

BHĀRATĪYA CHITTA MĀNAS AND KĀLA



by
DHARAMPAL

Translated from Hindi by
Jitendra Bajaj

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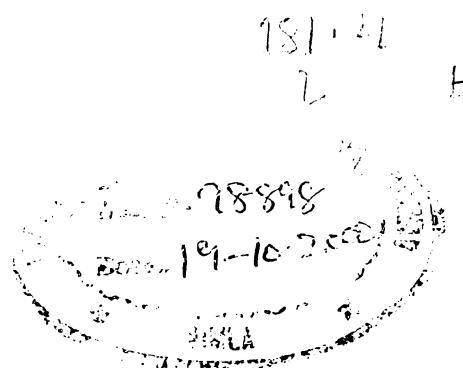
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PREFACE

India is once again at the cross-roads. The people of India, through their precipitate action at Ayodhya, have once again reminded the ruling elite of India that they do not particularly relish the persistent insults to their civilisational sensibilities offered by most of the public spaces and almost all of the organised public activity in India. And, India must pay heed to that reminder.

It is unfortunate that after the successful culmination of a freedom struggle, that Mahatma Gandhi had moulded entirely around the Indian ways of thought and action, the leaders of independent India quickly discarded those ways and went about organising the polity of free India in ways that had nothing to do with Indian civilisational consciousness and its varied expressions. The leaders, in fact, chose to continue with the organisational structures created by the foreign rulers, and retain the status quo in all spheres of public life. They behaved as if nothing had changed, as if the people of India had not won a great war to free themselves of the alien rulers, and as if the successful culmination of the freedom struggle meant nothing except the "transfer" of the levers of the established state apparatus from the British to the newly emerging Indian elite.

Independence of India thus became merely a matter of a change of guard at the British palaces in Delhi and the collectorates and courts in the districts. It was a matter entirely to be settled between the British and their successors among the Indian elite. The people of India, having forced the British out, were to have no further say in the public affairs of India, and their sensibilities and sensitivities were to be of no consequence in framing the polity of free India.

Even the task of drafting a constitution for India was entrusted to the experts of Western constitutional jurisprudence, most of whom had nothing but contempt for the people of India and their ways, and many of whom had explicitly expressed their contempt during the struggle for Independence. To draft the constitution for free India they searched through the constitutions

of the whole world, but they did not care to have even a cursory look at the Indian ways of organising public affairs. In their attempt to garner whatever sounded nice and grandiose in the constitutions of the world, they produced the longest constitution ever written, but their draft could not accommodate even passing references to the most basic of Indian principles of social and political organisation.

Public life and public spaces of India, therefore, remain essentially alien constructs for the people of India. For them every interaction with the public institutions and their functionaries continues to be a matter of insult and compromise of human dignity, and every visit to the public places of India a violation of their aesthetic and historical sensibilities. They have to suffer such violation of their sensibilities not only while visiting the highly regarded sacred places of India, like Ayodhya, Kasi and Mathura, but also in their immediate neighbourhood, in the ugly, alien and forbidding structures of the district hospitals, the district courts, and the all pervasive circuit houses, rest houses and police stations, etc., none of which conform to their ideas of appropriate public structures. And, the great metropolises of India, like Delhi, remain littered with innumerable symbols of Indian defeat and of the imposing wastefulness of the imperial victors, that cannot but remind an ordinary Indian of the insignificance of his person and his dignity in the public affairs of India.

In this alien milieu, the people of India generally retain a sullen docility. They participate in the occasional elections and try to somehow extract at least the bare essential services from the public institutions and public functionaries. But, they do not feel themselves to be forming any part of the public arrangements, nor are they ever asked or allowed to participate in these arrangements in any meaningful manner. Occasionally, when their feelings are particularly disturbed by an issue and when they find the opportunity, they do give expression to their sensitivities and sensibilities, as they have done, so emphatically, at Ayodhya. But even such precipitate actions of theirs seldom lead to any serious reflection on the state of India and on the ways to bring Indian polity in consonance with the aesthetic and ethical sensibilities of the people of India.

There are two possible denouements of the events of Ayodhya. One, and the more likely, possibility is that the elite of India, after having expressed their initial disgust or euphoria, according to their particular political predilections, would soon revert to what they consider to be the state of normalcy. To achieve this normalcy, attempts shall probably be made to put a Hindu veneer on the State apparatus, and political parties that are perceived to be espousing the Hindu causes may even get a larger share of the State power. But at the same time efforts would be made to mould these changes such that the voice of the people of India finds no larger place in the public affairs of India, and that nothing of consequence is changed in the Indian polity.

There may even be efforts, demands along these lines are already being stridently made, to 'harden' the Indian State apparatus to make it impossible for the people of India to give vent to their sensitivities and sensibilities, as they keep doing occasionally and as they did once again in Ayodhya. But such 'hardening' requires great commitment, and a willingness to suffer deprivation and hardship for the larger and long-term interests of the State. It is unlikely that the Indian elite, isolated as it is from the Indian mainstream, would be able to find such commitment and patient perseverance within itself.

The state of affairs shall, therefore, remain unchanged, notwithstanding the cosmetic changes here and there and the brave talk about tightening the State apparatus and hardening the State, if India takes to this road of 'normalcy'. The people of India then shall probably return to their usual state of sullen docility, until the next great convulsion.

The other possibility is that the events of Ayodhya are taken as a warning that the efforts to run the public affairs and organise the public spaces of India in ways that are contemptuous of the preferences, prejudices and seekings of the Indian people shall not be tolerated any more. We may then begin to realise that more than four decades of living in an independent country would have imbued the people of India with the confidence to assert their sensitivities and preferences, and it would not be possible to retain the facade of normalcy without changing the

present arrangements of public functioning. We may then also begin thinking about ways of re-organising the Indian polity to bring it in conformity with the seekings and sensibilities of the Indian people.

Such a reorientation of the Indian polity shall bring the people of India and their ways back into the mainstream of public life. This reorientation shall, of course, lead to some temporary disturbance of the normalcy that we have got used to, and to a great deal of restructuring of the public institutions and public spaces. But the awakening of the people of India from the state of sullen indifference and their arrival into the mainstream of India shall also release immense energies for the regeneration of India as a self-confident, strong, prosperous and dignified nation among other nations of the modern world. India shall thus once again experience the great blossoming of the Indian spirit, and the sudden resurgence of courage and skills of her people, that marked the arrival of Mahatma Gandhi in India.

For such a reorientation of Indian polity to happen it shall of course be necessary to explore and arrive at a consensus about what are the specific preferences and seekings of the Indian people, and how these preferences and seekings are expressed in the social and political organisations, and the aesthetic and ethical sensibilities of India. The events of Ayodhya would have served a great historical purpose if they lead us to an intense study of the civilisational consciousness of India and her preferred modes of expression in the physical and social world.

We are publishing this English version of Sri Dharampal's Hindi booklet on the essentials of the Indian Mind and the Indian sense of the flow of Time with the hope that it shall initiate further thought and study along these lines, and thus be of help in our quickly arriving at an understanding of the broad directions of the future Indian polity.

Sri Dharampal is of course well-known for his seminal work on the social, cultural, political, economic and technological arrangements of the eighteenth century India. This work has generated a

new awareness of the ways in which the Indian society functioned in its varied dimensions before the coming of the British. Those who have had the good fortune of reading his many books and articles, and of listening to him in person, have invariably been left with a heightened awareness of the Indian self, and have often seen, opening before them, new visions of a resurgent India, regenerated through the varied talents and skills of her people, and leading the world towards an Indian millennium. We in the Centre have been blessed to have shared such visions with him.

For the last about five years, Sri Dharampal has begun to feel that though his historical studies have to some extent helped him understand the ways in which the Indians prefer to organise the physical world around them, yet he has failed to comprehend the Mind that provides the anchorage for these typically Indian ways, preferences and seekings. And, to learn about this anchorage, to understand the Indian Chitta and Kāla, as he puts it, he began a study of the Indian classical literature. His long essay in Hindi, published last year, and translated into English now, is the first result of this study.

The preliminary picture of the Indian Mind presented in this essay is, of course, not meant to be final or exhaustive. The attempt is to emphasise the urgent need to understand the Indian Chitta and Kāla if India is to once again find her moorings in the present day world, and to sketch some of the basic aspects of the Indian Chitta and Kāla that seem to set the Indians apart from the rest.

It is hoped that this brief essay shall contribute to the reawakening of the Indian spirit that we are blessed to witness happening once again in our times.

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January 28, 1993

A Note on the Translation

Any study of the Indian Chitta and Kāla necessarily involves a number of definitional terms of Indian philosophical discourse, which are, of course, untranslatable. We have not attempted to translate these terms. Instead, we have provided a descriptive glossary of the Indian terms used in the text.

The glossary does not always follow the standard scholarly definition of a term. On the other hand, even at the risk of being long-winded, we have tried to indicate the various nuances commonly associated with a term in both the scholarly and the lay Indian usage. In particular we have tried to bring out and elaborate upon the specific meanings of a term implied in the text.

For transliteration of Indian terms in Roman script we have followed no specific convention, and have tried to use the form that seems to us to be most common, and most likely to be correctly understood by readers in both north and south India. We have generally avoided using any phonetic symbols, except in a few cases where not using the symbol would lead to too much confusion. In the glossary, however, we have given the correct Sanskrit form in Devanagari script for all Indian terms used in the text.

Sri M. D. Srinivas has crucially contributed in the preparation of the glossary. Without his help there would not have been any glossary, at least not in this form. Sri R. Krisnamurthy Sastrigal, Professor of Vedanta, Madras Samskrit College, has kindly read through the glossary. We are grateful to him for his valuable suggestions.

While translating this essay I have tried to retain the conversational flavour of the Hindi text. But it has not been always possible to remain literally faithful to the original. At places whole paragraphs have been restructured, and some illustrative and elaborative material has been inserted here and there.

Sri Dharampal had originally spoken about these matters at length, largely in Hindi, but also occasionally in English. The Hindi essay was constructed from those conversations running into many hours. The material was first prepared for serial publication in Jansatta, the Hindi daily of the Indian Express Group, and later printed in the form of a small book. It is my association with this whole process, and the fact of having listened to the original conversations of Sri Dharampal, that gave me the courage to undertake this translation.

My colleagues, Sri S. S. Vasan and Sri T. M. Mukundan, have kindly read through the English text. Their help has been invaluable.

Jitendra Bajaj

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Bhāratiya Chitta, Mānas and Kāla

I

On January 9, 1915 Gandhiji returned to India from his sojourn in South Africa. On his way back he visited Britain for a short while. After that homecoming he went abroad only once, in 1931, when he had to go to Britain to attend the round table conference. During that journey he managed to make brief halts in France, Switzerland, and Italy. The Americans wanted him to extend his visit to the United States of America, too. But, Gandhiji could not go to America, either then or later.

The journey to Britain in 1931 constituted the whole of Gandhiji's foreign travels after 1915, excepting, of course, his short visits to neighbouring Sri Lanka and Burma. Gandhiji, in fact, felt no need to frequently leave the shores of India. On the other hand, he was of the firm opinion that the struggle for the freedom of India had to be waged mainly in India. The world outside, according to him, could be of little help in this.

The people of India had begun to repose great faith in Gandhiji even before his arrival in 1915, and several national dailies took editorial note of his homecoming. The phrases used and the expectations expressed in these editorial comments suggest that in India he was already being seen as an Avatara, as a manifestation of the divine.

The city of Bombay accorded an unprecedented welcome to Gandhiji and Kasturba. Numerous receptions were hosted in their honour. And the high elite of Bombay turned out enthusiastically to attend these receptions. Even members of the British Governor's Council of the Bombay Presidency and judges of the Bombay High-Court participated in some of them.

Within three days of their arrival, however, Gandhiji and Kasturba began to feel somewhat out of place in the high society

of Bombay. Already on January 12 Gandhiji was giving public expression to his feeling of unease. On that day, at a reception attended by more than 600 guests and presided over by Sir Ferozeshah Mehta, Gandhiji observed that, "He did not know that the right word would come to him to express the feelings that had stirred within him that afternoon. He had felt that he would be more at home in his own motherland than he used to be in South Africa among his own country men. But during the three days that they had passed in Bombay, they had felt – and the thought he was voicing was the feelings of his wife, too – that they were much more at home among those indentured Indians who were the truest heroes of India. They felt that they were indeed in strange company here in Bombay." (Collected Works, Vol.13, pp. 5-6).

Soon afterwards Gandhiji's life-style began to change radically. His participation in the festivities of high society declined, and he started moving more and more among the ordinary people of India. And they saw such transparent divinity in him that by the end of January he was being addressed as 'Mahatma' in his native Saurashtra. Just three months later, people in as far a place as Gurukul Kangari near Haridwar, more than a thousand miles from Bombay, were also addressing him as 'Mahatma Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi'.

The arrival of Mahatma Gandhi gave rise to an immediate awakening of the Indian people. They probably felt that the gods had responded to their sufferings and had sent someone from amongst them to lessen their burdens. And, this feeling of having been taken under the protection of the gods, through the divine presence of Mahatma Gandhi, remained with them for the next thirty or more years. Many Indians might have never seen him. A large number of them might have sharply disagreed with his ways. Some might have doubted, till as late as 1945-46, the viability of his methods in achieving the goal of freedom. Yet practically all Indians perceived the presence of the divine in him, and that probably was the source of the self-confidence and the courage that India displayed in such large measure during his days.

Indians have a long-standing belief that the divine incarnates in various forms to lessen the burdens of the earth. This happens oft

and again. There are times when the complexity of the world becomes too much to bear, when the sense of right and wrong gets clouded, and when the natural balance of life, the Dharma, is lost. At such times, according to the Indian beliefs, the divine incarnates on the earth, to help restore the balance and the Dharma, and to make life flow smoothly once again.

Indians have held this belief in the repeated incarnations of the divine for a very long time, at least since the time of compilation of the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Puranas. The Mahabharata is in fact the story of one such divine intervention. By the end of the Dvapara Yuga the Dharma had got so emaciated that the earth, unable to bear the burdens of the a-Dharmic life on her, went to Vishnu and prayed for his intervention. On the advice of Vishnu the Devas worked out an elaborate strategy. Many of them took birth in various forms. Vishnu himself was born as Srikrishna. And, Srikrishna along with the other Devas fought the great war of Mahabharata to rid the earth of her burdens.

Buddhist epics like the Lalita Vistara similarly present the story of the birth of Gautama Buddha as another instance of the process of divine incarnation for the restoration of Dharma. And Jaina epics tell similar stories about the incarnations of the divine as the Tirthankaras.

To solve the problems of life on this earth, and to restore the balance, the divine incarnates, again and again, at different times in different forms. This is the promise that Srikrishna explicitly makes in the Srimadbhagavadgita. And, the people of India seem to have always believed in this promise of divine compassion. It is therefore not surprising that when Mahatma Gandhi arrived in India in 1915 many Indians suddenly began to see him as another Avatar of Vishnu.

The state of India at that time would have seemed to many as being beyond redress through mere human efforts, and the misery of India unbearable. The time, according to the Indian beliefs, was thus ripe for another divine intervention. And it is true that with the arrival of Mahatma Gandhi the state of hopelessness and mute acceptance of misery was relieved almost

at once. India was set free in her mind. The passive acceptance of slavery as the fate of India disappeared overnight, as it were. That sudden transformation of India was indeed a miracle, and it had seemed like a divine feat to many outside India too.

But though Mahatma Gandhi awakened the Indian mind from its state of stupor, he was not able to put this awakening on a permanent footing. He was not able to establish a new equilibrium and a secure basis for the re-awakened Indian civilisation. The search for such a secure basis for the resurgence of Indian civilisation in the modern times would have probably required fresh initiatives and a fresh struggle to be waged following the elimination of political enslavement. Unfortunately, Mahatma Gandhi did not remain with us long enough to lead us in this effort, and the effort consequently never began.

It seems that the spirit that Gandhiji had awakened in the people of India was exhausted with the achievement of Independence. Or, perhaps, those who came to power in independent India had no use for the spirit and determination of an awakened people, and they found such awakening to be a great nuisance. As a result the people began to revert to their earlier state of stupor, and the leaders of India, now put in control of the State machinery created by the British, began to indulge in a slave-like imitation of their British predecessors.

The self-awakening of India is bound to remain similarly elusive and transient till we find a secure basis for a confident expression of Indian civilisation within the modern world and the modern epoch. We must establish a conceptual framework that makes Indian ways and aspirations seem viable in the present, so that we do not feel compelled or tempted to indulge in demeaning imitations of the modern world, and the people of India do not have to suffer the humiliation of seeing their ways and their seekings being despised in their own country. And, this secure basis for the Indian civilisation, this framework for the Indian self-awakening and self-assertion, has to be sought mainly within the Chitta and Kāla of India.

Gandhiji had a natural insight into the mind of the Indian people and their sense of time and destiny. We shall probably

have to undertake an elaborate intellectual exercise to gain some comprehension of the Indian Chitta and Indian Kāla. But we can hardly proceed without that comprehension. Because, before beginning even to talk about the future of India we must know what the people of this country want to make of her. How do they understand the present times? What is the future that they aspire for? What are their priorities? What are their seekings and desires? And, in any case, who are these people on whose behalf and on the strength of whose efforts and resources we wish to plan for a new India? How do they perceive themselves? And, what is their perception of the modern world? What is their perception of the Universe? Do they believe in God? If yes, what is their conception of God? And, if they do not believe in God, what do they believe in? Is it Kāla that they trust? Or, is it destiny? Or, is it something else altogether?

We the educated elite of India are wary of any attempt to understand the Indian mind. Many of us had felt uneasy even about Gandhiji's efforts to delve into the Chitta and Kāla of the people of India and voice what he perceived to be their innermost thoughts and feelings. We are somehow afraid of those inner thoughts of the people of India. We want to proceed with the myth that there is nothing at all in the Indian mind, that it is a clean slate on which we have to write a new story that we ourselves have painstakingly learnt from the West.

