never simple or undisciplined nor meant for undisciplined enjoyment. Even in a romantic content the expression is severely classic. Sanskrit poetic theory of impersonal enjoyment ruled out personal passion and only permitted the theme not of a particular woman, but of woman as such. Moreover, amorous love not sanctified by marriage could not be the main theme of a *kāvya.*

But in depicting love a Sanskrit poetry is, as Dr. S. K. De has said, 'exasperatingly authentic and admirably outspoken. It does not talk about ideals and gates of heaven but walks on the earth and speaks of the insatiable hunger of the body and the exquisite intoxication of the senses. For these poets must have felt, as every true passionate poet feels, that passion in its essence is not idealism which looks beyond the real, but idolatry which finds ideal in the real.' (S. K. De: *Sanskrit Erotic Literature,* p. 36).

Some of these poems may offend the susceptibilities of modern Indians, particularly in translations. But standards and limits of propriety as well as of prudery are different for different people; coarseness or vulgarity must be approved or condemned only in connection with immorality or on purely artistic grounds. As Prof. Keith has said: 'There is all the world of difference between what we find in the great poets of India and the frank delight of Martial and Petronius in descriptions of amoral scenes'. (*History of Sanskrit Literature,* p. 310). Sanskrit poets did not practise the art of stimulating desire, and one must guard himself against assuming that Sanskrit or Prakrit erotic poetry is in the nature of pornography. In those days pleasure with refinement was sought for



in life, and pleasure with elegance was demanded in art.

There is a type of poems in Sanskrit and Prakrit where a stanza is a separate and complete unit of sense, expression and imagery, and presents a daintily finished picture of a single aspect of emotion or a particular situation. An example from the famous Prakrit anthology known as Hāla's *Gāthā Saptaśatī* will illustrate this type:

pasia pie, kā kuviā, suaṇu tumaṁ, para-aṇammi ko kovo ko hu paro, ṇāha tumaṁ, kīma, apuṇṇāname sattī (IV. 84) prasīda priye, kā kupitā, sutanu tvaṁ, para-jane kaḥ kopaḥ, kaḥ khalu paraḥ, natha tvam, kimiti apuṇyānāṁ me śaktiḥ.

'Be not angry dear'. 'Who is angry?' 'You oh! fair limbed one'. 'How can one be angry with a stranger?' 'Who is a stranger?'. 'You, my lord'. 'But how?' 'It is the result of my misfortune'.

This scene may have been drawn from conjugal life, but there are poems of extra-marital love. I have already spoken of the high value placed on chastity and the rigidity with which this virtue was practised. But there were exceptions also. For example, the word *puṁśachalī* ('a woman running after men') is already found in the *White Yajurveda* (XXX.22) and *Atharva-veda* (XV.2.1.ff). The *Atharva-veda* (III.25) has a very peculiar *mantra* or charm evidently meant for a lover intent on keeping an assignment. The *mantra* is: 'May the mother sleep, may the dog sleep, may the eldest in the house sleep, may her relations sleep, may all the people round them sleep'.

The same emotion is reflected in a single line quoted in Patañjali's *Mahābhāshya, 'varatanu sampravadanti kukkuṭāḥ,* 'O fair one, the cocks proclaim toge-

ther'. This line was extensively used as a riddle called *samasyā-puraṇa* where the poet had to supply the first three lines to complete the stanza, and Kshemendra in his *Auchityavichāracharchā* has quoted the stanza as completed by Kumāradāsa. Here it is as translated by Dr. S. K. De:

O fair limbed one, timid of the first union,
Leave your lover, abandon the close embrace!
The cocks unite to proclaim that here is now the break of dawn!

It is as difficult to deny the charm of the poem, as its implication of sensuous love.

Even more outspoken is the famous stanza by the poetess Śīlabhaṭṭārikā which seems to speak nostalgically of pre-marital love. However, this verse is found in most anthologies and is the first verse to be quoted in Mammaṭa's *Kāvya-prakāśa*, one of the most famous treatises on Sanskrit poetics. It begins with the well-known words *'Yaḥ kaumāra-haraḥ sa evahi varah'* and has been translated by Prof. Keith as follows: 'This is the husband who stole my maidenhood, these are the same April nights, there are the breezes whispering in the Kadamba fragrant with the budding jasmines, I myself too am the same! yet my heart yearns for the dalliance and the secret love that was ours below the ratan tree on the bank of the Reva' *'Revā-rodhasi vetasī-taru-tale chetaḥ samutkaṇṭhate,* and it is possible that Tagore had this verse in mind when he wrote *'baṇa betaser bāśīte paruk taba nayaner parashād'*.

But even this verse, which is apparently the expression of sexual love by a voluptuous woman, had its esoteric appeal. Śrī Chaitanya recited this verse as he began to dance in front of Jagannātha's chariot.

I have already given examples from Hāla's *Gāthā-Saptaśatī*. It is difficult not to concede that these 700 verses which Dr. S. K. De has described as 'little cameos of thought and feeling', contain at least a partially true picture of rural life in ancient times. Here is a family scene. The wife is angry and offended, the husband falls at her feet in penitence; but their little boy spoils the pathetic effort by seizing the opportunity of riding on papa's back, so that the incensed mother could hardly repress her laugh. Another verse depicts a young couple who have quarrelled and pretend to sleep with breathless silence and eager ear—it remains to be seen which of them will stick to the last. (I. 27)

But all the poems do not portray married love. There is one about the naughty wife who pretends to be bitten by a scorpion in order to go to the doctor who loves her. Attracted by the beauty of the flower girl, the idle village youth wanders about and shyly asks the price of the garlands although he has no intention to purchase them. The maiden who guards the field has no rest from the passer-by, who insists on asking her the way, however well he knows it. A young lady wonders why all gossip centres on her lover alone; is there only one young man in the village? The traveller seeking rest and lodging is often the subject of delicate address: 'The night is dark; my husband is away from home; the house is empty; pray come, O traveller, to guard me from robbers'. The reason for infidelity is supplied by King Hāla himself. He writes: 'In the village there are many young men; the season too is spring; she is in the full bloom of her youth: but her husband is old and infirm; with the freedom of action which

she enjoys would she become unchaste or die.' (II.97)

But whatever the sentiment, these Prakrit poems, written in an artificial and carefully studied language and metre, are remarkable for their elegance and precision, though some of the verses are somewhat conventional or even artificial.