But we are also probably aware that the Indian mind is not such a clean slate. In reality it is imbued with ideas on practically all subjects. Those ideas are not new. They belong to long-standing traditions, some of which may be as old as the Rig Veda. Some other aspects of these traditions may have emerged with Gautama Buddha, or with Mahavira, or with some other leader of Indian thought of another Indian epoch. But from whatever source and at whatever epoch the various ideas that dominate the minds of the Indian people may have arisen, those ideas are indeed etched very deep. Deep within, we, the elite of India, are also acutely conscious of this highly elaborate structure of the Indian mind. We, however, want to deny this history of Indian consciousness, close our eyes to the long acquired attributes of the Indian mind, and wish to re-construct a new world for ourselves in accordance with what we perceive to be the modern consciousness.

Therefore, all efforts to understand the Chitta and Kāla of India seem meaningless to us. The study of the history of the eighteenth and nineteenth century India, which I undertook in the nineteen sixties and the seventies, was in a way an exploration into the Indian Chitta and Kāla, and to many educated Indians that exploration too had seemed a futile exercise. That study, of course, was not the most effective way of learning about the Indian mind. It did help in forming a picture of the physical organisations and technologies through which the Indians prefer to manage the ordinary routines of daily life. It also provided some grasp of the relationships between various constituents of society and polity within the Indian context. But it was not enough to provide an insight into the inner attitudes and attributes of the Indian mind. The mind of a civilisation can probably never be grasped through a study of its physical attributes alone.

However, many who came to know of this work were disturbed even by this limited study of the Indian ways. When in 1965-66 I began to look into the eighteenth and nineteenth century documents relating to the Indian society, a close friend in Delhi wanted to know why I had started digging up the dead. He suggested, with great solicitude, that I should spend my time more usefully in some other pursuit.

Later, many others said that what I had discovered about the state of Indian society in the eighteenth century might have been true then. Indian society of that time might have practised highly developed agriculture, produced excellent steel, discovered the process of inoculation against small-pox and the art of plastic surgery. That society might have also evolved highly competent structures of locality-centered social and political organisation. All this, they said, was fine. It felt good to talk and hear about such things. This knowledge may also help, they conceded, in awakening a feeling of self-respect and self-confidence amongst the Indian people. But all such arts, techniques and organisational skills of the Indian civilisation, they were convinced, were of hardly any relevance in the present context. What could be gained by delving into this irrelevant past of India and learning about her lost genius?

I was asked this question repeatedly then, and many keep asking the same question now. Some time ago, I had an oppor-

tunity to meet the then Prime Minister of India, Sri Chandra Sekhar. He too wanted to know why I was so caught up with the eighteenth century. We should be thinking, he felt, of the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries, since the India of the eighteenth century was anyway long past and dead. My close friends express the same sentiment even more strongly. It seems that all of us are so immersed in the thoughts of the twenty-first century that we have no patience left for even a preliminary study of our own Chitta and Kāla.

But, whose twentieth and twenty-first centuries are we so anxious about? The epoch represented by these terms has little to do with our Chitta and Kāla. The people of India, in any case, have little connection with the twentieth or the twenty-first century. If Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru is to be believed, they are perhaps still living in the seventeenth or the eighteenth century. Pandit Nehru often used to say this about his fellow Indians, and he was very worried that the Indians obstinately continue to persist within the eighteenth century and refuse to acknowledge the arrival of the twentieth.

The people of India, in fact, may not be living even in the eighteenth century of the West. They may still be reckoning time in terms of their Pauranic conceptions. They may be living in one of the Pauranic Yugas, and looking at the present from the perspective of that Yuga. It is possible, for we know next to nothing about the Chitta and Kāla of the Indian people, that they are living in what they call the Kali Yuga, and are waiting for the arrival of an Avatara Purusha to free them from the bondage of Kali. After all, they did perceive in Mahatma Gandhi an Avatara Purusha who had arrived amongst them even during this twentieth century of the West. Perhaps they are now waiting for the arrival of another Avatara, and are busy thinking about that future Avatara and preparing for his arrival. If so, the twentieth century of the West can have little meaning for them.

In any case the twentieth century is not the century of India. It is the century of the West. To some extent the Japanese may take this to be their century too. But basically it represents the epoch of Europe and America. Since we cannot completely sever our ties with Europe, America and Japan, we perhaps have to understand this century of theirs. But this attempt at

understanding their epoch does not mean that we start deluding ourselves of being among its active participants. In fact our understanding of the twentieth century, for it to be of any use to us or to the West, shall have to be from the perspective of our own Kāla. If according to the reckoning of the people of India the present is the Kāla of the Kali Yuga, then we shall have to look at the present of the West through the categories of Kali Yuga. One understands others only from one's own perspective. Attempts to live and think like the others, to transport oneself into the Chitta and Kāla of others, leads merely to delusion.

It is possible that some amongst us believe that they have rid themselves completely of the constraints of their Indian consciousness and the Indian sense of time. They perhaps are convinced that having transcended their Indian identity they have fully integrated themselves with Western modernity, or perhaps with some kind of ideal humanity. If there happen to be any such transcendent Indians, then for them it is indeed possible to understand the Indian Kali Yuga from the perspective of Western modernity. Such Indians can perhaps meaningfully meditate on the ways of forcing the Indian present into the mould of the twentieth century.

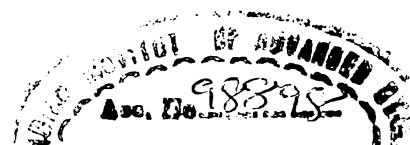
But such transcendence is not granted to ordinary human beings. Even extra-ordinary souls find it impossible to fully transcend the limits of their own time and consciousness, their Chitta and Kāla, and enter into the Kāla of another people. Even a man like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru found it difficult to perform this feat successfully. Even he was not able to rid himself completely of his innate Indian-ness. Even he was not able to go beyond the strange irrationality, the irreducible nonsense, which as Mahatma Gandhi observed in his address to the Christian missionaries in 1916 at Madras, pervades India. India, Gandhiji said then, is a country of "nonsense". And even Pandit Nehru could not fully erase that "nonsense" from his mind. What he could not do in this regard, other Indians have even less chance of accomplishing.

The elite of India have indeed adopted the external forms of the modern West. They may have also imbibed some of the Western attitudes and attributes. But it seems unlikely that at the level of the Chitta they would have been able to distance

themselves much from the Indian ways. Given the long history of our contacts with the Western civilisation, it is probable that some fifty thousand Indians might have in fact fully de-Indianised themselves. But these fifty thousand or even a somewhat larger number matter little in a country of eighty-five crores.

The few Indians, who have transcended the boundaries of Indian Chitta and Kāla, may also wish to quit the physical boundaries of India. But when India begins to live according to her own ways, in consonance with the Chitta and Kāla of the vast majority of her people, then many of such lost sons and daughters of India will in all probability return to their innate Indian-ness. Those who cannot shall find a living elsewhere. Having become part of an international consciousness they can probably live almost anywhere in the world. They may go to Japan. Or, to Germany, if Germany wants them. Or, perhaps to Russia, if they find a pleasurable place there. To America, they keep going even now. Some four lakhs of Indians have settled in the United States of America. And, many of them are engineers, doctors, philosophers, scientists, scholars and other members of the literati.

Their desertion of India is no major tragedy. The problem of India is not of those who have transcended their Indian-ness and have left the shores of India. The problem is of the overwhelming majority who are living in India within the constraints of Indian Chitta and Kāla. If India is to be built with their efforts and cooperation, then we must try to have an insight into their mind and their sense of time, and understand the modern times from their perspective. Knowing ourselves, and our Chitta and Kāla, it shall also be possible to work out modes of healthy and equal interaction with the twentieth century of the West. But the questions regarding interactions with others can be addressed only after having achieved some level of clarity about ourselves.



II

There are probably many paths to an understanding of the Chitta and Kāla of a civilisation. In studying the eighteenth century Indian society and polity I traversed one such path. But that path led only to a sketchy comprehension of merely the physical manifestations of the Indian mind. It gave some understanding of the way Indians preferred to organise their social, political and economic life, when they were free to do so according to their own genius and priorities. And, their modes of organisation probably had something to do with the Chitta and Kāla of India.

To learn about the people of India, to try to understand the way they live, the way they think, the way they talk, the way they cope with the varied problems of day-to-day living, the way they behave in various situations – and thus to know in detail about the ways of the Indians is perhaps another path to a comprehension of the Indian Chitta and Kāla. But this is a difficult path. We are probably too far removed from the reality of Indian life to be able to perceive intelligently the ways in which the people of India live within this reality.

It may be relatively easier to comprehend the Indian mind through the ancient literature of Indian civilisation. In fact, the process of understanding the Indian Chitta and Kāla cannot possibly begin without some understanding of the vast corpus of literature that has formed the basis of Indian civilisation and regulated the actions and thoughts of the people of India for millennia. We have to come to some understanding of what this literature – beginning with the Rig Veda, and running through the Upanishads, the Puranas, the Mahabharata, the Ramayana and the Buddha and the Jaina canons – says about the Indian ways and preferences. Indian texts dealing with the problems of mundane living, like those of the Ayurveda, the Silpasastra, and the Jyotishashastra, etc., also have to be similarly understood.

We should probably begin by forming a quick overview of the totality of this literature. Such an overview should provide us with a preliminary picture of the Indian mind, and its various manifestations in the political, social, economic, and technological domains. This initial picture of Indian-ness shall get more and more refined, as we continue our explorations into the corpus of Indian literature, and supplement it with observations on the present and investigations into the historical past. In the process of this refinement we may find that the preliminary picture that we had formed was inadequate and perhaps even erroneous in many respects. But by then that preliminary picture would have served its purpose of setting us on our course in the search for a comprehension of the Indian Chitta and Kāla.

We have so far not been able to form such a preliminary picture of the Indian Chitta and Kāla. It is not that no work is being done in India on Indian literature. We have a large number of institutes founded with the specific mandate of studying the various texts of Indian literature. Many high scholars have spent long years investigating various parts of the Indian corpus. But, these institutes and the scholars, it seems, have been looking at Indian literature from the perspective of modernity.

Indology, by its very definition, is the science of comprehending India from a non-Indian perspective, and practically all Indian scholars and Indian institutions engaged in the study of Indian literature fall within the discipline of Indology. They have thus been trying to make India comprehensible to the world. But what we need to learn from Indian literature is how to make modernity comprehensible to us, in terms of our Chitta and Kāla. We need to form a picture of the Indian Chitta and Kāla, and to place the modern consciousness and modern times within that picture. Instead, our scholars have so far only been trying to place India, the Indian mind and Indian consciousness, within the world-picture of modernity.

This exercise of exploring India from the perspective of Western modernity has been going on for a long time. The West has been studying various aspects of India for the last four to five centuries. Western scholars have tried to comprehend our polity,

our customs, our religious and philosophical texts, and our sciences, arts and techniques, etc. Their attempts have obviously been guided by the interests and concerns of the West at various times. They read into Indian literature what suited and concerned them at any particular time.

Following the scholars of the West, and more or less under their inspiration, some modern Indian scholars also started getting interested in the study of Indian literature. Consequently, specialized institutions for such study began to be founded in India. A number of these institutions opened up in Maharashtra. Many similar institutions came up in Bengal. And, some so-called Universities for Sanskrit learning began to function in various parts of India.

All these institutions, colleges and universities of Indian learning were conceived along the lines laid down by Western scholarship. Their organisation had no relation to the traditional organisation of learning in India. They were in fact structured on the pattern of the corresponding Western institutions, especially those in London. And, their main objective was to find a place for Indian learning within the various streams of modern Western scholarship.

The Sanskrit University at Varanasi is one example of the institutions of Indian learning that came up in India. An institution known as the Queen's College had been functioning in Varanasi from the times of Warren Hastings. Later the same College was named the Sampurnananda Sanskrit University. Today this University is counted amongst the most important institutions of Indian learning in the country. Most of the other Indian institutions engaged in the study of Indian literature have similar antecedents and inspirations behind them. And more of the same type are being established even today.

These institutions, created in the image of their Western counterparts, are burdened from their very inception with all the prejudices of the West and the complete theoretical apparatus of Western scholarship on India. Like the Western scholars, the Indian indologists have been merely searching for occasional scraps of contemporary relevance from the remains of a civilisation that for them is perhaps as dead and as alien as it is for the West.

The work of the indologists is in fact akin to anthropology. Anthropology, as recognised by its practitioners, is a peculiar science of the West. The defeated, subjugated and fragmented societies of the non-Western world form the subject of this science. Anthropology thus is the science of the study of the conquered by the conquerors. Claude Levi Strauss, an authentic spokesman and a major scholar of anthropology, defines his discipline more or less in these terms.¹ Indian indologists, anthropologists, and other academics may wish to disagree with such a definition, but within the community of practitioners of anthropology there is hardly any dispute on the issue.

It is true that not many scholars would like to state the objectives of anthropology quite as bluntly as Claude Levi Strauss does. But then Levi Strauss is an incisive philosopher who does not care to hide the facts behind unnecessary verbiage. It is obvious that anthropological tools cannot be used for studying one's own society and civilisation. Nor is it possible for the scholars of the non-Western world to invert the logic of this science, and study the conquerors through the methods evolved for the study of the conquered. But Indian indologists are in fact trying to study India through anthropological categories. If Claude Levi Strauss is to be trusted, they can achieve no comprehension of their own society through these efforts. They can at best collect data for the Western anthropologists to comprehend us.

It is not that this supplementary anthropological work requires no great effort or scholarship. Indian indological scholars have in fact invested enormous labour and stupendous scholarship in the work they have been doing. A few years ago a critical edition of the Mahabharata was brought out in India. This edition must have involved hard slogging effort of some forty or fifty years. Similar editions of the Ramayana, the Vedas and many other Indian texts have been produced in India.

There has also been a great deal of translation activity. Many texts, originally in Samskrit, Pali, Tamil, and other Indian languages, have been translated into English, German and French. There have also been occasional translations into some other European languages. And, of course, there have been translations

of the ancient texts into modern Indian languages. The Gita Press of Gorakhpur has translated a large body of classical Indian literature into simple Hindi, and has managed to bring these translated texts within the reach of the ordinary Hindi-speaking Indian. A number of texts have been translated into Gujarati also. And, perhaps there have been similar translations into many other Indian languages. All this amounts to a fairly large body of work. And this work has indeed been accomplished with great labour and painstaking scholarship.

These scholarly redactions, translations and commentaries have, however, all been carried out from a modern perspective and according to the rules of the game of Indology laid down by the Western scholars. When the Indian scholars have managed to avoid Western biases and Western methodologies, as those associated with the Gita Press of Gorakhpur have done to a large extent, they have been carried away by a sense of uncomprehending devotion. This great effort has therefore contributed little towards a comprehension of the Indian Chitta and Kāla. If any thing, it has only helped in reading modern Western prejudices and concepts into Indian literature, and perhaps also in attributing these to the essential Indian consciousness. In fact, what has emerged from the efforts of Indian indologists, when it is not entirely inane, reads like a queer commentary, a deviant Bhashya, by someone who has been completely swept off his feet by the currents of modernity.

To gauge how deeply modernity has insinuated itself into the work of Indian scholars, it is enough to have a look at Sri Sripad Damodar Satawalekar's translation of Purusha Sukta, and his commentary on it. Sri Satawalekar reads the Purusha Sukta to mean that from the sacred effort, Tapas, of Brahman, there arose, at the beginning of the Universe, a modern government with its varied departments. And, he goes on to name some twenty departments which the Purusha Sukta supposedly defines. From Sri Satawalekar's commentary it seems as if the content of the Purusha Sukta is merely a concise prescription for the establishment of a government on the pattern of modern departmental bureaucracy.

Sri Satavalekar was a great scholar. He is recognised and respected as a modern Rishi of India. His intellect, his commitment to the Indian thought, and the intensity of his effort were indeed very high. But even he got so carried away by the unrelenting sweep of modernity that he began to see a prescience of the modern governmental organisation in the Purusha Sukta. Much of the work done by the Indian scholars on Indian literature is similarly tainted by the touch of modernity. In essence what these scholars assert is that the peculiar attributes and specific comprehensions of the world that the West displays today had been arrived at long ago in the Indian literature. Ancient Indian literature, according to their understanding, records in its somewhat quaint language and phraseology essentially the same thoughts and apprehensions, and even the same organisational principles and techniques, that the West has arrived at only recently.

During the last twenty or thirty years there has been a fresh spurt in this kind of indological activity. But what use is all this scholarship? If we are concerned only about others' understanding of the world, and carry out our discourse on their terms and in their categories, then that can well be done without bringing the ancient Indian literature into the picture. Why demean this ancient literature by imputing it with modernistic presentiments? Why drag in our ancient Rishis to stand witness to our blind validation of Western modernity? We may call upon our ancestors and their literature in testimony of a resurgence of the Indian spirit. But modernity hardly needs their testimony to assert itself.

Let us look at another example of the type of scholarly work on the Indian literature being carried out in India. For a long time, perhaps for more than a hundred years, the scholars of Indology have been trying to make a compilation of the available catalogues and lists of known Indian manuscripts in various languages. After their long and tedious search, they have recently come to the conclusion that there exist probably two thousand catalogues of Indian manuscripts in Samskrit, Pali, Tamil, Prakrit, etc. These two thousand catalogues are from perhaps seven or eight hundred different locations, and about one third of these locations may be outside India. Each of these catalogues lists a hundred or

two hundred manuscripts. The scholars thus have a listing of two to four lakh Indian manuscripts.

This compilation of all available catalogues is indeed a task of great labour and scholarship. It could not have been easy to collect catalogues from seven to eight hundred different locations and compile them into a single comprehensive catalogue. But what purpose of ours will be served by this comprehensive catalogue compiled with so much labour and scholarship? It has taken more than a hundred years to complete this compilation. Numerous foreign and Indian scholars have contributed to this task. But, we do not even have an idea of the state of the manuscripts listed in this grand compilation. We do not know how many of the manuscripts listed actually survive today, and of those which survive, how many are in a condition fit enough to be opened and read, or even microfilmed.

In a somewhat similar exercise of scholarly thoroughness, some eminent scholars of India keep mentioning that there are some fifty crore Indian manuscripts in various Indian languages which have survived till today. Again, nobody has any idea where and how these crores of manuscripts are to be found, and what is to be done with them. It is in a way astonishing that we are occupied with exploring and establishing the possible existence of lakhs and crores of manuscripts that will almost certainly remain unavailable and unreadable, while we are making no efforts to understand and comprehend the literature that happens to be easily available to us.