One of the well-known principles of Indian philosophy is that not only every flow of our feelings and emotions are echoed in large tissues and muscles of our bodies, but that the movement of the mind is the root cause of the biological flow of the vital force which may be identified with mind. The external life movement is thus in unison with the inner movement of the mind, and the mental universe and life are in rhythmic accord with the vital pulsation of the physical universe. This attitude towards life which seems to have influenced ancient poets, who were invariably learned men, left no alternative between the world and monastery, between amorous love and complete renunciation. With this attitude towards life, the idea of platonic or of the so-called intellectual love could not develop. It has been said that there is only one instance in Sanskrit literature of warm friendship between man and woman in the charming picture of Patralekhā, the *tāmbula-karaṅka-vāhinī,* in Bāṇa's *Kādambarī,* though Rabindranath felt that Bāṇa had not done justice to Patralekhā's feminity. But then Bāṇa had probably personal experience of this type of friendship, for the list of his friends, which he gives at the beginning of the *Harsha-charita* contains quite a few women, which is rather surprising. However, in the *Kādambarī* there is no suggestion of any feeling warmer than friendship for Patralekhā which never develops into chivalrous

and platonic love. The Sanskrit poets regarded passion as a natural urge, and did not pretend to represent it under an ideal glamour.

There is, however, one aspect of love portrayed both in literature and art which is distinctly Indian. That was love of nature. I have spoken of the unison of mind with the physical universe as a principle of Indian philosophy, and it is for this reason that the Indians regarded man as a part of nature. This is most beautifully shown in the fourth act of the *Śākuntalam,* when the sage Kaṇva bids farewell to his adopted daughter on her way to her husband's home. It is practically impossible to translate Kalidāsa's sublime passages as the sage Kaṇva addresses the trees, the creepers, the birds and the animals whom Śakuntalā had befriended, to allow her to depart. The vivid imagery described in simple language transports the audience to the hermitage where love is no longer between man and man, or between man and woman, but a universal bond linking every creature and plant in the world. Yet Kaṇva feels the pangs of separation from Śakuntalā, but that part of a *yogī's* mind which is constantly contemplative awakens him to his feeling and he exclaims: 'Here am I a hermit, and Śakuntalā is my adopted daughter; if I feel so keenly her separation how much deeper must be the sorrow of the householders when their daughters depart to join their husbands.' Thus personal sorrow is transmuted to compassion for the inevitable suffering of man.

In the love of Dushyanta and Śakuntalā, Kālidāsa has portrayed ideal love. It begins as physical love; Dushyanta is charmed by Śakuntalā scantily dressed in tree barks. This love is cursed and Śakuntalā is

practically banished and retires to the hermitage of Marīci. There Dushyanta finds her at last dressed in drab clothes, emaciated by the performance of austere vows, her long locks tied into one simple plait (as befits a woman whose husband is absent) but she appears as personified purity having passed through the most cruel ordeals. Then they reunite; the exuberant passion for physical union is now replaced by real love which transcends the bonds of sexual attraction.

This was the ideal, but it needed a Kālidāsa to conceive and portray it.

7

ART

If there was a secular literature in ancent India, art and architecture were the handmaidens of religion. It is significant that the same is true for the area which came under the direct impact of Indian culture, namely, South East Asia. Apparently the kings were more intent on establishing permanent abodes for their deities, than for themselves. Thus Indian art is in a true sense religious art. The classical art of Europe is also largely motivated by religious imagery, but there is a qualitative difference between the two. In India the emphasis was on realization of the ideal, while in Europe it was on idealization of the real. Hellenism established the dignity of human personality, and it is human beauty that Greek art personified. In India the quest was towards celestial beauty, representation of divinity in the image of man. Religious faith or metaphysical anguish, the whole gamut of meditation, prayer and union with god is carved into universal language. Even when the form is stylized, motivation is apparent. One has only to compare the Assyrian lions with the lions of the Asokan pillar. The Assyrian lions are ferocious beasts, mighty symbols of unconquerable power. The Asokan lions are majestic, but their strength fully under control, representing inner strength and nobility.

This aspect of Indian art has been very well ex-

pressed by the great French scholar René Grousset who writes:

'The other characteristic of Indian sculpture is an anthropomorphism, a representation of divinity in the image of man, equal to that of Hellas. But in this land of luxuriant growth it was translated into works of a cosmic grandeur which no Zeus ever reached. In this respect, as shown by the Shivaite sculpture of the Deccan from the ninth to the sixteenth century, India appears to us a kind of tropical Greece, fed by all the sap of an over-fertile soil, and at the same time inspiring her artists with unbridled visions of the genesis of the gods. The reliefs of the rock-temples of Ellora and Elephanta, contemporary with the era of Charlemagne in Europe, prove this. Only the Michael Angelo of the Sistine Chapel, or Rodin, can stand comparison. The religion which inspired these reliefs was that of Shiva, conceived as a symbol of the cosmic force, and incarnation of Nature, the eternal creator and destroyer. Yet, a classical austerity is everywhere present. From the very entrance, it governs the formidable elephant-battles with which the frieze seems to support the temple-mountain. Even in the cosmic dance, or as the god of terror, Shiva's body is simple and pure of line, the smooth, chaste and gentle nude which declining Buddhism had handed on to Shivaism.

'Like the Seven-Pagodas, the Kailasa of Ellora offers us admirable pageants, as for example that of the titan Ravana shaking the mountain on which Shiva and the Goddess Parvati are enthroned: the subterranean violence of the titan, the serenity of the god as he crushes him with a gesture, the wholly feminine emotion of the goddess, who clings dis-

tractedly to her spouse, show a power of breadth and vision which Greek art never knew, and for whose like we can only turn once again to the Sistine Chapel. Such is the power of that Indian classicism that it even succeeds in embracing the strangest conventions of Shivaite iconography; for example, in the cosmic dance the god is represented with four arms. Disconcertingly repellent at first sight, this multiplicity of arms soon accords so well with the requirements of an internal law, that the divine dancer appears in perfect harmony with his dreadful joy.

'This rhythmic grace which India pitted against her super-abundance did not last long. In the temples of the Tamils it succumbed to the superfluity of floral, animal or anthropomorphic decoration that loaded the great pyramid with an inextricable tangle of designs, so that it became fretted stone in which not an inch was wasted.

'Finally, at the zenith of the Middle Ages, India gave us in the frescoes of the Buddhist grottoes of Ajanta, immortal painting. These were huge compositions in which the animal-painters of the fifth to seventh centuries have fixed for us all the scenes of jungle life, with gestures and facial expressions of the elephant and its young, the buffalo and the antelope, or the various species of monkeys. The same naturalism animated the lovely human bodies playing in the sub-tropical light—all those feminine studies with floral and, as they have been called, Botticellian gestures. But the Indian idyll and the jungle flowers are there only to emphasize more strongly the representation of the divine figures—the *bodhisattva*—in which the later Buddhist ideal was incarnate. These supernatural apparitions, at Ajanta, count among the

most moving that have ever come within human vision. The mind of the Western observer turns to Leonardo da Vinci's moving 'compositions for the Last Supper'. (Rene Grousset: *The Sum of History* pp. 106-07).