It is true that there are scholars in all ages who prefer to engage themselves in esoteric exercises, the results of which are unlikely to be of any earthly use to anybody. The grand compilation of Indian manuscripts and the speculation about there being crores of manuscripts to be located and catalogued, probably belong to a similar genre of scholarship. In functioning societies much of the scholarship is directed to specific social purposes, though some amount of this kind of esoteric activity also often takes place. When a society is moving on a well-defined course of its own, and the majority of the scholars are purposefully engaged, then the few who are so inclined are allowed to indulge in their explorations into the unusable and the futile. And, functioning societies, sooner or later, are able to put the results of their esoteric investigations also to some use somewhere.

But we have neither the resources nor the time for such indulgence. If we are to comprehend our Chitta and Kāla, and thus prepare a conceptual ground on which we may firmly stand and have a look at the world, then this directionless scholarship can be of little help. We need to form a picture of the Indian view of the world based on a quick overview of the totality of literature available to us, so that we have a framework within which the mainstream of Indian scholarship may operate. Once that mainstream is established and starts running strong and deep, there will also be time and opportunity for various scholarly deviations and indulgences.

Whenever I speak of the need to arrive at some such rough and ready outline of the Indian view of the world through a study of the ancient Indian literature, my friends advise me to keep out of this business. I am told that ordinary mortals like us can hardly understand this literature. As most of these texts are in Samskrit, they insist that one must be a serious scholar of Samskrit in order to have any comprehension of these texts of India. Approaching these texts through Hindi or English, it is said, can only lead to error and confusion. Therefore, if one were bent upon reading this literature, then one must first immerse oneself in a study of the Samskrit language.

But how many in India today have any fluency in Samskrit? Now-a-days, one can even get a doctorate in Samskrit without seriously learning the language. One can write a thesis in English and obtain a Ph.d. degree for Samskrit literature from most Indian universities. It seems that scholars who are seriously interested in learning Samskrit are now found only in Germany. Or, perhaps, some Japanese scholars may be learning this great Indian language. There may also be some fluent Samskritists in Russia and America. But there are hardly any serious students of Samskrit amongst the modern scholars of India. There may be a thousand or so of the traditional Pandits who still retain a certain level of competence in the language. And, among the families traditionally associated with Indian learning, there may still be four or five lakh individuals who can read and understand Samskrit, though few would be fluent enough to converse in it. That is about all the talent we have in the language.

The All India Radio, Akashvani, has been broadcasting an early morning news-bulletin in Samskrit for many years. But there are probably not many who listen to this bulletin. I once asked Sri Ranganatha Ramachandra Divakar whether there would be ten lakh listeners of the Samskrit news-bulletin. Sri Divakar had spent many decades in the public life, and he was a venerable scholar in his own right. His understanding was that in India the number of listeners of the Samskrit news-bulletin could not be that large.

South India has had a long tradition of Samskrit learning. Some time ago, I happened to meet Sri Sivaraman, the scholarly former editor of the Tamil daily, Dinamani. I asked him about his estimate of the number of people in South India who might still be fluent in the language, and who might feel comfortable reading, writing and speaking in Samskrit. His answer was that there was probably not a single such individual in South India. There might be, he later said, about a thousand scholars, definitely not any more, who would have some level of competence in Samskrit, but even they were unlikely to be fluent in the language.

If this is the state of Samskrit learning in the country, if there are hardly any people left who can read, write and speak Samskrit fluently, then there is no point in insisting that all Indian literature must be approached through Samskrit. We have to accept the condition to which we have been reduced, and we must start building up from there. If for the time being Samskrit has become inaccessible to us, then we must do without Samskrit, and work with the languages that we are familiar with.

It is of course true that no high scholarly work on Indian literature can be done without knowing the language of that literature. But what is urgently needed is not high scholarship, but a rough and ready comprehension of ourselves and the world. We need a direction, a vision, a conceptual basis, that is in consonance with the Indian Chitta and Kāla, and through which we can proceed to understand the modern world and the modern times. Once such a way is found, there will be time enough to learn Samskrit, or any other language that we may need, and to

undertake detailed high scholarship in our own way, on not only the Indian literature but also perhaps on the literature of other civilisations of the world.

But the detailed scholarship can wait. What cannot wait is the task of finding our direction and our way, of forming a quick vision of the Indian Chitta and Kāla. This task has to be performed quickly, with whatever competence we have on hand, and with whatever languages we know at the present time.

III

We seem to have little comprehension of the Indian Chitta and Kāla. And therefore we are often bewildered by the variety of questions that arise in ordinary social living. What is the relationship between the individual, the society and the state? Which of them has primacy in which fields? What are the bases of healthy interaction between individuals? What is civilised behaviour in various situations? What are good manners? What is beautiful and what is ugly? What is education and what is learning?

In societies that retain their connection with their traditions, and which function according to the norms of their own Chitta and Kāla, all such questions are answered in the normal course. Of course the answers change from time to time, and context to context, but that too happens naturally, without conscious effort.

But since we have lost practically all contact with our tradition, and all comprehension of our Chitta and Kāla, there are no standards and norms on the basis of which we may answer these questions, and consequently we do not even dare to raise these questions openly any more. Ordinary Indians perhaps still retain an innate understanding of the norms of right action and right thought, though signs of confusion on such issues are often seen even among them. But our elite society seems to have lost all touch with any stable norms of behaviour and thinking. All around, and in all situations, there prevails a sense of confusion and forgetfulness. It seems as if we are left with no standards of discrimination at all.

A few years ago the then Governor of Andhra Pradesh visited the Sankaracharya of Sringeri. During their conversation a reference to the Varna Vyavastha arose in some context, and the Sankaracharya started explaining different facets of this Vyavastha to the Governor. At this the Governor advised the Acharya that he should avoid talking about the Varna arrangement. And the Sringeri Acharya fell silent. Later relating the incident to his

junior Acharya he regretted that India had reached a state, where the Acharyas could not even talk about Varna.

In a functioning society such an incident would seem rather odd. The oddity is not related to the validity or otherwise of the Varna arrangement. There can of course be many different opinions about that. But a Governor asking a Sankaracharya to stop referring to the Varna Vyavastha is a different matter. In a society rooted in its traditions and aware of its civilisational moorings, this dialogue between a head of the State and a religious leader would be hard to imagine. Saints are not asked to keep quiet by governors, except in societies that have completely lost their anchorage.

Religious leaders are not supposed to be answerable to the heads of the State. Their answerability is only to their tradition and to the community of their disciples. It is part of their calling to interpret the tradition, and to give voice to the Chitta and Kāla of their society, according to their understanding. No functioning societies can afford to curb them in their interpretations and articulations.

Numerous instances of similar lack of discrimination in social and personal conduct on the part of the best of India's men and women can be recounted. Consider the example of Sri Purushottam Das Tandon taking to the habit of wearing rubber chappals because he wanted to avoid the violence involved in leather-working. Sri Tandon was one of the most erudite leaders of India. His contribution to the struggle for Swaraj was great. He had deep faith in the concept of Ahimsa. And, in pursuance of the practice of Ahimsa, he took to wearing rubber chappals bought from Bata, the multinational footwear chain, giving up the ordinary leather chappals made by the local shoemaker. There must have been many others who, like Sri Tandon, chose Bata chappals over the locally made leather footwear in their urge to practise the principle of Ahimsa.

It is of course creditable that important leaders of India had become so careful about their personal conduct and apparel, and took such pains to ensure that they did not participate in the

killing of animals even indirectly. But Ahimsa does not merely imply non-killing. Ahimsa as understood in the Indian tradition and as elaborated by Mahatma Gandhi is a complete way of life. A major aspect of the Ahimsak way of life is to minimise one's needs and to fulfill these, as far as possible, from within one's immediate neighbourhood. This practice of relying preferentially on what is available in the immediate neighbourhood and locality is as important a part of the principle of Ahimsa as the doctrine of non-killing. That is why for Mahatma Gandhi Ahimsa and Swadesi were not two different principles. Looked at in this perspective, Sri Tandon's practice of ignoring the local cobbler and taking to the rubber footwear from Bata would have violated the aesthetic as well as the ethical sensibilities of the Ahimsak way of life.

Now-a-days it is fashionable in the high society of India to use special ethnic goods which are often brought from thousands of miles away. And, this is often done with the noble intention of encouraging Khadi and village industries, or Indian handicrafts. This, then, is another instance of our failure to discriminate between the essence of a principle, and its contextually and temporally limited applications.

Mahatma Gandhi laid stress upon Khadi and village industries as two specific applications of the principle of Swadesi. In the context and the time of the freedom struggle these two were perhaps the most effective applications that he could choose, though, as he said in 1944, given a different context he would have probably chosen agriculture as the activity that most symbolised Swadesi. In any case none of these specific activities and applications could in themselves form the essence of Swadesi. The essence is in the frame of mind that seeks to fulfill all societal needs from the resources and the capabilities of the immediate neighbourhood. Using ethnic goods imported from far off places violates the essence, while conforming to the form, of Swadesi.

The instances we have mentioned are probably matters of mere personal etiquette. It can be said that too much should not be read into these personal idiosyncrasies. We, however, seem to be

similarly befuddled on questions of much larger social relevance. For example, we seem to have so far failed to decide on the meaning of education for ourselves. Recently, there was a conference on education held at Saranath. A number of eminent scholars of India had gathered there. Amongst them there were vice-chancellors of major universities, reputed professors of philosophy, and celebrated practitioners of high literature. They had come together at Saranath to deliberate on the question of education. They had chosen a beautiful venue for their meeting. In Saranath there is a major institute of Buddhist learning, the Tibetan Institute. The conference on education was being held in this Institute. The director of the Tibetan Institute, Sri Samdhong Rinpoche, a high scholar himself – the highest Acharyas in Tibet, including the Dalai Lama, have the title of Rinpoche – sat through most of the deliberations of the conference.

At the beginning of this conference, I sought to know from the assembled scholars the meaning of education as understood by us. Is it merely the craft of reading and writing, or is it something else? There was no answer at that stage. But, on the fourth day of the conference, just before the conclusion of the deliberations, Sri Samdhong Rinpoche was asked to speak, and he took up the question of defining what we call education.

Sri Samdhong said that he had failed to grasp much of what had been said during the four days of the conference, because he did not know the meaning of the English word 'education'. In any case, he said, he did not know much English. But he knew what is meant by the term *Siksha*. And *Siksha* in his tradition, according to him, meant the acquisition of the knowledge of *Prajna*, *Sila* and *Samadhi*. In rough translation these terms mean right intellect, right conduct and right meditation. According to Sri Samdhong, knowledge of these three was education. The learning of various arts, crafts, and various physical techniques and sciences did not come under the term *Siksha*. At least in the tradition to which he belonged this learning, he said, was not called 'education'.

Now, if this is the Indian definition of education then it needs serious consideration. If knowledge of *Prajna*, *Sila* and *Samadhi* is what is called education in our tradition, then we have to understand this form of education. We also need to find out how many amongst us are educated in this sense of education.

Perhaps there are not many Indians who may be called educated on this criterion. There may be only half a percent of Indians who are educated in the practice of Prajna, Sīla and Samadhi. Or, there may even be five percent, for all we know. But supposing there are only half a percent Indians who turn out to be educated in this sense of education, even that number may be five to ten times the number of people adept at Prajna, Sīla and Samadhi throughout the world. According to our own definition of education, therefore, we may be the most educated people of the world.

It is possible that knowledge of Prajna, Sīla and Samadhi is only one of the various kinds of education known in our tradition. Perhaps what is more commonly recognised as education is the knowledge of correct personal and social conduct, and the ability to earn a living for oneself and one's dependents. If this is our definition of education, then some 90 to 95 percent of the Indian people are indeed educated. Viewed from this perspective some 5 to 7 percent of highly modernised Indians like us may seem rather uneducated. Because, most of us who have gone through the modern systems of education and learning have lost the knowledge of correct personal and social conduct within the Indian context, and have acquired no productive skills appropriate for making a living.

Or, perhaps neither the knowledge of appropriate conduct in one's own social context and the ability to make a living, nor the knowledge of Prajna, Sīla and Samadhi conform with our definition of education. Perhaps by education we only mean the capability of reading and writing. We define education to be merely literacy, and on this criterion we find 60 to 80 percent of Indians to be uneducated. But even if we define education in this limited sense, we still have to come to some decision about the type of literacy we wish to impart through what we perceive to be education.

If somebody knows reading and writing in Bhojpuri, then do we take him to be educated or uneducated? Perhaps to us he will seem uneducated. We shall probably say that though he is familiar with letters, yet familiarity with Bhojpuri letters hardly

constitutes literacy, and we may insist that to qualify as an educated person he should know at least Nagari Hindi.

But then someone may object that knowledge of only Hindi is also not enough. To be called educated a person must know at least Samskrit. And, then someone else will say that Samskrit literacy is hardly education. An educated person must know English, and that too of the Shakespearean variety. Or perhaps knowledge of the English that is taught in Oxford or spoken on the British Broadcasting Corporation broadcasts will alone meet our criterion of education. But at that point someone may tell us that the days of British English are over. This English is no use in the United States of America. Americans speak a new type of English, and it is the American English that is current in the world today. Then we shall perhaps insist that for an Indian to be properly educated he must know the American English.

If after a great deal of effort some Indians manage to learn good American English and thus get educated according to our current standards, we may find that by then America itself has lost its pre-eminence in the world. The future may turn out to be the age of the Germans, or of the Russians. It may even happen that one of the African nations starts dominating the world. Or the Arabs may take the lead. Then, shall we insist that for an Indian to be educated he must be literate in the language of whoever happen to look like the current masters of the world?

The attempt at imitating the world and following every passing fad can hardly lead us anywhere. We shall have no options in the world till we evolve a conceptual framework of our own, based on an understanding of our own Chitta and Kāla. Such a framework will at least provide us with a basis for discriminating between right and wrong, and between what may be useful for us and what is futile. Such a framework will also provide us with some criterion for right conduct and thought. And, it will allow us to define, though tentatively, our way of living and being. We shall thus have some sense of the direction along which we must proceed in order to bring India back into her own.

The conceptual framework we devise now may not last long. Within a few years such a framework may start looking inadequate, or inappropriate, or even erroneous. We may have to

revise or even completely recast it in say just five years. But any conceptual framework can only be a temporary guide to action. All such frameworks are after all human constructs. These are not meant to be unchangeable and indestructible.

Conceptual systems devised by man do get revised, changed and even thrown overboard. Basic axioms and laws of even physical sciences keep changing, fundamental principles of humanities and social sciences are of course revised every so often. There is nothing unchanging in any of this. And, if there is something of the ultimate reality, of the absolute truth, in the conceptual frameworks we devise, then that absolute in any case remains unaffected by the changes we make in our temporal devices. The business of the world runs on the basis of temporary and changeable conceptual frameworks, which provide nothing more than useful guidelines for immediate action. Some such temporary but usable conceptual framework of our understanding of the Indian Chitta and Kāla is what we need to create for ourselves.

We shall ourselves have to make the effort to construct this conceptual basis for Indian thought and action in the modern times. Others can hardly help us in this. They cannot possibly devise for us a conceptual structure that will be in consonance with our Chitta and Kāla. No outsiders could perform this task for us, even if they had wanted to. How can any outsider look into the Chitta and Kāla of another people and present them with a meaningful understanding of themselves?

The effort to construct a framework for Indian thought and action in the modern world and in the present times is not to be confused with the search for the ultimate, the Sanatana, truth of India. That of course is a long and perhaps unending search. But it is not the ultimate truth that we need immediately. We only need some basis from which to start asking the appropriate questions. And, when we start asking those questions, the answers will also begin to emerge. Or, perhaps there will never be any final answers. But the fact of having raised the right questions would have provided us with some direction to the right path. At least the confusion that prevails regarding right conduct and thought, even in the ordinary day-to-day situations, will get cleared.

In a fascinating context of Valmiki Ramayana, Sita questions Sri Rama about the violent tendencies that she discerns arising in him.² As Sri Rama leaves Chitrakuta and proceeds deeper into the forest, he and Lakshmana start flaunting their weapons and their physical prowess in a rather conspicuous manner. Noticing this, Sita warns Sri Rama against the warlike inclinations that the possession of weapons invariably generates. "As contact with fire works changes in a piece of wood," she says, "so the carrying of arms works alteration in the mind of him who carries them." And then she goes on to question the propriety of their bearing arms in the forest where they were supposed to be leading an ascetic life:

"The bearing of arms and retirement to the forest, practice of war and the exercise of asceticism are opposed to each other; let us therefore honour the moral code that pertains to the peace. Murderous thoughts, inspired by desire for gain, are born of the handling of weapons. When thou does return to Ayodhya, thou will be able to take up the duties of a warrior once more. The joy of my mother and father-in-law will be complete, if during the renunciation of thy kingdom, thou dost lead the life of an ascetic..."

Sri Rama did reply to the questions Sita raised about his warlike demeanour in the forest. But it is the questioning that is important. Not so much the answers. What is important is to keep raising questions about human conduct in various situations, not necessarily to arrive at final prescriptions.

In the same vein, of raising questions without insisting on any final answers, there is a dialogue between Bhrigu and Bharadvaja in the Santi Parva of Mahabharata, which is also reproduced almost in the same form in the Narada Purana.³ Bhrigu initiates the dialogue with his teaching that after creating the humans and other beings, Brahman classified the former into four different Varnas. Bharadvaja asks for the basis of this differentiation:

"(You say) that one Varna in the four fold division of men is different from other. What is the criterion thereof? Sweat, urine, faecal matter, phlegm, bile and blood circulate within everyone. Then on what basis is the Varna divided?"

Bhrigu answers that originally there was no distinction among the people. At the beginning all were of the same Varna. But with the passing of time they began to differentiate into different Varnas, according to their Karmas. But Bharadvaja persists with his questioning. He wants to know how an individual becomes a Brahmana, a Kshatriya, a Vaisya or a Sudra. Bhrigu says that it is the Karmas and the qualities of an individual that determine his Varna. And, so the dialogue goes on.

Here, as in the Ramayana context above, there are no final answers that the text provides. Perhaps this way of continuous questioning is the Indian way. To keep asking questions about personal and social conduct, and about the appropriate modes of social organisation, to keep meditating about these issues, and to keep finding provisional answers in various contexts, this way of continuous awareness and continuous reflection is perhaps the essence of the Indian way of life. We have somehow lost this habit of constant questioning and the courage to question. If we only start raising those questions again, we may regain some anchorage in our Chitta and Kāla.