In India painting and sculpture were intimately related to dancing. Dancing consisted of the harmonious and graceful movement of the different parts of the body. Sometimes entire stories were illustrated by dancing and the various seasons were described by various types of rhythmic motion. The chief aim of dancing was to manifest the rhythmic flow of life which was also true for the visual arts. Therefore to an Indian artist a static figure was really a frozen moment in a concrete flow of motion. According to Indian mythology the universe emanated from the dance of Lord Narayana on the waves of the great ocean at the beginning of creation, and the phenomenal world dissolved into cosmic night when Nataraja Siva began to dance. As Dr. S. N. Das Gupta has said: 'The movement of dance thus represents in itself the rhythmic motion leading to creation and the opposite rhythm of dissolution. From this point of view the whole universe may be regarded in any of the static attitudes as congealed or sliced off states of rhythmic motion of dance... There is a two-fold dance in the universe; the rhythmic flow of inner life in all living beings and plants and even in hills and dales, and the external rhythmic flow in biological life as manifested in their corporeal expressions. Inner life of each man was in harmony with the inner life of nature and the corporeal life of nature was also in harmony with the corporeal life

of man. It was the business of the artist, the seer, and the poet to discover this harmony and to represent it in their art and philosophy'. (*Fundamentals of Indian Art,* pp. 62-63).

8

RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY

Through the medium of art one can reach the summit of Indian culture, expressed in religion and philosophy. Of late there has been a tendency to question the propriety of describing Indian culture as spiritual. In what sense and to what extent is this designation true? Did not India possess a great material culture with as much emphasis on *artha* and *kāma* as on *dharma* and *moksha*? To this I would like to point out that each nation has made its distinct contribution to world culture and is known under a particular label which depends on the nature of its field of most significant contribution. Thus Greece is associated with human dignity, Rome with political organization, and in the modern world France for liberty and England for liberal democracy. These labels are not merely of convenience but express the central emphasis of their national aspirations. In the same way the Indians were above everything religious, and their main contribution to the pool of world culture has been in the realm of metaphysical ideas. As for the *purushārthas*, Vātsyāyana himself declares at the beginning of the *Kāmasūtra* (I.2-14-17): 'When all three-*dharma*, *artha* and *kāma* come together, the former is better than the one which follows it; that is *dharma* is better than *artha* and *artha* is better than *kāma*.' Only exception to this general rule recommended by Vātsyāyana is that *artha*

should always be the first concern of the king, because sovereign power depends on the strength of the treasury, and *kāma* being the occupation of public women, they should prefer it to the other two, for earning money.

It is also remarkable that the commentary on the *Kāma-sūtra* discovered so far, namely the *Jayamaṅgalā* of Yaśodhara, was written during the 13th century. Apparently, till then the work could have had a restricted circulation only among those who could understand the aphorisms, not a very easy task.

Today our spiritual heritage—if I may use the word—has become vital for the preservation of our identity as a nation. For the rest we are entirely dependent on the west, from where we are receiving all our ideas—political, social, economic and even literary and artistic. For advance in science and technology as for improvement in our standard of living we rely entirely upon the western countries. Let us not, therefore, impulsively fritter away our rich inheritance from the past, which has stood the challenge of time. It is true what Swāmī Vivekānanda has said, that hungry stomach needs rice, not religion. But it is hoped that one day, and not in the too distant future, hunger will be banished from this ancient land, and then the people will again turn to religion for spiritual sustenance. As Andre Malarux has said: 'The principal problem of the end of the century will be religious problem' and he has referred to 'the discovery of what true Hindu thought is.' (*Partisan Review, Spring* 1955, p. 170, quoted by S. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahma-Sūtra,* Preface, p. 7).

Indian philosophy is religious, that is, inextricably tied up with religion, except in isolated in-

stances like the Lokāyata system. There are however well demarcated categories of their identification. Religion is mainly concerned with rituals and mythology, while philosophy, which derives its inspiration from mystic realization of truth, consists of metaphysics and epistemology. Thus though based on meditation philosophy expresses itself through disputation while religion is dogmatic, very real to the believer, but very baffling to the unbeliever.

Religion is now studied from various points of view, namely, those of history, sociology, anthropology, psychology and even as a factor of economic development. But it seems to me pertinent to judge any doctrine in the sense in which the founder himself understood it. Buddha, for example, understood his teaching not as a distant ideal for humanity, obedience to which was impossible, nor as a mystical poetic fancy wherewith he captivated his listeners. He, and others who came later, understood their teachings as a real thing and a thing which would save humanity.

There undoubtedly have been mistakes, but as Rabindranath has pointed out: 'To go through the history of the development of science is to go through the maze of mistakes it made current at different times. Yet no one really believes that science is the one perfect mode of disseminating mistakes.' (*Sādhanā,* p. 48). Therefore, while studying the essence of religion, it is improvident to waste time in going through the aberrations that were committed in the name of religion. The progressive ascertainment of truth is the important thing to remember in the history of science, not its innumerable mistakes. And so also in religion, one should study the

rituals. There is no doubt, however, that Buddha's teachings practically ended the era of Vedic ritualistic religion. Of course Vedic sacrifices were performed by kings, both small and big, the last recorded Aśvamedha being performed by Savai Jaysingh of Amber in the 18th century.

Buddha's teachings being directed against ritualism, there was very little scope for rituals in Buddhism. A very well-known verse, which I think is first found in the *Mahāvastu-avadāna* is ascribed to Sāriputta, the direct disciple of Buddha. In answer to a question by Moggalāyana, who was also initiated by Buddha, Sāriputta said:

ye dharmā hetu-prabhavā hetuṁ teshāṁ
tathāgato āha
teshāṁ cha yo nirodha evaṁ vādī mahā-śramaṇaḥ
Of those things which spring from cause,
The cause has been told by Tathāgata,
And their suppression likewise,
The great *Śramaṇa* has revealed.

Since action produces results, and the goal is to be free from all states of existence, one should refrain from performing any action.

Actually Buddha taught rationality and condemned faith in tradition and authority. He advised his disciples to trust in their own reasons and believe in what commended itself to their own reason. This rational attitude was necessary to destroy the authority of the Vedas, but later the Buddhists got into some difficulty, when the *Pūrva Mīmāṁsā* school posed the question, as to the authority and validity of Buddha's teachings and opinions; Buddha after all was a man, so why should anyone accept his teaching

as truth? It was difficult for the Buddhists to wriggle out of this position.

However, in the meantime Buddhism had undergone a change due to the enunciation of Mādhyamika philosophy probably in the 1st century A.D. The ideal of *arhat* was replaced by *bodhisattva.* In simple terms it may be said that *arhat*-hood aimed at individual liberation, while the new school aimed at universal liberation. The *Bodhisattva* shuns even *nirvāṇa,* the goal of the *arhat,* preferring to toil for the uplift of humanity, on whom he showers his grace and compassion. Thus a deep devotional element took hold of Buddhism, and ritualistic worship of *Bodhisattva* began; this was *bodhicharyā,* the worship of Buddhas and *Bodhisattvas.* The devotees confessed their sins to them and prayed for their active help. There was, however, one difference between Buddhist worship and Hindu worship of images. The Buddhas were but the realized ideal of the devotee, for the Mahāyānists preached the positive ideal of the unity of all beings with Buddha; this principle led to the *Tāntrik* form of worship, for the basic principle of *Tantra* is the identification of the devotee with the deity, wherefore *Tantra* was able to wander into the fold of Brahmanical religion as the ritualistic counterpart of *Advaita-vedānta.*

Unfortunately, however, in course of time, *Tāntrik* practices degenerated and Buddhism practically got identified with a set of debased rituals, if anything, worse than the type against which Buddha had preached.