IV

To form a comprehension of the Chitta and Kāla of India, we should probably begin with those aspects of the ancient Indian literature which seem to form the basis for all the rest. For example, there is the story of the creation and unfolding of the Universe, which is found with slight variation in most of the Puranas. This story seems to have a direct bearing on Indian consciousness, and Indian understanding of the Universe and its unfolding in time.

The story of creation that the Puranas recount is extremely powerful in itself. In bare essentials, according to this story, the creation begins with the intense effort, the Tapas, and the determination, the Samkalpa, of Brahman. The Universe once created passes through a number of cycles of growth and decay, and at the end is drawn back into Brahman. This cycle of creation of the Universe from Brahman and its disappearance into Him is repeated again and again according to the pre-defined flow of time. Within this large cycle, there are a number of shorter cycles, at the end of each of which the Universe gets destroyed, and created again at the beginning of the next. Thus the Universe keeps on passing through repeated cycles of creation and destruction, and there are series of cycles within cycles.

The terms 'creation' and 'destruction' are probably not wholly appropriate in this context. Because, at the time of creation, it is not something external to Him that Brahman creates. He only manifests Himself in the varied forms of the Universe, and at the end He merely contracts those manifestations into Himself, and thus there is in reality nothing that gets created or destroyed. The Universe, in a sense, is a mere play of Brahman, a cosmic game of repeated expansion and contraction of the ultimate essence of the Universe. But it is a game that is played according to well defined cycles of time. The Universe is play, but the play is not arbitrary. Even Brahman is governed by Kāla. He manifests and contracts according to a definite flow of time that even He cannot transcend.

Every Indian is probably aware of this Indian view of the Universe as the play of Brahman. Every Indian is also aware of the supremacy of Kāla in this play. Many Indians may not know the very detailed arithmetic of the various cycles of time that is given in the Puranas. But the thought that the Universe is a play that had no beginning and will have no end, and that this play of Brahman proceeds according to the inexorable flow of Kāla, is deeply etched on the Chitta of the people of India.

According to the Puranas, in these cycles of creation and decay of the Universe, the basic unit is that of Chaturyuga. Every new cycle begins with Krita Yuga. This first Yuga of creation is the period of bliss. In the Krita the Jeeva, the being, is not yet much differentiated from Brahman. There is of course yet no differentiation at all between one being and another. Amongst human beings there is only one Varna. In fact the concept of Varna has probably not yet arisen.

In the Krita life is simple and easy. There is no complexity anywhere. Complicating phenomena, like Mada, Moha, Lobha and Ahankara – forgetfulness, attachment, greed and egotism respectively, in rough translation – have not yet manifested themselves. There is no Kama, sexual desire, either. Procreation takes place merely through the wish, the Samkalpa. The needs of life are rather few. No special effort needs to be made for sustaining life. There is something called 'Madhu', which is abundantly available. Everyone lives on 'Madhu'. And, this 'Madhu' is self-generated. 'Madhu' is not the honey made through the efforts of the bees. No effort is involved in making or collecting it. In this simple blissful state of life even knowledge is not required. Therefore, there is no Veda yet in the Krita Yuga.

This state of bliss lasts for a very long time. According to the calculations of the Puranas, the length of the Krita Yuga is 17,28,000 years. But with the passage of time the Universe starts getting more and more complex. The innate order starts getting disturbed. Dharma starts getting weakened. And, towards the end of Krita, the creator has to take birth on earth in various forms to re-establish the Dharma.

Several Avatars of Vishnu, the aspect of the Brahman charged with the maintenance of the Universe, take place in the Krita, and the cycle of decay and re-establishment of Dharma, through the direct intervention of Vishnu, gets repeated several times already in Krita. But at the end of every cycle of decay of Dharma and its re-establishment, the Universe is left in a state of higher complexity. The Dharma is restored by the Avatara, but the original innate simplicity of life does not return. The Universe moves farther away from the original bliss. While the order of life is restored, life moves to a lower level. And, through these cyclical movements, each leading to a somewhat lower level of existence, the Krita Yuga finally comes to an end.

At the beginning of the next Yuga, the Treta, the Universe is no longer as simple and straightforward as it was in the Krita. According to the Puranas, Dharma, as symbolized by a bull, which stood on all its four feet to securely support the earth during the Krita, is left with only three feet in the Treta Yuga. In this state of relative instability, man requires knowledge and also some administrative authority, in order to sustain Dharma. That is why man is provided with a Veda and a King at the beginning of Treta. This is also the time when Mada, Moha, Lobha and Ahankara, etc., appear for the first time. But at the beginning of Treta these frailties of the human mind are as yet only in their nascent state, and thus can be controlled relatively easily.

In Treta the needs of life start multiplying. Life can no more be lived now on mere 'Madhu'. But there is no agriculture yet. Some cereals grow without any ploughing and sowing, etc. These cereals and the fruits of a few varieties of self-growing trees suffice for the maintenance of life. There are not many varieties of trees and vegetation yet. Differentiation has not yet gone that far.

In this Yuga of limited needs and requirements, man starts learning some skills and acquiring a few crafts and techniques. Some skill and technique are required for the gathering of cereals and fruits, even if these grow on their own without any effort. At this stage man also starts forming homes, Gramas and cities. For these human settlements some more skills, crafts and techniques are called forth.

With increasing complexity of the Universe, differentiation sets in. In Treta man is divided into three Varnas. Brahmana, Kshatriya, and Vaisya Varnas are formed in the Treta. But there are no Sudras yet.

In spite of this differentiation and division, communication between various forms of life is not yet obstructed. Dialogue between man and other creatures is still possible. The events described in the Valmiki Ramayana happen towards the end of Treta. In the Ramayana, Sri Rama is seen communicating with facility with the birds of the forest, and with various animals. He calls upon the Vanaras and Bhalus, probably meaning monkeys and bears etc., to help him in defeating the great scholar and warrior Ravana. The story of Ramayana probably indicates that till the end of Treta communication between man and other creatures had not stopped. There was differentiation between the various forms of life, but it was not so deep as to foreclose all possibilities of contact and dialogue.

Treta also lasts a very long time. But the duration of Treta is only three fourths that of the Krita. According to some texts, Treta ends with the departure of Sri Rama from earthly existence. And, then the third Yuga, the Dvapara begins. What is known as history in the Indian perception also seems to begin with Dvapara. In Dvapara the Universe has moved very far from the easy simplicity of the Krita. All living beings and all phenomena start getting sharply differentiated. The one Veda of Treta now gets divided into four. And, then even these four acquire many branches. It is in this Yuga that various arts, skills and crafts start appearing. Knowledge gets divided and subdivided, and numerous Sastras come into being.

In the complex Universe of Dvapara man needs a variety of skills and techniques in order to live. So, a large number of technologies and sciences start evolving. Agriculture also does not remain simple any more. Growing of cereals now requires a number of complex operations and great skill. Perhaps, it is to bear the multiplicity of newly evolving arts and crafts that the Sudra as a Varna comes into existence for the first time at the end of Treta or the beginning of Dvapara.⁴ Dvapara thus acquires the full complement of four Varnas.

Dvapara Yuga in a sense is the Yuga of the kings. Some present day scholars even reckon the beginning of Dvapara from the time of the ascendance of Sri Rama to the throne of Ayodhya. The multitude of stories about the kings that is found in the Santi-Parva of the Mahabharata, and in the other Puranas, seem to belong to the Dvapara Yuga. And, the atmosphere that prevails in these stories of the kings is quite different from the atmosphere of the Ramayana. The Ramayana period is clearly the period of the dominance of Dharma. But the kings of Dvapara seem to be always immersed in Kshatriya-like excitement and anger. There is said to be unbounded jealousy and greed in them. Unnecessary cruelty seems to be an integral part of their mental make-up. Perhaps that is why the Puranas believe that Dharma is left with only two feet in the Dvapara. Founded on that unstable basis Dharmic life keeps on getting disrupted during the Dvapara Yuga, which is to last for half the duration of Krita.

In this atmosphere of the decay of Dharma, and jealousy, greed and cruelty of the Kshatriyas, Prithvi, the goddess earth, finally approaches Vishnu with the request that He should now relieve her of this unbearable burden of creation gone astray. Then Vishnu takes birth in the form of Sri Krishna and Sri Balarama. Other gods and goddesses also appear on earth in various forms. And, after all this grand preparation, the Mahabharata war happens. It is commonly believed that in the war of Mahabharata Dharma won over a-Dharma. But in spite of this victory of Dharma the coming of the Kali Yuga cannot be stopped.

Within a few years of the culmination of the Mahabharata war Sri Krishna and the whole of his Yadava Vamsa come to their end. The event of the extermination of the Yadava Vamsa is taken to be the beginning of the fourth Yuga, the Kali Yuga. Learning of the departure of Sri Krishna from the earth, the Pandavas also depart for the Himalaya, along with Draupadi, to end their lives. Thus all the protagonists of the Mahabharata war are gone. Only Parikshit, the grandson of the Pandavas, who miraculously survives the destruction wrought by the Mahabharata war, is left behind. After a short time he too dies, of snake-bite. Parikshit is said to be the first king of the Kali Yuga.

It is said that the Mahabharata was fought 36 years before the beginning of Kali. According to the commonly accepted modern scholarly calculations, the current year is the 5094th year of Kali. This is only the early phase of Kali Yuga. Like the other three Yugas, the Kali Yuga is also to last a long time, even though the duration of Kali is only one fourth that of Krita. The total duration of Kali is believed to be of 4,32,000 years.

The main characteristic of the Kali Yuga is that in this Yuga Dharma stands only on one foot. Dharma becomes rather unstable in Dvapara itself. But, in Kali the position of Dharma becomes precarious. In this Yuga of wavering Dharma creation has gone much beyond the simple bliss of Krita. Complexity, division and differentiation are the norm. Mere living becomes a difficult art. Life loses the natural ease and felicity of the earlier Yugas.

But in this difficult Yuga the path of Dharma is made somewhat easier for man. The piety and virtue that accrue only through great Tapas in the earlier Yugas can be earned in the Kali Yuga by simple and ordinary acts of virtue. This is perhaps due to the compassion of the creator for those caught in the complexity of Kali Yuga. This compassion generates a continuing process of balance between the state of man in the four Yugas, at least as regards his relationship with Brahman. This can perhaps also be seen as the process of continuous balancing between the sacred and mundane attitudes of man.

This in short is the Indian story of creation. Most Indians form their view of the Universe and their place in it on the basis of this story. The details of this story and the style of narration vary from Purana to Purana. But the basic facts seem unvarying and are clearly etched in all renderings of this story. And according to this basic Indian understanding of creation and its unfolding, the Universe after creation constantly moves towards lower and lower levels of existence and being. The various arts and crafts, various sciences and technologies, and various kinds of knowledge arise at relatively later stages of the unfolding of the Universe. All these help to make life livable in a Universe that has degraded to a high level of complexity. But none of these arts, crafts, sciences and technologies can change the downward direction of the Universe.

The natural tendency of the Universe to keep moving towards more and more complexity, more and more differentiation and division, and thus farther and farther away from the state of natural simplicity and bliss, cannot be halted by even the Avataras of the creator Himself. Such Avataras arrive again and again, but even they are able to restore only a degree of balance in the naturally disturbed state of the Universe. They, too, cannot reverse the march. That is why in spite of all the efforts of Sri Krishna, and His massive and far-reaching intervention in the form of the Mahabharata war, the onset of Kali Yuga can neither be stopped, nor delayed. But without the cleaning up of the burdens of Dvapara, that the great Mahabharata war achieved, the coming of the Kali might have been too much to bear for mere man.

The major lesson of the Indian story of creation is of the smallness of man and his efforts in the vast drama of the Universe that has no beginning and no end. The cosmic play of creation unfolds on a very large scale, in time cycles of huge dimensions. In that large expanse of time and Universe, neither the man living in the simple bliss of Krita, nor the man caught in the complexity of Kali, has much significance. Simplicity and complexity, bliss and anxiety keep following each other. But the play goes on.

The cycle of Chaturyuga seems big to us. It takes 43,20,000 years for the Universe to pass through this one cycle of Chaturyuga. But according to the Pauranic conception a thousand such cycles, called a Kalpa, make merely one day of Brahma, the godhead representing Brahman as the creator. After a day lasting a Kalpa, Brahma rests for the night, which too is a Kalpa long. And, then another Kalpa and another cycle of a thousand Chaturyuga cycles begins. Three hundred and sixty such days and nights, of a Kalpa each, make a year of Brahma. Brahma lives a life of a hundred years. And, then another Brahma arrives and the play starts all over again. In these cosmic cycles of the inexorable Kāla what is the significance of mere man living his momentary life in some tiny corner of the Universe?

V

The peculiarly Indian awareness of the insignificance of man and his efforts in the unending flow of Kāla is however not in consonance with modernity. The belief that in every new cycle the Universe, from the moment of its creation, starts declining towards a lower and lower state is also incompatible with modern consciousness. And to look upon various arts and crafts, and sciences and technologies, etc., merely as temporary human artifacts required to sustain life in a constantly decaying state of the Universe goes completely counter to the modern view of sciences and technologies, and of human capabilities in general. According to the world view of modernity, man, through his efforts, his sciences and technologies, his arts and crafts, and his various other capabilities, keeps on refining the world, lifting it higher and higher, making it better and better, and moulding it more and more into the image of heaven.

If the Indian understanding of the unfolding of the Universe, and the place of man and his efforts in it, is so contrary to the concepts of modernity, then this contrariness has to be seriously pondered over. The structures that we wish to implant in India and the processes of development that we want to initiate can take root here, only if they seem compatible with the Indian view of the Universe, with the Indian Chitta and Kāla. Structures and processes that are contrary to the picture of the Universe and its unfolding etched on the Indian mind are unlikely to find much response in India. At least the people of India, those who are still basically anchored in their own Chitta and Kāla, are unlikely to participate in any efforts that seem essentially alien to the Indian comprehension of the Universe.

We must, therefore, work out what the thoughts and ideas ingrained in the Indian consciousness imply in practice. What structures and processes seem right from the perspective of Indian Chitta and Kāla? What sort of life seems worth living and what sort of efforts worth making from that perspective? Before meditating afresh on such temporal structures and models, however, we shall have to comprehend and come to terms with some

of the major aspects of the Indian ways of organising the mundane day-to-day world of social and physical reality.

Differentiation between what is called the Para Vidya, knowledge of the sacred, and the Apara Vidya, knowledge of the mundane, is one such aspect of the Indian ways of organising physical and social reality, which seems to be directly related to the fundamental Indian consciousness, to the Indian Chitta and Kāla. At some early stage in the Indian tradition, knowledge must have split into these two streams. Knowledge that deals with the unchangeable Brahman beyond the continuously changing temporal world, knowledge that shows the path towards the realisation of Brahman and union with Him, is Para Vidya. And that which deals with the day-to-day problems of temporal life and makes ordinary life in this complex world possible is Apara Vidya. In the Indian tradition it is believed that Para Vidya is higher than the Apara Vidya. In fact, it is said, that Para Vidya alone is real and the Apara Vidya is merely an illusion.

When this division between Para and Apara knowledge occurred in the Indian tradition cannot be said with any certainty. This could not have happened in the Krita Yuga. Because in that Yuga no knowledge at all was required. There was no Veda in the Krita. This division is unlikely to have occurred in Treta also. Because there was only one undifferentiated Veda at that stage. This sharp differentiation may, however, have arisen sometime towards the end of Treta and the beginning of Dvapara, when a variety of skills and crafts started appearing on the earth to help man live with the increasing complexity of the Universe.

It is commonly believed that the four Vedas, along with their various branches and connected Brahmanas, Upanishads, etc., form the repository of Para Vidya. And, the Puranas and Itihasas, etc., as also the various canonical texts of different sciences and crafts like the Ayurveda, Jyotisha, etc., deal with the Apara Vidya. In reality, however, the canonical texts of various disciplines do not differentiate between Para Vidya and Apara Vidya as sharply as is commonly believed.

It is probably true that the Upanishads deal with nothing but Para Vidya. But, the same can hardly be said about the

Vedas. In a large number of contexts the Vedas seem to be dealing with such mundane subjects as would fall only under the category of Apara Vidya. On the other hand, there are extensive discussions in the Puranas about the attributes of Brahman and about the possible modes of realising Him, which are the subject of Para Vidya. Then there are disciplines like Vyakarana, grammar, which of necessity belong to both Para and Apara, because Vyakarana is needed for the proper communication of either kind of knowledge. For the same reason, Jyotisha Sastra, the science of the motion of stars and planets and the art of determining time and place, must also belong to both the Para and Apara streams to some extent. But even in the texts of purely mundane disciplines, like those of Ayurveda, issues related to Para Vidya are discussed, and attempts are made, for example, to perceive the problem of maintenance of health within the context of man's relation with the Universe and the Brahman.

In spite of the presence of both streams of knowledge together in almost all canonical texts, the dividing line between Para Vidya and Apara Vidya seems to be etched rather deeply in the minds of the Indian people. On raising the context of the Puranas in routine discussion among even the ordinary people, one is likely to be told that these tales and fables are not to be relied upon, and that the Vedas alone are true. It seems that the Indian mind has somehow come to believe that all that is connected with Apara Vidya is rather low, and that knowledge of the Para alone is true knowledge. This consciousness seems to have become an integral part of the Indian mind. And high scholars of Indian literature, who ought to know better, seem to believe even more than the others that the essential Indian concern is only with the Para, and the great body of Apara knowledge found in the Indian tradition is of little relevance in understanding India.

This contempt for the Apara Vidya is probably not fundamental to Indian consciousness. Perhaps the original Indian understanding was not that the Apara is to be shunned. What was perhaps understood and emphasised at an early stage of the evolution of Indian thought was that while dealing with Apara, while living within the complexity of the world, one should not forget that there is a simple undifferentiated reality behind this seeming complexity, that there is the unchangeable Brahman beyond this ever-changing mundane world. What the Indians

realised was the imperative need to keep the awareness of the Para, of the ultimate reality, intact while going through the complex routine of daily life. What they emphasised was the need to regulate the mundane in the light of the Indian understanding of the ultimate unity of the Universe, to keep the Apara Vidya informed of the Para.

With the passage of time this emphasis on regulating the Apara Vidya through our understanding of the Para Vidya turned into a contempt for the Apara. How and when this happened is a question to which we need to give very serious thought. And, indeed, we have to find some acceptable interpretation of the appropriate relationship between Para Vidya and Apara Vidya within the larger Indian understanding of the processes of the creation and the unfolding of the Universe, and the inexorable movement of Kāla.

There is evidently an imbalance in our attitudes towards Para Vidya and Apara Vidya, which has to be somehow remedied. It is possible that this imbalance is not of recent creation. In the world of scholarship this imbalance may have arisen rather early. It is the usual tendency of scholarship to emphasise the abstract and the formal over the concrete and the contextual reality of day-to-day living. This normal scholarly preoccupation with the abstract may have got incorporated in basic Indian literature over its long history. Or, perhaps it was felt that the details of ordinary living cannot form the subject-matter of high literature.⁵ Or, it may be that in our mentally and spiritually depressed state we have been too obsessed with the Para knowledge of India, and consequently have failed to seriously search for the texts of Apara learning, and therefore this seeming imbalance of Indian literature and Indian thought may merely be a consequence of our lopsided viewing.

Whatever may be the causes of the imbalance in our attitude towards Para Vidya and Apara Vidya, it cannot be denied that the available literature of Indian civilisation and the commonly agreed understanding of the Chitta and Kāla of India today seem abnormally skewed towards the Para. This imbalance has affected our thinking on numerous other subjects and issues. For instance, take our understanding of the Varna Vyavastha. In interpreting

this Vyavastha we have somehow assumed that the Varnas connected with textual practices and rituals of the Para Vidya are higher, and those involved in the Apara are lower. Closeness of association with what are defined to be Para practices becomes the criterion for determining the status of a Varna and evolving a hierarchy between them. Thus the Brahmanas associated with the recitation and study of the Vedas become the highest, and the Sudras engaged in the practice of the arts and crafts of ordinary living become the lowest.

This hierarchy may not in reality be a fundamental aspect of classical Indian thought. There is some discussion on this subject in the Puranas. We have already referred to the dialogue in the Mahabharata and the Narada Purana, where Bharadvaja questions Bhrigu on the rationale of the Varna hierarchy. Mahatma Gandhi also believed that it cannot be right to place one Varna above the other. Around 1920, Gandhiji wrote and spoke a great deal on this subject. But even his efforts were not sufficient to restore an appropriate balance in our current thinking on the Varna Vyavastha.

But, the issue of the hierarchy of the Varnas is not a closed question in the Indian tradition. During the last two thousand years, there have occurred numerous debates on this question within the Indian tradition. And, in practical social life such a formulation of high and low could not have survived anyway. The concepts of the irreconcilability of Para Vidya and Apara Vidya, and the corresponding asymmetry between the Brahmana and the Sudra, could never have meant much in actual practice in any healthily functioning social organisation. The canonical and fundamental texts of Indian literature also do not show this degree of imbalance on the question of the relative status of Para and Apara Vidya, and correspondingly that of the Brahmana and the Sudra. The imbalance seems to have arisen mainly through the interpretations of the canonical texts that have been made from time to time.

The Purusha Sukta indeed states that the Sudras appeared from the feet of Brahman, the Vaisyas from the thighs, the Kshatriyas from the arms and the Brahmanas from the head. But this does not necessarily define a hierarchy between the Varnas. The Sukta is a statement of the identity of the microcosm and the macrocosm. It presents the world as an extension of the body of

Brahman. In its cryptic Vedic style, the Sukta informs us that the creation is a manifestation of Brahman, it is His extension, His play. The Sukta also probably recounts the variety of tasks that have to be performed in the world that Brahman creates. But nowhere in the Purusha Sukta is it said that some of these tasks, and consequently the performers of those tasks, are better than others. That the functions of the head are higher than those of the feet could only be a matter of a somewhat literal interpretation that came later. At another time such interpretations can even get reversed. After all it is only on his feet that a man stands securely on earth. It is only when the feet are stable that the head and hands play their parts. When the feet are not securely placed on the earth, nothing else remains secure either.

Incidentally, the Purusha Sukta does not even imply that all four Varnas came into existence simultaneously at the beginning of creation. The Sukta does not give the story of creation and its unfolding – it only explains, through the analogy of the body of Brahman, an already manifest and differentiated Universe. In fact, as we have seen earlier, the Pauranic texts seem to suggest that at the beginning there was only one Varna, and it is only later as the need for newer and newer human capacities started arising that the Varnas divided, first into two and then into three and four.

Like the hierarchy of Varnas, there is also the hierarchy of the Karmas, of actions, in our present day Indian consciousness. And this hierarchy of Karmas also seems to have arisen from the ideas of the superiority of the Para over the Apara. Now, the concept that every action has an unalterable consequence is a fundamental aspect of Indian consciousness. As we believe that everything that is created must come to an end, so we believe that every event that happens must have a cause in a previous action. Thus, from the Indian perspective, life and indeed the whole creation seem like a long sequence of actions and their consequences, with the consequences leading to further consequences and so on. And all that happens in the world takes place within this interconnected sequence of Karmas.

Yet this fundamental theory of Karma seems to have nothing to do with the commonly prevalent ideas about the

hierarchy of Karmas. Nothing in that theory implies that some kinds of Karmas are superior and others are inferior. The idea that, for example, recitation of the Vedas is a high Karma and weaving of cloth is low does not follow from the Karma theory. These ideas of high and low Karmas seem to have arisen out of the imbalance in our perception of the Para Vidya and Apara Vidya.

This belief in a hierarchy of Karmas has, however, got so deeply ingrained in us that even our major scholars often explain away large scale poverty and hunger as the consequences of the earlier lowly Karmas of the sufferers. Such interpretations of the Karma theory have become so mechanical, that even as high a scholar as Sri Brahmananda Saraswati, Sankaracharya of Joshi Math, used to casually state that destitution and poverty are only matters of Karmas. But, this is hardly an appropriate interpretation of the Karma theory. In any case, the theory could not have implied that even the best of our men dismiss all thoughts of compassion for their fellow human beings and give up all efforts to redress social imbalances.

The meaning of the Karma theory is perhaps something else. All Karmas, all actions, are after all the same in themselves. What probably differentiates one Karma from another is the mental attitude and the sense of concern with which it is performed. It is the mode of performing a Karma that makes it high or low. If recitation of the Vedas is done with concern and attention, then that recitation is a high Karma. By the same token if someone cooks food with great attention and care, then that cooking too is a high Karma. In India cooking was in fact one of the functions of the Brahmanas. There are Brahmana cooks even today. And, it seems that the recitation of the Vedas and cooking of food are indeed not such different Karmas. A Brahmana is likely to acquire the same burden of evil Karmas, whether he recites the Vedas without care and attention, with the attitude of somehow completing an uninteresting and thankless task that has been forced upon him, or whether he cooks food with the same attitude and similar lack of attention and care.

The same must hold for all other kinds of Karmas. There is nothing inherently evil or low in the Karma of sweeping the floor, or bringing up children, or washing clothes, or making pots, or shoes, or weaving cloth, or looking after cattle, or

ploughing and sowing the land. All these Karmas become high if performed with care, attention and concern, and become low otherwise. They could not be high or low in themselves.

There is a Mahabharata story that seems highly instructive in this context. Once there was a Rishi. He sat unmoving, at one place, in deep meditation, for uncountable number of years. One day his meditation was disturbed and he woke up with a start. He found that the excreta of a sparrow had fallen on his head. In great anger, he turned his eyes towards the sparrow, and the bird was at once burnt to ashes. Seeing this the Rishi thought that his penance had been accomplished and he had achieved great powers.

He got up from his meditation, and walked up to the nearby habitation. There he knocked on the door of the first dwelling he reached and asked for food. The lady of the house was probably busy with her household chores. It took her some time to open the door and answer the Rishi's call. This delay infuriated the Rishi. When the lady of the house finally opened her door, the Rishi looked at her with intense anger, just as he had looked at the sparrow. But nothing happened. And, the lady said, with great composure, "Maharaj, please do not unnecessarily trouble yourself. Give up your anger. After all, I am not that sparrow."

The Rishi was stunned. He could not understand how the powers he had acquired through such great penance proved so utterly futile against this ordinary woman. And, how had she, sitting at her home, divined the incident of the sparrow? He wanted to know the secret of her powers. But she referred him to a seller of animal flesh.

The Rishi was even more surprised. He went to the meat-seller, and the latter told him that the lady against whom he tried to use his powers was performing her household duties with great care and attention. Her housekeeping was in no way inferior to his meditation and penance. And, in any case, the reward of his penance was fully exhausted when he looked at that poor sparrow in such anger. The meat-seller also told the Rishi that he himself was engaged in the selling of animal flesh,

but he performed this task with great care and devotion. All tasks performed with such an attitude are equally great. What matters is to do your task well, with concern and care. It does not matter whether what you do is penance and meditation, or merely house-keeping, or even selling of animal flesh.

This Mahabharata story presents one interpretation of the theory of Karma. There may be several other interpretations in Indian literature. Similarly there would be numerous interpretations of Para Vidya and Apara Vidya, and also of the Varna Vyavastha. Comprehending and appreciating these various interpretations, and working out a new interpretation that falls within the ancient tradition and is yet capable of being related to the modern contexts, is perhaps the paramount task of Indian scholarship. This continuous re-interpretation and renewal of the tradition, continuous meditation on the ways of manifesting the Indian Chitta and Kāla in practical day-to-day life, and the continuous exploration of the Indian way of life in different times and different contexts, is what the Rishis, Munis and other great scholars of India have been concerned with through the ages.

VI

There is an episode in the Vishnu Purana concerning Maharshi Vyasa, which seems to offer an interesting interpretation of our present Kāla, the Kali Yuga. It is said that once Vyasa was bathing in a river. At that time some Rishis came to visit him, and from a distance they saw that the great Vyasa, standing in the river, was clapping his hands and shouting, 'Great is the Kali Yuga', 'Great are the women of the earth', and 'Great are the Sudras'.

The Rishis were wonder-struck. Later they asked Vyasa the reason for his loud praise of the Kali Yuga, the women and the Sudras. Vyasa explained that what had been possible for men in the other three Yugas with great effort and penance was easily accessible to them in the Kali Yuga. In the Kali Yuga, said Vyasa, man could achieve realisation of the Brahman with merely a little devotion. And, the women and the Sudras could obtain that realisation by merely performing their mundane day-to-day tasks well, with care and concern.

Vyasa is one of the great Rishis of India. It is said that in Dvapara he divided the one Veda into four, and later he divided them into numerous branches. Later still, he composed the Mahabharata epic, especially for the edification of the women and the Sudras. In the writing of this epic, Ganesa himself acted as his scribe, because none else could have matched the pace and sophistication of Vyasa's composition. But reflecting on the state of the world after completing his great epic, Vyasa felt a sadness in his heart. He noticed that the women and the Sudras had been deprived of the Vedas, and the epic that he had composed for them was full of pain and sorrow. It was a story that provided no solace to the mind, generated no enthusiasm for life, and gave no pleasure.

Then, the great Vyasa, to make up for these deficiencies and with compassion for mankind, composed the Puranas.

Through the Puranas he tried to make the path of devotion and faith in the creator easily available to all. Amongst the Puranas, Srimadbhagavata Purana seems the most steeped in the faith and devotion that Vyasa wished to propagate. Srimadbhagavata Purana, composed on the advice of Narada Muni, describes events in the life of Vāsudeva Srikrishna. And, this Purana is today probably the main source of the non-scholarly Indian Grihastha's acquaintance with the ancient Indian literature.

The great compassion of Vyasa, which propelled him to compose the Puranas, his feeling of concern and care for man – caught in the complexity of the universe and pulled farther and farther away from his creator by the flow of time – is transparently reflected in the above episode from the Vishnu Purana, where he proclaims the Kali Yuga to be the Yuga of the women and the Sudras. This interpretation of the Kali Yuga seems highly significant. It is possible that as there is only one Varna in the Krita Yuga, so in the Kali Yuga too only one Varna remains, that of the Sudras. Perhaps in the Kali Yuga everyone turns into a Sudra. Or, perhaps, in this Yuga of the ascendance of the Apara Vidya, the role of the women and the Sudras, the major practitioners of the Apara Vidya, of the practical arts and crafts of sustaining life, becomes the most valuable. In our own times, Mahatma Gandhi expressed the same thought, when he insisted that in this Yuga everyone must become a Sudra.

There is, of course, no point in asking whether Vyasa's interpretation of the Kali Yuga is correct or not. All interpretations keep changing with time and the context. What matters, perhaps, is not the accuracy of an interpretation, but the sense of compassion that the interpreter feels for his fellow beings. It is this compassion, the concern for the state of all beings and respect for their efforts, even if these seem insignificant on the cosmic canvas, which makes a particular interpretation valuable. Only in the light of such compassion and concern can we hope to make any meaningful new interpretations of the Indian Chitta and Kāla. Contemporary interpretation flowing from such transparent compassion and concern alone can have any chance of forming a secure basis for the re-establishment of the Indian way of life today. Interpretations that lack compassion, like the one about poverty

and destitution being the result of one's own earlier Karmas, are not going to be of much help in such an effort.

Along with the deep sense of compassion for fellow beings, there must also be an abiding faith in the inherent soundness and strength of the Indian tradition. There are many amongst us who believe that Indian civilisation was indeed great in some distant past, but now its days are gone. Many of us sincerely believe that with the rise of modernity Indian Chitta and Kāla and Indian understanding of creation and unfolding of the universe have lost all significance, and there is no use any more of deliberating upon such matters. Even someone like Sri Jayendra Saraswati, Sankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham, seems to suggest that there was a time when we were great, and the memory of that time is valuable, but there is nothing that can be said with any assurance about the relevance and place of Indian consciousness in the present.

But what is of significance is always the present. If we wish to affirm the validity of Indian consciousness, of Indian Chitta and Kāla, we can do so only by establishing the Indian way of life in the present-day world. And, this re-assertion of India in the present context is the major task today which Indian scholarship, Indian politics, Indian sciences and technologies, Indian arts, crafts and other diverse skills must accomplish.

It is conceivable that some sections of the Indian people do not subscribe to the traditional Indian understanding of creation and unfolding of the Universe, and probably some of them even believe that they have no relationship with the Indian Chitta and Kāla. There may also be Indians, especially among the Indian Muslims, Christians and Parsis, who do not believe that there are any such times as the Kali Yuga, or any cycles of Kāla as the Chaturyuga and Kalpa, etc. Someone like Periyar Ramaswami Nayakar, and his followers, may even deny the validity of these Kāla cycles. In different parts of India there may be many other people who do not believe in any of the concepts that seem to be fundamental to Indian consciousness. But, the differences in the beliefs of all these people may not be as large as they are made out to be. And, many of those who claim to have no faith in the Puranas often have their own Jati Puranas, which in their

essential conception are not much different from the Puranas written by Vyasa.

This at least can be said about all Indians, even about the ordinary Christians of India, that their Chitta and Kāla have little in common with modern European civilisation. They are all equally alien in the world of European modernity. In fact, except for at most half a percent of Indians, the rest of India has precious little to do with European modernity. Whatever else may be etched on the minds of these 99.5 percent of Indians, there is nothing there that even remotely resembles the consciousness of the modern West or even that of ancient Greece or Rome.

But in the unbounded flow of modernity almost every Indian seems to have lost the ability to express his innate consciousness even in small ways. Even his festivals, that in a way reminded him of his Kāla, and gave him, till recently, some little pleasure in his otherwise impoverished drab life, and even the most vital of his rituals, those of birth, marriage and death, that gave him a sense of belonging to the universe of his Chitta and Kāla, have fallen by the wayside. Most Indians, of course, still perform these festivals and rituals, but these have been so reviled, that there is little grace left in their mechanical and often unbelieving performance. Not surprisingly the festivals give us little pleasure and the rituals provide no solace. We have lost our identity, our anchorage in our civilisation. And, this loss of identity afflicts us all. This is a pain that practically all Indians, including the Christians, the Muslims and others, have to bear in common.

We have to find some way out of such a state of rootlessness. We have to somehow find an anchor again in our civilisational consciousness, in our innate Chitta and Kāla. Some four or five years ago, Indira Gandhi Memorial Trust had organised an international gathering of scholars to deliberate on the fundamental questions of Indian identity. It is said that in that gathering a European scholar had suggested that the only way out for India was in her taking to Christianity in a big way.

This of course is not an entirely new thought. For at least the last two hundred years, Christianisation of India has been seriously thought of as an option for taking India out of what had seemed to many, especially in Britain, as the morass of her civilisational memory, and giving her a more easily understandable identity. There have also been large scale governmental efforts to help in this direction. And the so-called Westernisation of India, which even the governments of independent India have been pursuing with such seeming vigour, is not very different from India's Christianisation.

If all these efforts had led to a thorough-going Westernisation of the Indian mind so that the people of India on their own could start associating themselves with the late twentieth and the twenty-first centuries of the West, then that perhaps would have been some sort of a solution of India's problems. If that change of Indian civilisational consciousness had taken place, then the ordinary Indian today would think and behave more or less like the ordinary man of Europe and America, and his priorities and seekings would have become similar.

Indians would then have also lost the peculiarly Indian belief, which even the most ordinary of the ordinary Indians harbours in his heart, that he is a part of the ultimate Brahman, and by virtue of this relationship with Brahman, he too is completely free and sovereign in himself. In place of this feeling of freedom and sovereignty, that so exasperates those who seek to administer or reform India, the Indian too would have then acquired the Western man's innate sense of total subordination to the prevailing system, a subordination of the mind that man in the West has always displayed irrespective of whatever the system was in any particular Western phase, whether it was a despotic feudal oligarchy, a slave society like that of ancient Greece and Rome, a society of *Laissez Faire*, or of Marxist Communism, or the currently ascendant society of market forces.

Notwithstanding the prosperity and affluence that the West has gained during the last forty or fifty years, the innate consciousness of the Western man seems to have remained one of total subordination to the given system. At the level of the mind he is still very much the slave of the imaginary Republic of Plato and the very real empire of Rome. The consciousness of the Indian people would have also been moulded into the same state

of subordination as that of the Western man, if the attempts of the last two hundred years to Westernize or Christianise India had reached anywhere. And, even such slavery of the mind might have been a way out of the present Indian drift.