Later, however, almost all the Hindu sects accepted *Tantra,* in one form or another, till by the 19th century, debased models of *Tāntrik* worship

brought a part of Hinduism practically to the level of decadent Buddhism.

The real blow to Buddhism was dealt at a higher intellectual level by two persons, Kumārila and Śaṅkara, who were probably near contemporaries and lived during the late 8th and the early 9th centuries. They revived the school of *Pūrva-mīmāṁsā* and *Uttara-mīmāṁsā* or Vedānta. The *Pūrva-mīmāṁsa* deals with Vedic rituals, but its main contribution has been its methods of interpretation, which was followed even by the British Indian High Courts in determining points of Hindu Law.

Kumārila advocated the Vedic rituals, but Śaṅkara, while tacitly approving the efficacy of Vedic rituals is said to have introduced the Panchāyatana mode of image worship. According to this method, a devotee took the images of five gods, namely, Vishṇu, Śiva, Śakti, Gaṇeśa and Sūrya or Kārttikeya and placing his chosen deity in the centre placed the other four in the four corners of an imaginary square. It was obviously an attempt to harmonize the different image worshipping sects.

Śaṅkara's attempt in this direction is also obvious from the large number of *stotras* or devotional hymns which are ascribed to him on justifiable grounds, and it is significant that practically all the great temples are dated after Śaṅkara.

Image worship is very old and can be traced to Pāṇini (V.3.99) from whose statement it is clear that images of gods were made for sale and worship. But though image worship was tolerated, it is apparent that it was looked down upon, for Manu (III. 152) has prescribed that the *devalakas* along with healers, meatsellers, and those living by (improper)

trades should be avoided at rites performed in honour of gods, and *pitṛis*, that is, Vedic ceremonies, and *śrāddhas:* and *devalaka* has been explained by all commentators as one who maintained himself by serving, that is worshipping, an image.

Another image-worshipping sect had to suffer from this attitude towards image worship. This was the Pañcharātra sect. The date of the earliest Pañcharātra text would be about the 8th century, but their beginning which is quite obscure, must be dated to a much earlier period. By the time of Śaṅkara the Pañcharātrins had developed a school of philosophy, which Śaṅkara combated. One of the reasons may have been that the Pañcharātrins were a non-Vedic sect, as indeed early image worshippers are likely to have been. The attitude of the orthodox society towards the Pañcharātrins was for a long time somewhat equivocal, and while some Purāṇas approve of them others are fanatically against them.

The Pañcharātrins were formally elevated to the orthodox fold by Rāmānuja (A.D. 1017-1137). Rāmānuja's spiritual predecessor Yāmunāchārya had attempted the fusion of Pañcharātra and the doctrine of the Āḷvārs, but it was Rāmānuja who completed the process by uniting the two schools as well as that of Vedānta. From that time Pañcharātra mode of worship has been accepted by practically all Vaishṇava schools, and though its influence on Śaivism was not as marked as that on Vaishṇavism, there is evidence of Śaiva Pañcharātra also.

Though image worship became in time the main manifestation of Hindu religion, it is possible that the top intellectuals accepted it somewhat apologetically and Rammohun Roy could cite verses from authori-

tative texts which denounced image worship. It was also quite unusual for a learned Brāhmaṇa to accept the position of a temple priest. To the common man, however, the idol is not an aid to meditation, but God Himself.

From the Vedic times onwards the Hindus have worshipped multiple deities, and the Buddhists and the Jains also have large pantheons. Scholars usually give a special position to Vishṇu and Śiva and group the rest as 'cult gods' or 'minor deities'. One justification of this schematic arrangement is that Śiva and Vishṇu have by far the largest followers and their worship can be traced to antiquity and even in the Vedas. It seems to me, however, that Hinduism would not have been what it is, without the large number of cult deities, which correctly reflect the pantheistic attitude inherent in Hinduism.

Along with the rituals, the mythologies sustained the faithful and provided a source of perennial inspiration for the vast masses. The metaphysical subtleties of the various systems of philosophies written in elegant Sanskrit would hardly have any appeal for the masses. Hence the philosophical truths had to be expressed at levels of explanation of fables and here the Purāṇas usually written in very simple language were extremely useful. For those who did not understand Sanskrit at all, there were the Paurāṇikas, people who explained the Purāṇic stories with various embellishments; they almost formed an institution which survived till recent times.

The Śūdras, women, and the so-called Brāhmaṇas had no right to study the Vedas, but could attain *moksha* or liberation by listening to the Purāṇas and the *Mahābhārata*, and even Śaṅkara agreed to this

arrangement with reference to the Śūdras (*Brahmasūtra,* 1.3.38). The fact was overlooked that the Purāṇas contain many passages from the Upaṇishads and that the *Mahābhārata* contains the *Gītā,* which is said to be an epitome of all the Upaṇishads.

Some of the Purāṇas were extremely liberal. For example the *Bhavishya-purāṇa* says that 'Devī (Durgā) should be worshipped in all places, cities, houses, villages and forests by Brāhmaṇas, Kshatriyas, Kings, Vaiśyas, Śūdras, who are full of devotion, who have taken a bath and are cheerful and jolly, by *mlechchhas* and other men and women.' Elsewhere the same Purāṇa reiterates that 'Durgā is worshipped by various groups of *mlechchhas,* by *dasyus* (criminal tribes), by people from Aṅga, Vaṅga, and Kaliṅga, by Kinnaras, Barbaras, and Śakas'. Later, mediaeval writers restricted the right of the *mlechchhas* to offering animals and wine in honour of the Devī, but the Śūdras retained the right to perform *japa, homa,* or *pūjā* with *mantras* through a Brāhmaṇa. Hence MM. Kane has remarked *(History of Dharmaśastra,* V, p. 157): 'Durgāpūjā is very cosmopolitan in character'.

The pantheistic ideal overflows from religion into literature and art. For example the central motif of Naṭaraja or Dancing Śiva is thus explained in Tirumular's *Tirumantram*:

His form is everywhere; all pervading is his Śiva Śakti
Chidambaram is everywhere, everywhere His dance:
As Śiva is all and omnipresent,
Everywhere is Śiva's gracious dance made manifest.

Śiva is a destroyer and loves the burning ground. But what does He destroy? He destroys the fetters that bind each separate soul. The burning ground where Śiva dances is the heart of His Lovers laid waste and desolate; He burns their ego and illusion and accumulated result of past deeds are burnt away.