But perhaps such simple solutions to civilisational problems are well nigh impossible. It does not seem to be given to man to completely erase his civilisational consciousness and establish a new universe of the mind. Not even conquerors are able to so metamorphose the mind of the conquered. The only way such metamorphosis can be achieved is perhaps by completely destroying the conquered civilisation, eliminating every single individual, and starting afresh with an imported population. This is what occurred, more or less, in the Americas and Australia. India has so far been saved this denouement at the hands of Europe, though not for any lack of trying.

If the Westernisation of India is not possible, then we shall have to revert to our own civilisational moorings. We shall have to come back into our own Chitta and Kāla. Ridding ourselves of the Western ways of thought and action, we shall have to start understanding ourselves and the world from our own civilisational perspective. This effort to understand ourselves and our Kāla will probably be similar to the way Vyasa, in his Mahabharata, surveys the complete story of Indian civilisation, explores its diverse seekings, its ways of thought and action, and then, shows a path that is appropriate to the Kali Yuga. Or, perhaps it will be like the way Srikrishna offers Arjuna a glimpse of the Universe and on the basis of that view of the world, the Visvarupa Darsana, shows him the way out of his dilemma. In any case, we shall have to form a view of the world and the present time, from our own perspective, before we can find a path of our own.

This task of having a new Visvarupa Darsana for ourselves, and searching for a path of action in the light of that Darsana, has to be performed by all those who are closely connected with the Indian tradition and have a deep sense of respect for it. It is, however, important that those involved in this exercise are motivated by compassion for fellow beings. And, for that to happen the beliefs of the people of India and their ways of thought and action will have to be given priority over anything that is written in the texts.

To be tied mindlessly to the words of the texts has never been the Indian way. The Indian Rishis never believed themselves to be bound by any text. It is true that the Rishis of India do not often negate or denigrate the text, their preferred style is that of starting with the text and then interpreting it in newer and newer ways. That is how Vyasa could stand in the river and loudly proclaim the greatness of the women and the Sudras in the Kali Yuga.

The direction of a civilisation is determined by meditating on its innate consciousness and its sense of the creation and unfolding of the universe. And that probably is the task of the Rishis. But it is the ordinary Grihasthas who carry it forward in the determined direction. And Grihasthas are all those who are engaged in the mundane routine of life. Those who are adept at scholarship, or are skilled in cooking, or are engaged in agriculture, or in various arts and crafts, or those who are familiar with the modern sciences and technologies, or are running modern industry or trade, or those who have learnt the art of running the State, and its administrative and coercive apparatus, all of them are the Grihasthas, who collectively are charged with the duty of carrying the civilisation along its preferred direction and helping it realise its seekings and aspirations.

Even when the direction is lost and the seekings and aspirations become unclear, the routine of life keeps going on, and therefore the Grihasthas have to keep performing their assigned tasks even during such times of drift. They cannot shut off the routine to start meditating on the overall direction that the civilisation may take. Therefore it is ordinarily true that the politicians, the administrators and the managers, and even the scholars of a civilisation should concentrate on the day-to-day running of society, and not let themselves be distracted by fundamental doubts about the state of the civilisation.

But there are times when the direction that a civilisation is to take is so thoroughly lost and the drift is so acute that the daily routine of life itself becomes meaningless. It seems that today India has reached that situation. This is possibly the nether end of one of those cycles of decay of Dharma and its re-establishment that keep recurring, according to the Indian

conception. At such times the Grihastha also must help with his skills and energies in finding a new direction and a new equilibrium for his civilisation. The present is a time of crisis for the Indian civilisation. And, we have to shepherd all our energies, and all our skills and capabilities, towards making a single-minded effort for getting out of the crisis.

Once we seriously get down to the task, it may not turn out to be too difficult to find a new direction for the Indian civilisation. To redefine our seekings and aspirations, our ways of thought and action, in a form that is appropriate and effective in today's world may not be too hard a task after all. Such re-assertions and re-definitions of civilisational thrust are not uncommon in world history. For every civilisation there comes a time when the people of that civilisation have to remind themselves of their fundamental civilisational consciousness and their understanding of the Universe and the Time. From the basis of that recollection of the past, they then define the path for their future. Many civilisations of the world have undergone such self-appraisal and self-renewal at different times. We ourselves, in our long history, must have many times engaged in this re-collection and re-assertion of the Chitta and Kāla of India. We need to undertake such an exploration into ourselves once again.

Notes

Chapter II

1. During his remarks at the bicentennial celebrations at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC (U.S.A.) on November 17, 1965, Claude Levi-Strauss explained the nature of anthropology in the following words (Current Anthropology, Vol. 7, No.2, April 1966, pp. 126):

"Anthropology is not a dispassionate science like astronomy, which springs from the contemplation of things at a distance. It is the outcome of a historical process which has made the larger part of mankind subservient to the other, and during which millions of innocent human beings have had their resources plundered and their institutions and beliefs destroyed, whilst they themselves were ruthlessly killed, thrown into bondage, and contaminated by diseases they were unable to resist. Anthropology is daughter to this era of violence: its capacity to assess more objectively the facts pertaining to the human condition reflects, on the epistemological level, a state of affairs in which one part of mankind treated the other as an object.

A situation of this kind cannot be soon forgotten, much less erased. It is not because of its mental endowments that only the Western world has given birth to Anthropology, but rather because exotic cultures, treated by us as mere things, could be studied accordingly, as things. We did not feel concerned by them whereas we cannot help their feeling concerned by us. Between our attitude toward them and their attitude toward us, there is and can be no parity.

Therefore, if native cultures are ever to look at anthropology as a legitimate pursuit and not as a sequel to colonial era or that of economic domination, it cannot suffice for the players simply to change camps while the anthropological game remains the same. Anthropology itself must undergo a deep transformation in order to carry on its work among those cultures for whose study it was intended because they lack written record of their history.

Instead of making up for this gap through the application of special methods, the new aim will be to fill it in. When it is practiced by members of the culture which it endeavours to study, anthropology loses its specific nature and becomes rather akin to archaeology, history, and philology. For anthropology is the science of culture as seen from the outside and the first concern of people made aware of their independent existence and originality must be to claim the right to observe themselves, from the inside. Anthropology will survive in a changing world by allowing itself to perish in order to be born again under a new guise."

Chapter III

2. Valmiki Ramayana, Aranya Kanda, Chapter 9&10. The quotations are from The Ramayana of Valmiki, tr. Hari Prasad Shastri, Shanti Sadan, London, 1957, Vol. II, pp. 19-20.
3. Mahabharata, Santi Parva, Chapter 188, and Narada Purana, II.43.53-60. The quotations are from The Narada Purana, tr. Ganesha Vasudeo Tagare, Motilal Banarsi Dass, Delhi, 1981, pp. 519.

Chapter IV

4. The narration relating to Sambuka in the Uttarakanda of the Valmiki Ramayana perhaps symbolizes the origin of the first Sudra and his aspiration to enter Svarga, the heaven of the Devas, but along with his body, of which even a Brahmana was said to be incapable of. Hence the destruction of Sambuka by Sri Rama. The dialogue between Bhrigu and Bharadvaja also seems to suggest some similar aspiration by those who at about this stage or a little later began to be termed Sudras. See, The Ramayana of Valmiki, cited earlier, Vol. III, pp. 582-583; and Narada Purana, cited earlier, especially, II.43.69&70, pp.521.

Chapter V

5. For example, one of the Alankarsastra texts, Kavyadarsa, defines the permissible subjects of a Maha-Kavya, an epic, in the following words:

"It [the Maha-Kavya] has its source in a story told in the Itihasas or other good (true) material. It deals with the fruit (or goal) of the four kinds (Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha). It has a great and generous person as the hero. It is embellished with descriptions of the cities, oceans, hills, the seasons, the moonrise, the sunrise, of sport in the garden and of sport in the waters, of drinking scenes, of festivals, of enjoyment (love), of separation (of lovers), of (their) marriage and (their) nuptials and birth of princes, likewise, of consultation with the ministers, of sending messengers or ambassadors, of journeys (royal progress), of war and the hero's victories; dealing with these at length and being full of Rasa (flavour) and Bhava (suggestion): with Sargas (chapters) which are not very lengthy and which are well-formed with verse measures pleasing to the ear; everywhere dealing with a variety of topics (in each case ending each chapter in a different meter). Such a poem being well-embellished will be pleasing to the world at large and will survive several epochs (Kalpas)."

It is obvious that ordinary persons and their routine day-to-day occupations cannot be the subject of high literature that is so precisely defined and elaborately circumscribed. A similar view of literature seems to have been held in Europe also till recent times.

GLOSSARY

Acharya आचार्य

Preceptor and teacher. One who initiates the student into *Adhyayana*, study of Vedas (see below) and *Sastras*, the canonical texts of various disciplines. The first teachers of different schools of philosophy and different *Sastras*. Also *Bhashyakara*-s, the commentators, of Vedas and *Sastras*.

Ahankara अहंकार

Attachment to self, conceit, self-consciousness, egotism. Considered to be a form of ignorance in Indian philosophy. Also, the third of the eight basic constitutive elements of the manifest Universe in *Sankhya*, one of the major schools of Indian philosophy.

Ahimsa अहिंसा

The doctrine of non-injury, non-violence. Abstaining from killing or giving pain, and in general abstaining from violating the *Rita*, the natural order of Universe and Time, in thought, word and deed. Considered to be part of the *Samanya Dharma*, discipline common to all sections of society, in the Indian *Dharma-Sastra* texts. Mahatma Gandhi re-emphasised *Ahimsa* and *Satya*, steadfastness in truth, as the supreme principles of individual and social thought and action.

Ahimsak

Adjective form of *Ahimsa*.

Apara Vidya अपरा विद्या

Knowledge of the mundane, as distinct from *Para Vidya*, knowledge of the transcendent reality. *Para Vidya* and *Apara Vidya* are defined in the context of the discourse of the *Upanishads* (see below).

Artha अर्थ

Human effort directed towards the attainment of worldly prosperity in accordance with *Dharma*. One of the four *Purusharthas*, basic categories

of human endeavour, along with *Kama*, *Dharma* and *Moksha* (see below).

Avataras अवतार

Worldly incarnation of the divine. There happen ten *Avataras* of Sri Vishnu (see below) in every cycle of creation. The names of the ten *Avataras* differ from text to text, but the usual list includes: Matsya, Kurma, Varaha, Narasimha, Vamana, Parasurama, Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Kalki, in chronological order. Besides these ten, Puranas talk of several *Avataras* that occur at different times. In general, persons with extraordinary divinity are perceived as *Avataras* by the Indians.

Ayodhya अयोध्या

Literally, one that cannot be fought against. The capital city of Kosala Desa, located on the banks of Sarayu river. During the *Treta* and *Dvapara Yugas*, Kosala Desa was ruled by the Ikshvaku Vamsa into which Sri Rama was born. Ayodhya is one of the seven great sacred cities of India that have been in existence since the Pauranic times. The seven are: Dvarika, Avantika (Ujjain), Mathura, Maya (Haridwar), Ayodhya, Kasi and Kanchi. These cities are also known as *Mokshadayikas*, the cities that lead to *Moksha*. For *Moksha*, see below.

Ayurveda आयुर्वेद

The Indian science of healthy living. This science is considered as an *Upaveda*, along with *Dhanurveda*, *Gandharvaveda*, and *Sthapatyaveda*, the sciences of archery, fine-arts and architecture, respectively.

Balarama बलराम

Elder brother of Srikrishna. A great warrior and a great exponent of *Gada Yuddha*, the art of fighting with the mace, which he teaches to both Arjuna and Duryodhana, the two opposing heroes of Mahabharata war. Balarama is one of the few great warriors of the time of Mahabharata who refuse to take part in the war.

Buddha बौद्ध

Pertaining to Buddha. Also, the followers of Buddha. Also see Gautama Buddha below.

Bhalu-s भालू

Bears. In Ramayana, Rama conquers Ravana with an army of monkeys, lemurs and bears. In the descriptions of Ramayana it is difficult to discern any species-specific differentiation between humans and these. Other species like birds, reptiles, etc., also seem to be in natural communication with humans and other beings. Also, see *Vanara* below.

Bharadvaja भरद्वाज

One of the major ancient *Rishis* of India at the time of Ramayana. Bhāradvaja is also a *Gotra*, clan name, and *Rishis* of Bhāradvaja *Gotra*, called Bhāradvajas occur in various Puranas at different epochs.

Bharatiya भारतीय

Pertaining to Bharatavarsha, the geographical region bounded by the Himalaya in the north and the ocean in the south, described in the Puranas as the *Karma-Bhumi*, the area of manifestation of Indian civilisation.

Bhashya भाष्य

Commentary, interpretation. Literally, bringing (a text) to light. Canonical texts of most disciplines in India are written in a compact, tightly structured form. These texts are elaborated and interpreted in the *Bhashyas*. Writing of *Bhashyas* is considered the basic scholarly task and is invariably undertaken whenever a new school of thought is formed in any discipline.

Bhava भाव

Literally, becoming, existing, appearing. According to Indian aesthetics, *Bhava* is the quality of a creative composition, verbal or visual, that leads to the generation of the intended *Rasa*, sentiment, in the *Sahridaya*, the listener or the viewer. Also, see *Rasa* below.

Bhojpuri भोजपुरी

The language of Bhojpur, the region around Patna and Bhagalpur in the state of Bihar. Bhojpuri is one of the family of languages from which modern Hindi has evolved. Other important members of this family are Braj, Avadhi and Maithili. All of these languages continue to be spoken, and most have a fair amount of continuing literary activity.

Bhrigu भृगु

One of the ancient *Rishis* of India in the age of Ramayana. Father of Parasurama. Bhargavas, the descendants of Bhrigu, often appear prominently in later Indian history as recounted in the Puranas.

Brahma/Brahman ब्रह्मा / ब्रह्मन्

Brahma, the Sanskrit masculine noun form, refers to the creator, who is also called the Chaturmukha Brahma. He is the first of the *Trimurti*, the Indian Trinity, comprising Brahma, the creator, Vishnu, the preserver, and Mahesvara, the destroyer. Brahman, the Sanskrit neuter noun, refers to the Being, the ultimate principle, that is whole and undifferentiated, and that manifests as the Universe during the phase of creation.

Brahmana ब्राह्मण

One of the four *Varnas*, large groupings, into which human society gets differentiated at a certain stage of evolution of the Universe. *Brahmana* is canonically charged with performing the duties of *Adhyapana*, teaching, *Adhyayana*, self-study, *Ijya*, performing *Yajnas* (see Brahmanas below), *Yājana*, to get *Yajnas* performed, *Dana*, to give, and *Pratigraha*, to receive offerings.

Brahmana-s ब्राह्मण

The part of Vedas (see below) that lays down rules regarding which *Mantras*, hymns, are to be recited, in what form, and accompanied by what rituals, during the various *Yajnas*. Brahmanas also often tell the legends associated with the origin of various *Mantras* and *Yajnas*. *Mantras* are the hymns of the Vedas. *Yajnas* are often represented as Vedic rituals, but canonically all action performed in accordance with the Vedas is *Yajna*.

Most of the Upanishads (see below) form the concluding part of the Brahmana-s.

Brahmananda Saraswati ब्रह्मानन्द सरस्वती

Former Sankaracharya of Joshi Math at Badari. For Sankaracharya, see Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham below. Also see Joshi Math below.

Chaturyuga चतुर्युग

The basic Indian cycle of creation and destruction. According to the Puranas and the astronomical texts, one *Chaturyuga* consists of 43,20,000 solar years. Thousand *Chaturyugas* form a *Kalpa*, which is the larger cycle of creation and destruction, and is seen as a day of Brahma (see above). The four *Yugas* comprising the *Chaturyuga* are: *Krita*, *Treta*, *Dvapara* and *Kali*.

Chitrakuta चित्रकूट

Literally, the mountain with picturesque hills. The hills and forests at the outskirts of Kosala Desa, near Prayaga, the confluence of rivers Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati, where *Rishi* Bharadvaja had his *Asrama*, the hermitage. Sri Rama stayed at Chitrakuta for some time at the beginning of the fourteen years of his *Vanavasa*, banishment into forest.

Chitta चित्त

The perceiving intellect. In their analysis of consciousness different schools of Indian philosophy present somewhat differing definitions of *Chitta*. But, for all of them the perceiving intellect carries the *Samskaras*, is tinged with the recollection of earlier experiences and actions, both civilisational and individual. It is the objective of all effort at ultimate knowledge, *Jnana* and *Moksha*, to rid the *Chitta* of the *Samskaras*, and thus perceive the reality in itself. Such perception is *Darsana*, which is also the Indian term for philosophy. The Indian perception of the Universe and its unfolding is supposed to have arisen through such *Darsana* of the *Rishis*. Thus, as far as Indian view of the intellect is concerned there is no escape from thinking within the civilisational framework in the ordinary course of mundane living, and the civilisational truths that inform this thinking are all supposed to be the ultimate truths that would be perceived by the pure intellect that is rid of all civilisational or other recollections. Also see *Mānas* below.

Deva-s देव

Forms of the divine. Various aspects of the Universe and its functioning are manifestations of different *Devas*, such as Indra, Mitra, Varuna, etc. For the Indians any person or object that reminds them of the ultimate reality becomes a *Deva*. The Puranas talk of 33 crore *Devas* inhabiting the Universe.

Dharma धर्म

The sustaining order of the Universe. Also of human society and individuals. Hence *Dharma* of various *Varnas* (see below), of various stages of life, and of various situations. *Dharma* in all these cases is the appropriate action and thought in conformity with the order of the Universe. The order of the Universe is *Rita*, and *Dharma* is what sustains it. *Adharma* is what would be violative of *Rita*. Since order of the Universe unfolds in time, *Dharma* changes with the changing times, and is, in fact, specific to *Kāla*, *Desa* and *Avastha*, time, place and circumstance, respectively.

Dharmic

Anglicised adjective form of *Dharma*. In accordance with *Dharma*.

Draupadi द्रौपदी

Daughter of Drupada, the king of Panchala Desa, and wife of the five Pandava brothers (see below). Draupadi was born from the *Yajna Vedi*, the sacred fire of the *Yajna* (see Brahmana-s above) performed by Drupada. Draupadi and Srikrishna are the two pivotal figures of Mahabharata, whose *Samkalpa* (see below) and determination seem to drive the entire sequence of events. Most localities of south India have a Dharmaraja temple, named after the eldest of the Pandava brothers. In these temples Draupadi is invariably the main deity.

Dvapara द्वापर

The third of the four *Yugas* of the *Chaturyuga* cycle. In this *Yuga* the bull representing *Dharma*, that holds the earth, is left with only two feet. *Dvapara* in the current *Chaturyuga* begins with the ascendance of Srirama and ends with the ascendance of Srikrishna from the earth.

Ganesa/ Sri Ganesa गणेश/श्री गणेश

God of wisdom. Son of Siva, Mahesvara of the Indian Trinity (see Brahma above), and Parvati. Ganesa literally means the chief of *Ganas*, the army of Siva. Ganesa is invoked as *Vighnesvara*, the remover of obstacles, at the commencement of all undertakings and compositions. The elephant head of Sri Ganesa denotes his great sagacity.

On being invoked by Vyasa (see below), Sri Ganesa agrees to be the writer for his composition of Mahabharata on the condition that Vyasa must compose and dictate the text so fast that Ganesa's quick pen may never stop till the end of the composition. It is said that in order to satisfy this condition and somewhat slow down Sri Ganesa's hand, Vyasa often had to introduce complicated concepts and complex phrases in his composition of Mahabharata.

Ganesa and Hanuman, the *Vanara* (see below) chief of incomparable strength and wisdom and the incomparable devotee of Sri Rama, are the two most intimate gods of the Indians. Their temples are found in almost every locality and habitation of India. And in south India, no locality is considered properly inhabited without a *Murti*, idol, of Ganesa sanctifying it with his presence.

Gautama Buddha गौतम बुद्ध

Prince Siddhartha of Sakya *Vamsa* (see below) of Kapilavastu, who moved by *Dukkha*, suffering inherent in the transient world, renounced his kingdom and family, undertook great *Tapas* (see below) for several years, and finally achieved enlightenment and thus became Gautama Buddha. He became the founder of one of the two great *Darsanas*, schools of philosophy, that evolved outside the Vedic schools. Gautama Buddha's teachings spread far and wide, and through his teachings Indian thought reached Sri Lanka, Tibet, China, Japan and many other countries of South and East Asia. A majority of the people in many of these countries continue to be the followers of Gautama Buddha, who is known by many names and worshipped in many forms. In India, Gautama Buddha is revered as the ninth *Avatar* of Sri Vishnu.

Gram ग्राम

Literally, a coherent group. The community of people of a locality. Such communities in the indigenous polity were largely self-governing and along with the localities in the immediate neighbourhood formed a more or less self-sufficient whole.

Grihastha गृहस्थ

Householder. The second of the four *Asramas*, stages of life defined in the Indian classical texts. *Grihasthasrama* is the stage of married life, during which a person is responsible for bringing up children, for

creating and sharing wealth, and performing all acts necessary for the routine sustenance of society. Other three *Asramas* are: *Brahmacharya*, the stage of studentship and celibacy, *Vanaprastha*, the stage of withdrawal from active routines of social life, and *Sanyasa*, the stage of renunciation.

Itihasa इतिहास

Literally, "it happened thus". The term generally refers to the two great epics of India, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, which recount the important events and the details of life in the *Treta* and the *Dvapara Yuga*, respectively. In current Hindi, the term *Itihasa* is taken to be the equivalent of history.

Jaina जैन

One of the two ancient *Darsanas*, schools of philosophy, that are considered to be outside the Vedic schools. The other is *Baudhha*. The Vedic schools of philosophy are: *Sankhya*, *Yoga*, *Nyaya*, *Vaisesika*, *Purva Mimamsa* and *Uttara Mimamsa*. The last is also referred to as *Vedanta*. The Jaina school traces its history to great antiquity marked by 24 *Tirthankaras*, the Jaina *Avatars*, the last of whom is *Mahavira*. Present scholarship places *Mahavira* as an elderly contemporary of *Gautama Buddha*. From the time of *Mahavira* a separate Jaina *Sampradaya*, community of followers of Jaina teachings, came into being.

Jati जाति

Literally, a group with a generic defining attribute. A community of people joined together by kinship and profession. A *Jati* is often spread over a number of localities within a compact region. *Jati* is the basic trans-locality social and political grouping of Indian polity. *Jati* and *Grama* are, in fact, the two fundamental constitutive units of this polity. All individuals belong to a specific *Jati* and a *Grama*, and they participate in the polity as members of their *Jati* and *Grama*.

The defining attribute of a *Jati* is the *Jati Dharma*. Many *Jatis* have a *Jati Purana* (see, *Purana* below) of their own, which describes the *Jati Dharma*, and stories and legends of the origin, and of the great heroes, of the *Jati*.

The use of the word *Jati* for the kinship community in the sense defined above seems to be of relatively recent origin. The traditional Indian terms connoting this concept are *Gotra* and *Kula*. The English word 'caste', of Portuguese origin, is an ambiguous term that, at least in the common language, is used indiscriminately to stand for *Jati*, *Varna*, *Vamsa*, (see below for *Varna* and *Vamsa*), or any other Indian grouping or community of people.

Jayendra Saraswati जयेन्द्र सरस्वती

The second of the three Sankaracharya's of the Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham, who are gracing our times with their presence. The eldest, the Paramacharya, Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati, one of the holiest men of India, consecrated Sri Jayendra Saraswati as the *Peethadhipati*, the reigning *Sankaracharya*, in the year 1954. Later, in 1983, the youngest, Sri Sankaravijayendra Saraswati was consecrated as the *Peethadhipati*. Also see Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham below.

Jeeva जीव

The individualised soul. *Jeeva* and *Isvara* are two aspects of Being. *Jeeva* is individualised being, and *Isvara* is the cosmic, undifferentiated Being. Relationship between *Jeeva* and *Isvara* is the central issue of discussion in various schools of Indian philosophy.

Joshi Math जोशी मठ

The seat of the Sankaracharya of Jyotirpeetham at Badari in the hills of Uttar Pradesh. Also, see Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham below.

Jyotisha ज्योतिष

One of the six *Vedangas*, constituent sciences of the Vedas. The other five are: *Siksha*, phonetics, *Vyakarana*, grammar and linguistics, *Nirukta*, etymology, *Chandas*, metrics, and *Kalpa*, rules for the performance of rituals. *Jyotisha* deals with the determination of time, location and direction in conjunction with the movement of the celestial bodies. This is the *Ganita Skandha*, or the mathematical section of *Jyotisha Sastra*. There are two other *Skandhas*: *Samhita*, dealing with the symbolism of natural and celestial phenomena, and *Jataka*, dealing with the determination of the influence of celestial motion on the human condition.

Kāla काल

Time. *Kāla* denotes the concept of time, and is seldom used for calendrical time or for the time of the day. *Kāla* in Indian thought is the determinator of all that happens and is said to be *Duratikrama*, inviolable. *Kāla* thus is the nearest approximation to the Western concept of the *law* of nature, except that, unlike the *law*, *Kāla* is also said to be unknowable in its entirety. Nevertheless, since in the Indian understanding the unfolding of the Universe is cyclical and repetitive, the way things in general are likely to be can largely be inferred from the *Yuga* and the epoch one is situated in. This sense of *Kāla* as the 'tendency' of the epoch often appears in the ordinary Indian usage.

Kali कलि

The fourth and the last *Yuga* of a *Chaturyuga* cycle. The current *Kaliyuga* began with the ascendance of Srikrishna from the earth after the Mahabharata war, more than 5,000 years ago. Indian astronomical texts fix the time and date of the onset of current *Kaliyuga* either at the midnight of February 17/18 or the sunrise of February 18 of 3102 B.C., which is the *Chaitra Sukla Pratipad* of *Vikrama Purva* 3045 by the Indian calendar.

Kalpa कल्प

Period of one thousand *Chaturyugas*, forming a day of Brahma. A *Kalpa* is divided into 14 *Manvantaras*, and there is a Manu, the patriarch, of each of the 14 *Manvantaras*. The largest Indian time cycle is that of 100 years of the life of Brahma, which is called a *Para* and half of it is *Parardha*. Currently we are in the *Vaivasvata Manvantara*, the seventh *Manvantara* of the *Svetavaraha Kalpa*, which is at the beginning of the second *Parardha*, or the fifty-first year of the current 100 year cycle of Brahma.

Kama काम

One of the *Arishadvarga*, the six vitiating attributes of the *Chitta*. The other five are *Krodha*, *Moha*, *Mada*, *Matsarya* and *Lobha*, roughly translated as anger, attachment, conceit, jealousy, and greed, respectively. Appearing at different stages, these attributes are necessary concomitants of the unfolding Universe. *Kama*, loosely translated, is the longing for sensory gratification. *Kama* is also one of the four *Purusharthas*, and refers to the human endeavour towards procreation and sensory satisfaction in accordance with *Dharma*.

Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham काञ्ची कामकोटि पीठम्

One of the five Peethams, seats of high learning and sanctity, established by Adi Sankara in different parts of India to re-establish the pre-eminence of *Vedanta* as the Indian way of life and thought. The other four Peethams are at Sringeri, Dvarika, Badari and Puri. These Peethams are presided over by Sankaracharyas, who are also revered as *Jagadgurus*, teachers of the world.

Karma कर्म

Action. The Indian principle of causality, according to which every action has a consequence. In fact, every action sets off a chain of consequences that stretches through all Universe and Time. For the individual all actions performed leave their traces, the *Samskaras*, which are carried from one birth to the other, and so are the consequences, the *Karma-Phalas*, of his actions.

Kavyadarsa काव्यादर्श

Treatise on *Alankarasutra*, the science of rhetorics, by Dandin, the Samskrit poet, who is presumed to have lived in south India in early seventh century. His other important works are *Dasakumaracharitam* and *Avantisundarikatha*, both of which are literary compositions known for their *Padalalitya*, the simplicity and beauty of composition.

Khadi खादी

Handspun and handwoven cotton cloth. Daily hand-spinning and wearing of *Khadi* were part of the discipline of *Satyagraha* evolved by Mahatma Gandhi during the Indian freedom movement. *Satyagraha*, literally, insistence upon truth, was Gandhiji's name for the form of civil disobedience that he believed was the Indian way of countering oppression and injustice.

Krita कृत

The first *Yuga* of the *Chaturyuga* cycle. In this *Yuga*, *Dharma* represented by the bull supporting the Universe stands securely on all four legs. The four legs of *Dharma* are said to be *Satya*, *Ahimsa*, *Daya*, and *Dana*, truth, non-injury, kindness and generosity, respectively, in rough translation.

Kshatriya क्षत्रिय

One of the four *Varnas*. Canonically the *Kshatriya* is charged with *Prajarakshana*, protection of people, *Adhyayana*, self-study, *Ijya*, performing *Yajnas*, *Dana*, giving, and *Vishayeshu Aprasakti*, detachment from the sense objects.

Lakshmana लक्ष्मण

Younger brother of Srirama. Lakshmana is the *Avatara* of Adisesha, the serpent associated with Vishnu. Lakshmana represents, for the Indians, the role model of an ideal younger brother and companion.

Lalita Vistara ललितविस्तार

Major text of *Mahayana* Buddhism. Written in Samskrit. Belongs to the class of Buddhist texts called *Vaipulya Sutras*. *Lalita Vistara* refers to itself as a *Purana*. The text is divided in 27 chapters, and describes the life of Buddha up to *Dharma Chakra Pravartanam*, the first sermon. The text was translated into Chinese in the 1st century A.D.

Lobha लोभ

One of the six vitiating attributes of the *Chitta*. *Lobha* connotes the human weakness indicated by terms like covetousness, greed, avarice, etc.

Mada मद

One of the six vitiating attributes of the *Chitta*. *Mada* connotes the human weakness indicated by terms like conceit, presumptuousness, arrogance, etc.

Mahabharata महाभारत

One of the two *Itihasas*, the other being *Ramayana*. *Mahabharata* is the story of the great war fought towards the end of the present *Dvapara Yuga*, that involved almost all the kings and warriors of Bharatavarsha. Only the five Pandavas (see, below), their cousin Srikrishna and his nephew Satyaki, on the one side, and three warriors, Kripacharya, Asvatthama and Kritavarma, on the other, survive the war. Within four decades of the war, the entire *Yadava Vamsa* of Srikrishna, except for Vajra and Uddhava, also gets wiped out, and Srikrishna himself leaves the earth. So do the Pandavas along with their wife, Draupadi. This event is said to mark the beginning of *Kaliyuga*.

Maha-Kavya महाकाव्य

Great literary composition. *Kavya*, according to the Indian texts, consists in the appropriate union of *Sabda* and *Artha*, word and meaning. In this sense all great literature is *Kavya*. *Maha-Kavya* is a *Kavya* that has the additional quality of dealing with themes and personages from the *Itihasas* or *Puranas*, or other canonical texts of similar stature. *Maha-Kavyas* treat these subjects on a wide canvas, and Indian texts offer rigorous definitions of the qualities that a *Kavya* must satisfy for it to be termed a *Maha-Kavya*. *Maha-Kavya*, like all *Kavya*, can be in *Padya*, verse, *Gadya*, prose, or *Champu*, mixed form. Five major *Padya Maha-Kavyas* of classical Sanskrit literature are: *Raghuvamsam* and *Kumarasambhavam* of *Kalidasa*, *Kiratarjuniyam* of *Bharavi*, *Sisupalavadham* of *Magha*, and *Naishadham* of *Sriharsha*. *Kadambari* of *Bana* is a major *Maha-Kavya* in the *Gadya* form and *Champu Ramayana* of *Bhoja* is one of the highly regarded among those in the mixed form.

Maharshi महर्षि

Great *Rishi*. For *Rishi*, see below.

Mahatma महात्मा

Literally, great soul. One who is great both by nature and actions. Indians use this honorific for someone who is perceived to be near the divine and beyond worldly temptations.

Mahavira महावीर

Vardhamana Mahavira. Born in *Vaisali*. The 24th *Tirthankara* (see below), who was the first teacher of *Jaina Darsana*, one of the two great non-Vedic schools of Indian philosophy, and founder of the *Jaina Sampradaya*, community of the followers of *Jaina Darsana*. *Mahavira* is said to be an elderly contemporary of *Gautama Buddha*. Also, see *Jaina* above.

Mānas मानस

Literally, of the *Manas*, loosely translated as the mind. Used in the text in the sense of the shared psychic attributes of a civilisation. Canonically, all sense perception occurs through the agency of *Antahkarana*, which is constituted of *Manas*, the internal sense organ, *Buddhi*, the

intellect that discriminates between the received sensations, *Ahankara*, the I-sense, and *Chitta*, the pure intellect that is tinted by previous and current perceptions and consequent *Samskaras*, (see *Chitta* above). Though *Manas* is one of the constituents of *Antahkarana*, yet the term is also used as synonymous with *Antahkarana*. Defined thus, *Mānas* can perhaps be said to be the agency through which all phenomena are sieved before perception.

Moha मोह

One of the six vitiating attributes of the *Chitta*. Attachment born out of delusion, such as taking the manifest Universe to be the ultimate reality and consequent failure to see the undifferentiated Brahman manifesting as the Universe.

Moksha मोक्ष

Literally, liberation. The state of realisation of the unity of all manifest beings. Dissolving of the differentiated being into the Brahman. Such realisation and dissolution frees the individual from *Samsara*, the cycle of repeated births and deaths that the individual keeps going through till the sense of the individual identity is not merged with the Brahman. Also, one of the four *Purusharthas* (see *Artha* above). Thus, human endeavour towards *Moksha*. For the Indians all human endeavour must ultimately be directed towards this state of realisation.

Muni मुनि

Literally, one who thinks and reflects. Also, according to some authorities, one who keeps *Mauna*, silence. Men of great wisdom and equanimity are generally referred to as *Muni*-s in Indian classical literature and also in current usage.

Nagari नागरी

Literally, pertaining to the city. Of the city. *Nagari* usually refers to the script of the classical Samskrit corpus of north India. This is also the script in which many languages of India, like Hindi, Marathi, Nepali, etc., are written. Another meaning of the word, and the one followed in the text, is that which defines the practice of the elite. *Nagari* Hindi, thus, is the Hindi spoken and written by the elite.

Narada Muni नारद मुनि

A very famous *Rishi* of the Puranas. Narada literally means the one who gives knowledge of Brahman (see above). In the Pauranic narratives Narada Muni often appears at the crucial moments and makes the events move on their destined course through his suggestions and interventions. It is Narada Muni who first recount the story of Sri Rama to Maharishi Valmiki. Narada Muni is known as a great devotee of Sri Vishnu and is the author the famous Bhakti Sutras. He is also known as a great musician, who wanders through the worlds playing on a stringed instrument and singing devotional songs.

Pali पाली

Literally, that which preserves. Pali is the language in which the teachings of Gautama Buddha are "preserved". The corpus of Buddha's teachings is contained in the *Tirpitaka* texts. At a later stage, Buddhism split into *Hinayana* and *Mahayana* streams, and while Pali continued to be the language of the *Hinayana* school, the *Mahayana* school adopted Samskrit.

Pali was the Prakrit of Magadha, the region where Gautama Buddha lived and taught for a long time. For Prakrit, see below.

Pandavas पाण्डव

The five sons of Pandu, whose elder brother Dhritarashtra was the ruler of the Kuru Desa, the region around modern Delhi, at the time of Mahabharata war. Five sons of Pandu, the Pandavas, and one hundred sons of Dhritarashtra, the Kauravas, are the main protagonists of the war. The names of the Pandava brothers are: Yudhisthira, Bhimasena, Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva. Their main opponent is Duryodhana, the eldest of the Kaurava brothers.

Pandit पण्डित

A learned person. Also used as an honorific.

Para Vidya परा विद्या

See *Apara Vidya* above.

Parikshit परीक्षित्

Grandson of Pandavas, who was the only survivor to carry forward the Kuruvamsa, the royal line to which Pandu and Dhritarashtra belonged. Thirty-six years after the end of the Mahabharata war, the Pandavas anointed Parikshit the king, and left the earth along with their wife, Draupadi. Parikshit thus became the first king of the current *Kaliyuga*. *Srimadbhagavata Purana* was recited to Parikshit by Maharshi Suka during the last seven days of Parikshit's life.

Pauranic

Anglicised adjective form of Purana. Of the Puranas. For Purana, see below.