The conception of cosmic dance is also current among the Śāktas, particularly in Bengal, but there the Mother Kālī, conceived as Śiva's consort, is the deity; primordial maleness Śiva is also Kāla or Mahākāla, that is Eternal Time; primordial femaleness Kālī or Mahākālī is the energy forever revealing Herself in Her cosmic dance; for, rhythm, not stability, is the vital principle of life and destruction is at the beginning of all creation.

The other notable dance in our mythology is the esoteric *rāsa* dance expressed through sex symbols. Where concentrated emotion propels a man towards spiritual height, the ethic is beauty, and sex is polarized into two pure unconditioned beings, of which the female represents the devotee and the male is Kṛishṇa. The devotee, even if he is a male, conceives himself as a female and Kṛishṇa as the lover. The *Taittirīya Upanishad* says that the world has emanated from the *ānanda* or bliss aspect of Brahman. To enjoy the manifestation of bliss, Kṛishṇa, who is bliss itself, dances the mystic *rāsa* dance and shares His joy with his devotees, represented by the milkmaids of Vṛindāvana. Milkmaids are many, but Kṛishṇa is the only male, yet each milkmaid feels that Kṛishṇa is dancing with her. He is wherever every thought except that of Kṛishṇa has been cast out of the heart, for it is through the obliteration of the inhibitions and cravings of the lower planes of phy-

sical desire, that the dynamic energy of the highest spiritual level is rendered available. Then Kṛishṇa embraces the devotee in rapturous love, and their mystic dance awakens the soul till the sense, forms, and name are purged by the ecstasy of divine love, and Kṛishṇa appears as the ultimate *rasa*. As the *Taittirīya Upanishad* says: 'Verily *rasa* is He (Himself), this (*jīva*) by obtaining *rasa* becomes blissful.'

The mythologies lead on to the threshold of mystic contemplation on which philosophy is based. Mysticism may be said to be a mode of mentation in which consciousness ceases to work in symbolic subconscious representations but apprehends by means of intuitive realization. It is a state which can be reached by proper discipline under competent guidance, but cannot be comprehended by means of empirical data. As Śrī Rāmakrishṇa Paramahaṁsa used to say, the taste of a particular food cannot be explained to a person who has not eaten it.

The mystic school par excellence is the Yoga, of which Patañjali wrote the philosophy in his celebrated *Yoga-sūtra*. Patañjali's date is uncertain, and we need not discuss the problem of his date here. But the practice of Yoga is very ancient.

Yoga practice is clearly referred to in *Kaṭha* (2.3.11) and the *Śvetāśvatara* (2.11) *Upaṇishads* and the former defines it as follows:—

Tāṁ Yogam iti manyante sthirām
indriyadhāraṇām
This they consider as Yoga
The firm holding back of the senses
Then one becomes undistracted
Yoga, truly, is the origin and the end.
(Translation by R. E. Hume, The Thirteen Prin-

cipal Upanishads, p. 360).

Buddha himself learnt Yoga from two teachers, namely, Āḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta. Hence it is evident that Yoga technique was evolved long before Buddha's time, that is before the 5th century B.C. Thus since ancient times some sort of Yoga practice has been considered obligatory for every novitiate in every school of religion and philosophy. For, the practice of Yoga bestows on a person the peculiar power to turn the mind loose within determined limits, or lead to the cessation of mental activities, which are the bases of all meditations.

The practice of Yoga is now popular both in India and in many foreign countries. But the Yoga which is usually taught is a type of physical exercise, which is associated with the Yoga of meditation, yet not the same thing. These beneficial physical exercises were also invented and practised by the ancient Yogīs to keep themselves physically fit. The Yogīs used to live in secluded places where no medical help was available if they fell sick; moreover, good health is a necessity for those who practise Yoga meditation. Hence the Yogīs not only performed these exercises but also took care to eat particular food which was most conducive towards the maintenance of good health. But all these were a means to an end, not the end itself.

The Yoga philosophy is allied to Sāṅkhya philosophy and the two are usually grouped together, in spite of their obvious difference; thus the two teachers who taught Buddha the Yoga technique are known to have been Sāṅkhya teachers.

The second group is the Nyāya-Vaiśeshika school of philosophy. The Vaiśeshika is a combination of

complete atomism in the realm of matter with pure monadology in the realm of mind, and has been described as 'a combination of the physics of Lucretius with the metaphysics of Leibnitz'. Nyāya, as the name implies, is primarily concerned with logic and epistemology, though its ultimate object like that of other schools of Indian philosophy, was liberation, which in the case of Nyāya and Vaiśeshika meant cessation of all pain. During the mediaeval ages, however, Gaṅgeśa Upādhyāya of Mithilā started a new school of Nyāya, known as Navya-Nyāya, and later Navadvīpa in West Bengal became its main centre of study. Navya-Nyāya developed the theory of knowledge into a formal logic of relations between concepts, terms, and propositions. There is no doubt about the intellectual brilliance of the great exponents of Navya-Nyāya; it is equally true that the pure intellectual exercise of a somewhat arid character had a baneful effect on the development of metaphysics, which seems to have lost its vigour since Navya-Nyāya became popular. But possibly this was inevitable.

The other group consisted of the two Mīmāṁsā schools, the Pūrva and the Uttara. The Pūrva-mīmāṁsā, or the Mīmāṁsā school proper, was concerned with the *Karma-kāṇḍa* or the ritualistic side of the Vedas. I have already spoken about the importance of the Mīmāṁsā rules of interpretation; these were formulated to harmonize the complicated Vedic precepts about rituals, though it has been said that Mīmāṁsā cited the conflicting rules of Vedic rituals, because those were common knowledge all over India. Whatever it may have been Mīmāṁsā sought to supply the epistemological basis of Vedic ritualism.

We shall give an example of the manner in which a Mīmāṁsā rule of interpretation may be used as a maxim by a modern student of history by slightly changing the connotation of the words. In the *Śloka-vārtika,* Kumārila states:

Sarva-vijñāna-vishayaṁ idaṁ tāvat parīkshyatāṁ
pramāṇatv-āpramaṇatve svataḥ kiṁ parato 'thavā

For Mīmāṁsā this verse means: 'In regard to all cognitions this has to be considered—is validity or invalidity inherent in them or extraneous.'

It is, however, possible to render this verse as: 'In all scientific inquiry, one should check whether the evidence is direct or indirect.'

The last of the great six schools of orthodox philosophy is the Uttara Mīmāṁsā, better known as the Vedānta. Most of the great Vaishṇava sects and some of the Śaiva sects have accepted the Vedānta texts as authoritative, hence its popularity. As a matter of fact, it would probably be not too great an exaggeration to say that modern Hinduism is Vedantism in various forms.

Vedānta is not a unified doctrine, but is divided into various schools. To understand the cause of their difference it is necessary to discuss the nature of the Vedānta texts. Vedānta means the end of the Vedas, that is the Upanishads which are appended at the end of each Veda with the exception of Īśa, which is a part of the *Vājasaneyī saṁhitā* of White Yajur-Veda. Traditionally there are 108 Upanishads, though more have been found. But Śaṅkara definitely commented only on 9 Upanishads, namely, *Īśa, Kena, Kaṭha, Praśna, Muṇḍaka, Bṛihadāraṇyaka, Chhāndogya, Taittirīya* and *Aitareya.* The commentaries on the *Śvetāśvatara* and the *Māṇḍukya* ascribed to Śaṅkara,

have been rejected by scholars. But the *Śvetāsvatara* is also considered to be a major Upanishad, and if Śaṅkara did not comment on it, he quoted from it in his other works. Śaṅkara's commentary on Gauḍapāda's *Māṇḍukyakārikā* is genuine, and therefore these 11 Upanishads are known as the major or principal Upanishads.

The contents of the Upanishads are eternal, uncreated and indestructible in the sense that the physical laws, such as the law of gravitation existed before Newton discovered it, and will continue to exist and operate, even if due to some calamity men were to forget it. Of course every word of the Vedas has the same quality even according to the followers of Vedānta, but they are really concerned with the Upanishads, which are known as the *Jñāna-kāṇḍa* as opposed to the *Karma-kāṇḍa* or the *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Saṁhitās,* and the doctrine of the two schools of *Mīmāṁsā* are contradictory. The Pūrva-mīmāṁsā is resigned to an endless circle of births and deaths while the Vedānta prescribes the means of liberation from this chain of human bondage.

The teachings of the Upanishads were compressed into about 900 *sūtras* or aphorisms by Bādarāyaṇa, who is traditionally identified with Vyāsa, the author of the *Mahābhārata;* Vyāsa is also credited with having given the Vedas its present arrangement. Scholars, however, do not accept these identifications, though it does not involve any inherent improbability. Moreover, Pāṇini mentions a *Bhikshu-sūtra* by one Pārāśarya, that is, son of Parāśara. Vyāsa too was the son of Parāśara, and it is within the bounds of probability that Pāṇini was mentioning the Sūtras of Bādarāyaṇa which are now known as *Brahma-*

sūtra, Vedānta-sūtra, or *Vyāsa-sūtra.* There are, however, difficulties in identifying the *Bhikshu-sūtra* with the *Brahma-sūtra,* though the probability cannot be ignored. If the two texts are taken to be identical, then, it may be held that the *Brahma-sūtra* was pre-Paṇinian. Otherwise it becomes a problem to determine its date which need not be discussed here.

The third authoritative text of the Vedānta school is the *Gītā* or the *Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā,* which records the dialogue between Kṛishṇa and Arjuna before the battle of Kurukshetra began. Traditionally it is accepted as a part of the epic, and no manuscript of the epic has yet been discovered without the *Gītā.* But the manuscripts of the *Mahābhārata* are rather late, the earliest being of the 8th century. Most scholars, however, do not believe that it is a part of the *Mahābhārata,* and few of them have attempted to discover what they call 'the original Gītā'. With great respect to these scholars, I would like to point out, however, that for a proper understanding of Vedānta, the *Gītā* must be studied in the manner in which the founders of the system wanted us to study it, namely, a work of 700 verses, forming an integral part of the *Mahābhārata* and recording the dialogue between Kṛishṇa and Arjuna, Kṛishṇa being an incarnation of the Supreme Reality.

The principal Upanishads, with the *Brahma-sūtra* and *Gītā* have formed the famous three *prasthānas,* or sources of the Vedānta schools, since Śaṅkara wrote his commentaries on these texts to establish his views.

Vedānta, as we know it, that is, modern Vedānta, starts with Śaṅkarāchārya (*c.* 788-820 A.D.) though the system is much older. All the ideas of the

Vedānta schools must be traceable to the Upanishads, otherwise they would not be authoritative. Even the opinions of the great Āchāryas can be challenged, if these are not in conformity with the ideas of the Upanishads. Actually, none of the Āchāryas claimed to have preached a new faith, and there is historical evidence to prove that they were right. To take, for example, the Advaita-vāda, the main idea of Advaita-vāda is embedded in the Upanishads, and I think that it may be said that so far as the Upanishads are concerned, Śaṅkara has revealed the secret of their heart, and the same may almost be said for the *Gītā*. On the *Brahma-sūtra,* opinions differ as to the correctness of Śaṅkara's commentary. But if it is held that Śaṅkara's interpretation of the Upanishads is basically correct, then his interpretation of the *Brahma-sūtra* too must be correct, for the latter is merely an epitome of the Upanishads. For, each *sūtra* has at its basis certain passages from the Upanishads which are known as the *Vishayavākyas*. The selection of the *Vishayavākyas* call for high intellectual and scholarly attainments and here the Āchāryas differed, and Śaṅkara has been accused of using irrelevant *Vishaya-vākyas*. But this is a problem which only another Śaṅkara can solve.

Śaṅkara's school of philosophy is known as Advaita-vāda or non-dualism, and today the term Vedānta is practically used as a synonym for Advaita-vāda. But not only is this identification wrong, but taken together the Vaishṇava and the Śaiva Vedānta schools can almost certainly claim a larger following than Śaṅkara. The principal Vaishṇava Vedānta schools are those of Rāmānuja, Nimbārka, Madhva, Vallabha and Chaitanya, while the principal Śaiva

Vedānta school is of Śrīkaṇṭha. Apart from the metaphysical points on which all these schools of thought differed from Śaṅkara, a cardinal point of difference was the identification of Brahman with Vishṇu or Kṛishṇa by the Vaishṇavas and with Śiva by the Śaivas. It has therefore been sometimes suggested that these theistic systems of philosophy were based on a monotheistic religion, or a close imitation of monotheism. It is difficult to support this view, if by monotheism one has Judaism, Christianity or Islam in view. There was sectarian rivalry among the Śaivas and Vaishṇavas, which, however, does not form the only criterion of monotheism. It is doubtful if the Hindu mind ever apprehended the true ideals of monotheism, Śaṅkara's non-dualism being entirely different from it, and quite unrelated to it. Hinduism is essentially pantheistic, and none of the cults could shake the Hindus out of their way of thinking. Nor indeed was it even theoretically possible; for example the *Aitareya Upanishad* (III.5.3) states: 'He is Brahma; he is Indra, he is Prajāpati (he is) all these gods; and these five gross elements, namely earth, wind, space, water, light; these things and those which are mingled of the fine (*kshudra*) as it were; origins (*bīja*) of one sort and another; those born from an egg, and those born from a womb, and those born from sweat, and those born from a sprout, horses, cows, persons, elephants; whatever breathing thing there is here—whether moving or flying, and what is stationary. All this is guided by intelligence, is based in intelligence. The world is guided by intelligence. The basis is intelligence. Brahman is intelligence'. (*prajñānaṁ Brahma*).

When I spoke about the Hindu mind and mono-

theism, I had Rammohun Roy in mind. He was the first among Brāhmaṇa intellectuals to have studied the Christian and the Muslim scriptures. But he was a confirmed follower of Śaṅkara and non-dualism, as he has many times acknowledged in his work. The result was that instead of being influenced by these two works Rammohun attempted to reform them to bring them within the fold of his non-dualistic philosophy. That was the purport of his Persian work called the *Tuhfat-ul-muwahhidin* or *'A Gift to the Monotheists'*, which predictably the monotheists were unable to accept. Among Christians Rammohun preached Unitarianism, for being a non-dualist he could not accept the Christian dogma of Trinity.

It is true that when advocating the abolition of image worship, Rammohun cited the example of the Christians and Muslims, but he also cited the Sikhs as an example of non-image worshippers. And he quoted several verses from Sanskrit texts denigrating image worship. For it is really difficult to support image worship if one takes his stand on Vedas, Upanishads, *Brahma-sūtra* and the *Gītā*, as Rammohun did. To find authority for image worship, one has to rely mainly on the Purāṇas, and the Pañcharātra texts, apart of course from tradition, which in these matters is often of decisive importance. Hindus have been worshipping images for more than two thousand years, and for the last thousand years or more images have been the only object of worship. Not only art and architecture, but our vast literature both in Sanskrit and in modern languages have drawn upon the epics and the Purāṇas for their ideas, ideals, and similes. Even Rabindranāth, who in his private life did not worship images, freely wrote about Naṭarāja,

Kṛishṇa and other deities. Actually, it is not possible to understand much of his writings without a working knowledge of Hindu mythology on which image worship is based. This may be called the compulsions of an idolatrous culture, for that is the characteristic feature of Hinduism though there are non-idolatrous sects within its fold.

An outstanding effect of image worship has been the growth and development of a class of devotional literature. Though devotional hymns are not absent in the Vedas, and *bhakti* as an essential article of faith is demanded in the *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad,* the *Gītā* may said to be the earliest *bhakti* text. Actually of the three *prasthānas* of the Vedānta, the *Upanishads* are known as the *Jñāna-prasthāna,* the *Brahma-sūtras* as the *Nyāya-prasthāna* and the *Gītā* as the *Bhakti-prasthāna.*

The *Gītā* describes four paths, *Karma-yoga, Rāja-yoga, Jñāna-yoga* and *Bhakti-yoga* with main emphasis on the last two, and ends with absolute reliance on *bhakti* alone. As the *Karma-yoga* of the *Gītā* is now very highly valued, it is necessary to point out that any action without regard to its purpose is not *karma;* for, the act performed must be without any desire to enjoy its result which is a far cry from the relentless pursuit after fresh fields of activities to maintain one's prominence in public life. In the third chapter at the beginning of *Karma-yoga* (verse 4) Kṛishṇa says 'freedom from activity is never achieved by abstaining from action. Nobody can become perfect by merely ceasing to act.' It is clear, however, that freedom from activity is the ideal, which is made clear at the end in chapter 18 (verse 49) where he says: 'When a man has achieved non-attachment, self-mastery and

freedom from desire through renunciation, he attains the perfect state of non-action'. This indeed is the goal, and is made clearer by another verse in chapter 4 where he says: 'He who sees the inaction that is in action, and the action that is in inaction, is the wisest amongst men, and has reached the end of *karma*'. The suitability of different paths for different types of men is stated in the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* (XI. 20.6-8) where Kṛishṇa tells Uddhava: 'Desiring the welfare of mankind I have taught three kinds of *yoga*, namely, *jñana, karma,* and *bhakti. Jñāna-yoga* has been taught for those whose minds have been completely withdrawn from sense objects. *Karma-yoga* is necessary for those who are immersed in sense objects. And to them who are not fully averse to sense objects and at the same time have reverence for my discourses with the result that they are not inordinately attached to worldly objects, *bhakti-yoga* brings success in spiritual life.'

The *Gītā* was not a popular text before Śaṅkara wrote his commentary on it. This shows that he was not opposed to *Bhakti-yoga.* In the last verse of chapter 11, Kṛishṇa says: 'Whosoever works for me alone, makes me his only goal and is devoted to me, free from all attachment, and without hatred towards any creature—that man, O Pāṇḍava, shall enter into me'. In a short sentence introducing this verse Śaṅkara says that 'here is now the central idea of the *Gītā*,' which makes clear his attitude towards *bhakti.*

Śaṅkara's attitude is not surprising because he wrote a number of beautiful hymns which are among the best in Sanskrit devotional hymns. These are addressed to various gods and goddesses such as Śiva, Vishṇu, Annapurnā and Gaṅgā. Scholars have some-

times doubted whether these hymns were really from the pen of the great commentator; but such apprehensions are more in the realm of scepticism than criticism. Śaṅkara's philosophy and general outlook towards life are discernible even in his devotional hymns.

It is, however, with Rāmānuja that medieval Vaishṇavism and the emphasis on devotion as a means to salvation begin. Here he was aided by the Tamil songs of the Āḷvār saints who flourished about the 6th century A.D. The Nāyanārs or the Śaiva saints also had written beautiful hymns in praise of Śiva. But as Dr. Das Gupta has said: 'The hymns of the Śaivas are full of deep and noble sentiments of devotion which can hardly be excelled in any literature; but their main emphasis is on the majesty and greatness of god and the feeling of submission, self-abnegation and self-surrender to god. The spirit of self-surrender and a feeling of clinging to god as one's all is equally dominant among the Āḷvārs, but among them it melts down into the sweetness of passionate love'. This passionate love has been the main characteristic of the famous *bhakti* movement of medieval India, and as Rene Grouset has said: 'India and her vast literature have also given the world the example of two representative states of the soul. One, developed particularly in the Krishnaite churches, is compounded of trusting devotion (*bhakti*), the love of God, of tenderness and surrender to Him. This is not peculiar to India and may also be found in Christianity and in Shi'ite Islam. It finds expression here, especially in Bengali poetry, in charming images (little cows and shepherd-girls, alike symbolizing pious souls, raised to ecstasy by the flute notes of the divine cow-

herd); but also in that excess of erotic symbolism which has always been the inevitable characteristic of certain religious faiths.' (*op. cit.*, p. 99).

Though it had parallels elsewhere *bhakti* cults were indigenous in origin and development. Sometimes it has been suggested that development of *bhakti* was due to Islamic influence, for which there is no evidence. On the contrary the earliest phase of the *bhakti* literature can be traced to the Āḷvārs and Nāyanārs who lived before the rise of Islam. Rāmānuja also flourished during an age when South India had no contact with Islam, and from what *al* Birunī states, it is clear that the Hindus steadfastly refused to have any truck with the Muslims after having suffered from Sultān Mahmūd's ferocious iconoclastic raids. The same is true of Vallabha and Chaitanya.

Hinduism has many things besides idol worship, and Islam has many things to show other than iconoclastic zeal. But throughout the medieval age of India, these two aspects of the two religions confronted each other, and not to speak of reconciliation, there is no evidence that any dialogue took place between a Hindu and a Muslim intellectual, which was indeed expressed by Rammohun very forcefully in his *Tuhfat-ul-Muwaphhiddin*. The masses can be relied to have been rooted to their own brands of superstition as they are even now.

The Sufī saints also reached the doctrine of love as the Vaishṇavas did. But there is a qualitative difference between the two. A great Sufī saint, most probably, Jalāl-ud-dīn Rūmī said: 'If you cannot love god, love a man'. This means that a person has to develop the faculty of love, or intense passion, if

necessary for a man or woman. Having achieved this, he can transfer the passion towards God. Hence the Sufi imageries of Sākī. When Hāfiz says that he will give away Samarqand and Bokharā for the little mole on the Sākī's cheek if she can win over his heart, he was not thinking of any woman, but was vividly describing the intensity of passion necessary to attain the Sufī ideal of worship through pure love.

This is different from the Vaishṇava attitude. The relation which a Vaishṇava wants to establish between himself and his deity, may be of the nature of servitude, friendship, parental affection, or amatory love, the devotee being always the servant, obliging friend, parent and woman respectively. These sentiments can be developed only by image worshippers, for whom the abstract and impersonal love of the Sufīs had no attraction. Actually quietistic devotion, which is an approved sentiment, held little attraction for the Vaishṇavas.

However, Vaishṇava *bhakti* does not mean insensate acts of dancing, jumping, weeping or horripilation. Both Jīva Gosvāmin and Rūpa Gosvāmin, two of the greatest exponents of *bhakti*, have quoted a verse from an older text which says that 'intense devotion to Hari which is not regulated by the precepts of the Vedas, Purāṇas and the Pañcharātra texts is a nuisance'.

Since I have spoken about the Sufīs, I may touch upon their assumed contact with the Yogīs from whom they are said to have learnt *yogic* exercises. This assumption also has no evidence in its favour, and seems to be equally misconceived. The Jews from early antiquity had developed a system of esoteric mysticism known as the Qabalah, which, though independent in origin and development resembles the *yogic* mysticism

both in theory and practice. The Sufīs, unless they themselves developed their own system, may have learnt it from the Jews and not from the Hindus. For, the development of Sufīsm can be traced from the early days of Islam when they could not possibly have had any contact with India. Moreover a *Yogī* never teaches anyone his secret practices, unless the aspirant accepts him as his preceptor and undergoes initiation, which would involve the acceptance of the Yoga philosophy and rejection of Islam. I cannot imagine any Sufī agreeing to learn anything on these terms.

I may add that the Christians also developed their own method for extreme interiorization of consciousness called Hesychasm or Hesychast method, which is a Russo-Byzantine school of mysticism and has been described as Christian *yoga.* But the Western Christian Churches do not look kindly upon either Qabalah or Hesychasm.

This digression into Sufī and Christian mysticism was intended to show that similarity of cultural manifestations does not necessarily imply borrowing from one another. The aim and method of every religious discipline is to bring about a subjective change in the devotee's personality so as to put him at the most inward and intense centre of his existence. The Hindus possibly succeeded in accomplishing this to a greater degree and in a more marked manner than others. This claim may well be disputed, hence I give a few reasons in its favour.

The Hindus discovered the methods or aides to concentration more than 2500 years ago, and in course of centuries developed a system which could be followed by anyone under proper guidance.

Second was the freedom of intellectual inquiry and

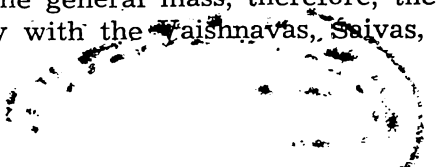
spiritual quest and respect for divergent views. The Upanishads contain such contrary views on fundamentals that even Śaṅkara's genius could not produce a unified philosophy acceptable to everyone, but still they were considered authoritative.

Third was the rational approach to religion which was probably the result of having no sharp line of demarcation between religion and philosophy. This was of course for the intellectuals; for the comman man there were the rituals. Rituals may be pure superstition, but it has the power of evoking in man the faculty of visual imagination which is the first step towards spiritual progress.

Hindu philosophy is not pessimistic. Buddha and Śaṅkara were not apostles of pessimism; on the contrary they wanted to remove human misery, which they conceived to be inherent in everyday life. Their message was of a higher form of existence, in the realization of the supreme unity, call it perfect void, intelligence, or bliss.

But the conditions imposed on an aspirant by Śaṅkara made it very difficult to follow him. He demanded that the aspirant should possess the power to discriminate between the eternal and the non-eternal, to subjugate all desire of enjoying the pleasure of this world or the next, to have retained the result due to the suppression of physical and mental organs, and acute desire for release (*moksha*). As Śaṅkara has himself admitted, very few among the multitude had the power of discrimination. It is possible that his doctrine as well as that of Buddha were primarily intended for monks.

For the general mass, therefore, the way to salvation lay with the Vaiṣhnavas, Śaivas, Śāktas and



other cults. But the ultimate goal of every path was enjoyment of permanent divine bliss or a state of bliss. This is best expressed in the words of Rabindranath Tagore:—

'The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures.

'It is the same life that shoots in joy through the dust of the earth in numberless blades of grass and breaks into tumultuous waves of leaves and flowers.

'It is the same life that is rocked in the ocean-cradle of birth and of death, in ebb and in flow.

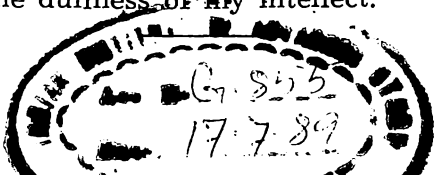
'I feel my limbs are made glorious by the touch of this world of life. And my pride is from the life-throb of ages dancing in my blood this moment. (*Gitanjali*, no. 69).

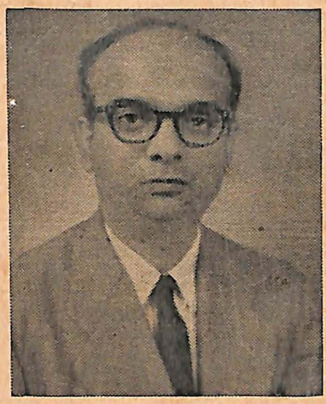
Here, in this poem, we get the quintessence of Indian culture, the awareness and its expression from the depth of consciousness that the superconscious reality is bliss—*ānanda,* and it is through this aspect of the reality that the finite can be linked with the infinite.

Finally, in the inimitable words of the great Hemachandra, I would like to beg for indulgence:

pramāṇa-siddhānta-viruddham atra
yat-kiñchid uktaṁ mati-māndya doshāt
mātsaryaṁ utsārya tad ārya chittaḥ
prasādaṁ ādhāya viśodhayantu

'May the noble minded audience instead of cherishing ill feeling towards me, kindly correct my errors (such as) misinterpretations of evidence which are due to the dullness of my intellect.'





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