Prajna प्रज्ञा

Purified intellect, symbolised by goddess Sarasvati. One of the main components of education is the discipline of purifying the intellect.

Prakrit प्राकृत

Literally, natural, artless, normal. Any one of the languages spoken in the different regions of India. Samskrit, literally is the "refined" language, while Prakrit-s are the "natural" languages. In classical Samskrit drama, women and the ordinary people speak Prakrit, and the male gentry speaks Samskrit. This distinction, however, is peculiar to the literature of drama alone, and is not found either in the Puranas and Itihasas, or in the other *Kavyas*. Many Jaina canonical texts and Jaina Puranas are in Prakrit.

Three major Prakrit languages of classical India are: Sauraseni of the Mathura region, Magadhi of the Magadha region of Bihar, and Maharashtri of Maharashtra.

Prithvi पृथ्वी

The goddess earth. Also one of the *Panchamahabhatas*, the five elementary constituents of the material Universe. The other four are: *Ap*, *Tejas*, *Vayu*, *Akasa*. Water is largely constituted of the element *Ap*, fire of *Tejas*, air of *Vayu* and space of *Akasa*.

Purana पुराण

Literally, belonging to ancient times. Puranas, along with the Itihasas, recount the major happenings of various epochs. The five defining characteristics of a Purana are: It should describe *Sarga*, creation; *Pratisarga*, dissolution; *Vamsa*, the different lineages from Manu, the first patriarch of the epoch; *Manvantara*, the happenings of different *Manvantaras* (see *Kalpa* above); and *Vamsanucharita*, the genealogies of the protagonists, especially of the kings and the *Rishis*. It is said that study of the *Vedas* has to be complemented by that of the *Itihasas* and *Puranas*. *Veda* without the knowledge of *Purana* and *Itihasa* is likely to be misunderstood.

Indians speak of *Ashtadasa Maha Puranas*, the eighteen great *Puranas*. The list of eighteen can differ. One of the more commonly accepted lists includes: *Vishnu Purana*, *Bhagavata Purana*, *Narada Purana*, *Garuda Purana*, *Padma Purana*, *Varaha Purana*, *Brahma Purana*, *Brahmanda Purana*, *Brahmavaivarta Purana*, *Markandeya Purana*, *Bhavishya Purana*, *Vamana Purana*, *Siva Purana*, *Linga Purana*, *Skanda Purana*, *Agni Purana*, *Matsya Purana*, and *Kurma Purana*. Besides these there are scores of other *Puranas* in *Samskrit*, and there are also similar *Puranas* in different regional languages.

Though written in the style of narratives of the kings and *Rishis* of an epoch, most *Puranas* are in fact in the nature of encyclopedias of the major issues of public concern at the relevant epoch.

The Pauranic style of narration is the canonical Indian style of presenting the thoughts and events of different times, and besides the major *Puranas*, there are *Puranas* of different communities, of different localities and also of great personages of known history.

Purusha-Sukta पुरुषसूक्त

A widely known hymn of the of *Rig Veda*, that describes Brahman in the form of the cosmic man, and the creation proceeding from Him. This *Sukta* appears as the ninetieth hymn of the tenth *Mandala*, the tenth book, of *Rig Veda*. The *Sukta* also appears in *Yajurveda*.

Ramayana रामायण

The *Itihasa* composed by *Maharshi Valmiki*, that describes the events which took place towards the end of the present *Treta Yuga*. *Ramayana*

tells the story of the Ikshvaku prince Sri Rama and his wife Sri Sita, who remain the ideal man and woman for the Indians. And the Indians continue to define ideal polity by reference to *Rama Rajya*, the period when Sri Rama graced the throne of Ayodhya, the capital of the Ikshvakus, after having established the supremacy of *Dharma* throughout Bharatavarsha. Maharshi Valmiki's *Ramayana* is regarded as the *Adi Kavya*, the first great epic of India, and the story of *Ramayana* has been told again and again by the great poets of all languages and regions of India.

Rasa रस

Aesthetic emotion generated in a *Sahirdaya*, the viewer or the listener of a creative composition, by the dominant and the secondary *Bhavas* (see above) present in the composition, and the circumstances within which these *Bhavas* are placed. Indian texts of aesthetics recognise 10 distinct *Rasas*. These are: *Sringara*, *Vira*, *Bibhatsa*, *Raudra*, *Hasya*, *Bhayanaka*, *Karuna*, *Adbhuta*, *Vatsalya*, and *Santa*, love, valour, disgust, fury, humour, fear, pathos, wonder, affection, and tranquillity, respectively, in rough translation.

Rasa is also a technical term in *Ayurveda*, where it is used to define the qualities of a substance, and in *Rasa Sastra*, Indian chemistry, where *Rasa* defines the essence of different metals and their compounds.

Rig-Veda ऋग्वेद

The first of the four Vedas. The other three Vedas are: *Yajurveda*, *Samaveda* and *Atharvanaveda*. *Rig-Veda* consists of 1,028 *Suktas* arranged in 10 *Mandalas*. *Sukta* may be translated as the hymn, and *Mandala* as the book. Each *Sukta* of *Rig-Veda* consists of a number of *Richa-s*, the verses of *Rig-Veda*. There are more than 10,000 *Richa-s* of *Rig-Veda*.

Rishi ऋषि

Literally, seer. *Rishis* are the great sages of Indian antiquity, who are *Drashtras*, seers, of the unfolding of the Universe, and therefore have the ability to see into the past and the future. Most Vedic *Mantras*, hymns, are associated with some great *Rishi*, who is said to be the *Drashta*, or seer, of that hymn.

Samadhi समाधि

Right meditation. According to *Yoga Darsana*, the Indian school of philosophy specialising in the analysis and discipline of the mind, *Chitta* is said to be in a state of *Samadhi* when its natural tendency of being in constant flux is put under control and the consciousness is highly concentrated. There are different stages of *Samadhi*, culminating in the *Asamprajnata Samadhi*, in which state the distinction between the knower and the known is lost, and the *Chitta* merges with the Brahman.

Sambuka शम्बुक

A *Sudra Muni*. Towards the end of the reign of Sri Rama, the tranquillity of life in Kosala Desa is disturbed by Sambuka's intense *Tapas* (see below) with the objective of ascending to *Svarga*, the abode of the *Devas*, along with his earthly body. This extraordinary desire disturbs *Dharma*, the natural order of the Universe, and the disturbance leads to unnatural occurrences, like the death of a child before that of his parents. In order to restore *Dharma*, Sri Rama goes out in search of the source of the disturbance, and finding Sambuka engaged in intense austerities, kills him with a single blow of his sword.

Sambuka is probably the first *Sudra*, who appears towards the end of *Treta*. There is perhaps no earlier reference to *Sudras* in the *Itihasas* and *Puranas*.

Samkalpa संकल्प

Oriented consciousness. Intentionality. Creation and unfolding of the Universe follow from the *Samkalpa* of Brahman. Fruition of all human action also depends upon *Samkalpa*, which in this context would imply orienting the consciousness in conformity with the cosmic design. Such orientation is achieved through *Tapas*, disciplined and intense effort. This discipline often includes the practice of great austerities of the mind and the body.

Samskrit / Sanskrit संस्कृत

Literally, properly refined, well-formed and perfect. Language of the classical literature of India.

Sanatana सनातन

Eternal. That which has neither a beginning nor an end. What is *Sanatana* must also be necessarily whole and undifferentiated, all divisions and differentiations being transient. Brahman and *Dharma* are *Sanatana*. *Veda*, all knowledge, is also *Sanatana*, though what human beings at any given stage are given to comprehend of it is only a partial glimpse of the whole, and hence transient.

Sankaracharya शंकराचार्य

See Kanchi Kamakoti Peetham above.

Santi-Parva शांतिपर्व

The twelfth of the eighteen *Parva-s*, books, of Mahabharata. The eighteen *Parva-s* are: Adi, Sabha, Aranya, Virata, Udyoga, Bhishma, Drona, Karna, Salya, Saupatika, Stri, Santi, Anusasana, Asvamedhika, Asramavasika, Mausala, Mahaprasthanika, Svargarohana. *Santi-Parva* describes the *Raja Dharma*, the discipline of politics, and *Moksha Dharma*, the discipline of *Moksha*, as interpreted by the patriarch Bhishma, from his death bed after the end of the war, for the edification of the Pandavas. *Santi-Parva* is the canonical compendium of Indian thought on polity and *Dharma*.

Saranath सारनाथ

A sacred place near Kasi, where Gautama Buddha initiated the *Dharma Chakra Pravartana*, literally setting the wheel of *Dharma* in motion. In Saranath a famous *Stupa*, Buddhist shrine, stands at the spot where Gautama Buddha preached for the first time after achieving enlightenment, and thus becoming the Buddha.

Siksha शिक्षा

The India concept corresponding to the idea of education. *Siksha* also is a *Vedanga*, a science auxiliary to *Vedas*, that deals with phonetics.

Sila शील

Right conduct. According to the *Dharma Sastras*, classical Indian texts of worldly conduct, *Sila* involves thirteen virtues including the quality of being immersed in Brahman, of respectfully serving the parents and

ancestors, and of being detached from the worldly desires and jealousies, besides the usual attributes of good conduct, like humility, pity, kindness, truthfulness, etc.

Silpasastra शिल्पशास्त्र

The mechanical and structural sciences and technologies of India.

Sita / Sri Sita सीता / श्री सीता

Wife of Sri Rama. Sita is an *Avatar* of Mahalakshmi, the goddess of all worldly prosperity and wife of Sri Vishnu. Sri Sita of Ramayana is the role model of ideal womanhood in India.

Maharshi Valmiki refers to his Ramayana as *Sitayascharitam Mahat*, the great story of Sri Sita. In Valmiki Ramayana Sri Sita's is the voice of reasoned earthly *Vyavahara*, peaceable routine of daily life, constantly tempering Sri Rama's unbending adherence to the rigid codes of *Kshatriya Dharma*. Notwithstanding her preference for compassionate earthly living, however, she patiently accepts the sufferings she has to endure so that Sri Rama may remain steadfast in his *Kshatriya Dharma*. In her commitment to the preservation of the ordinary routine of daily life, and in her inexhaustible patience, Sri Sita is like the life-sustaining earth herself, whose daughter she is, and into whose lap she returns when the demands of Sri Rama's *Kshatriya Dharma* become too much to bear, even for her.

In some ways, Sri Sita is the opposite of Draupadi of Mahabharata, who also is said to be an *Avatar* of Mahalakshmi in a later epoch. Draupadi, like Sita, has an inexhaustible capacity for sustaining the routines of daily life, even under pressing circumstances, but unlike Sri Sita, she also has to keep inspiring the Pandavas to rise up to their *Kshatriya Dharma* and not be sucked into the indolence of the ordinary routine.

Sri श्री

Literally, diffusing light and radiance. Resplendent with beauty, prosperity, auspiciousness and majesty. Name of goddess Lakshmi, wife of Sri Vishnu (see below), and the repository of all these qualities. *Sri* is used as an honorific prefix to the names of deities, and also of celebrated works and objects of high sanctity. In India, *Sri* is the common respectful form of address prefixed to the name of the person addressed.

Sometimes the gender specific prefixes *Sriman* and *Srimati*, masculine and feminine form respectively for the 'one endowed with *Sri*' , are also used.

Srikrishna श्री कृष्ण

The form adopted by Sri Vishnu during His *Avatara* on earth towards the end of the present *Dvapara* at the time of Mahabharata.

Srimadbhagavata श्रीमद्भागवत

One of the eighteen *Mahapuranas*. Srimadbhagavata describes the story of Srikrishna in detail.

Sringeri Sarada Peetham श्रृंगेरी शारदा पीठम्

One of the five Peethams established by Adi Sankara. Sringeri is situated on the banks of river Bhadra in Karnataka. Acharya Vidyaranya, the Sankaracharya of Sringeri Peetham in the early fourteenth century, was the guiding spirit in the establishment of Vijayanagara *Samrajya*, the Vijayanagara kingdom of south India.

Sri Rama/Srirama श्री राम/श्रीराम

The form adopted by Sri Vishnu during His *Avatara* on earth towards the end of the present *Treta*. Sri Vishnu in this *Avatara* plays the role of *Maryada Purushottama*, the ideal man who is bound by and lives within the human limitations. Sri Rama thus sets the ideals and limits of the human state. See also Ramayana, above.

Sudra शूद्र

One of the four *Varnas* into which human society gets divided at a certain stage of the unfolding of the Universe. Canonically, *Sudras* are charged with *Paricharya*, or service. The service tasks, as detailed in the Indian lexicographical texts, include all the arts and crafts that in modern societies are counted under the heads of manufacturing and services.

Swadesi स्वदेशी

Literally, of ones own *Desa*, locality or region. Pertaining to the immediate neighbourhood. The concept that enjoins one to organise

mental and material needs such that these may be fulfilled from within the resources, skills and wisdom available in the immediate neighbourhood, and to define one's primary responsibility of life with respect to that neighbourhood. During the Indian independence movement the concept of *Swadesi*, as adopted and interpreted by Mahatma Gandhi, became the most cogent argument and a powerful weapon against alien rule.

Swaraj / Swarajya स्वराज्य

Literally, rule of the self. Gandhiji's term for the Indian polity of his vision. According to this vision, *Swaraj* was to be based upon the *Swadharma* of India, on the Indian ways of thought, action and belief, and this re-establishment of *Swadharma* in Indian polity was to begin with the *Gram* (see above). Regenerated *Gram*, confidently established in its *Swadharma*, was the key component of Gandhiji's vision of *Swaraj*, which he also called *Gram Swaraj*. Gandhiji often compared *Swaraj* with *Rama Rajya*, the ideal polity of the time when Sri Rama sat on the throne of Ayodhya.

Tapas तपस

Burning away the *Samskaras* (see, *Chitta* above). *Tapas* essentially is *Nanasanatpara*, starving the body and senses, following *Niyamasvikara*, determined resolution.

Tirthankara तीर्थंकर

Literally, one who makes *Tirthas*, which mean both the *Sastras* and the holy places. *Avataras* of the divine in Jaina Darsana. Also, see Jaina above.

Treta त्रेता

The second *Yuga* of the *Chaturyuga* cycle. In this *Yuga* the bull representing *Dharma* stands on three feet.

Upanishad उपनिषद्

Upanishads are the basic philosophical texts, generally found at the end of the Brahmana part of the Vedas. These texts define the nature of Brahman, the *Jeava* and the Universe, and the relationship between them. This is what is defined as *Brahmavidya*, the knowledge that leads

to *Moksha*. There are more than a hundred Upanishads of which the following ten are considered the most important: Isopanishad, Kenopanishad, Kathopanishad, Mundakopanishad, Mandukyopanishad, Prasnopanishad, Aitareyopanishad, Taittiriyyopanishad, Chhandogyopanishad, and Brihadaranyakopanishad. Upanishads are the canonical texts of the *Vedanta Darsana*.

Vaisya वैश्य

One of the *Varnas* into which the human society gets divided at a certain stage of the unfolding of the Universe. The *Vaisyas* are specifically charged with the tasks of *Krishi*, *Goraksha* and *Vanijya*, agriculture, animal husbandry and trade, respectively, in addition to the usual duties of *Ijya*, performing *Yajnas*, *Adhyayana*, self-study, and *Dana*, giving.

Valmiki वाल्मीकि

The great sage who composed *Ramayana*, the first epic of India. He is, therefore, revered as *Adi Kavi*, the first poet.

Vamsa वंश

Lineage. All Indians are presumed to belong to one of the two *Vamsas* that began with the current Manu, Vaivasvata. These two great *Vamsas* are *Surya Vamsa*, the solar lineage, and *Chandra Vamsa*, the lunar lineage. Within these great *Vamsas* there are several smaller *Vamsas*, each starting with a great patriarch, like Ikshvaku *Vamsa* of Sri Rama that started with Ikshvaku; Kuru *Vamsa* of the Pandavas and the Kauravas that began with Kuru; and Yadava *Vamsa* of Srikrishna that began with Yadu.

Vanara-s वानर

The inhabitants of the kingdom of Kishkindha whose help is sought by Sri Rama in his search for Sri Sita, who was kidnapped by Ravana, the King of Lanka. Ultimately, Sri Rama defeats the great scholar and warrior, Ravana, with the help of the *Vanara* armies. *Vanara* is also the generic term for different species of apes and monkeys. Also see *Bhalu*, above.

Varṇa वर्ण

Large groups, based on occupations, skills and social responsibilities, into which human society gets divided at a certain stage of the unfolding of the Universe. At the stage of highest complexity human society is divided into four Varnas. These are: *Brahmana*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaisya* and *Sudra*. For the specific tasks and skills of these *Varnas*, see above.

Vāsudeva वासुदेव

Literally son of Vasudeva, who was a prince of Yadu *Vamsa* and father of Srikrishna and Balarama.

Veda वेद

Literally, knowledge. Veda generally refers to all knowledge, and specifically to the *Sanatana* knowledge of India that is said to have no beginning, and that was compiled into four separate texts by Vedavyasa (see Vyasa below) at the end of *Dvapara Yuga*. Veda is also said to be *Śruti*, the text that has been heard or communicated from the beginning of creation.

Vishnu / Sri Vishnu विष्णु

The aspect of Brahman specially oriented towards the preservation of the creation. Also see Brahma, above.

Visvarupa Darsana विश्वरूपदर्शन

At the beginning of the Mahabharata war, Arjuna, the chief Pandava warrior, is unnerved at the prospect of fighting against and killing his elders and close relatives. Srikrishna then explains to him that all creation is a manifestation of the Brahman, and all human endeavour is only *Nimitta Matra*, merely instrumental, in the unfolding of the Universe. Srikrishna also provides Arjuna, though only for a moment, the insight to see the whole Universe manifesting and unfolding within the form of Srikrishna. This event is known as *Visvarupa Darsana*, literally vision of the Universe. These teachings of Srikrishna constitute the eighteen chapters of *Srimadbhagavadgita*, which forms part of the Bhishma Parva, the seventh book of Mahabharata. *Visvarupa Darsana* is described in the eleventh chapter of *Srimadbhagavadgita*.

Vyakarana व्याकरण

Grammar and the science of language. One of the six *Vedangas* (see *Jyotisha* above). *Vyakarana* is known to be the primary science of India, that has to be learnt prior to the learning of all other knowledge and on which most other sciences of India are modelled.

Vyasa व्यास

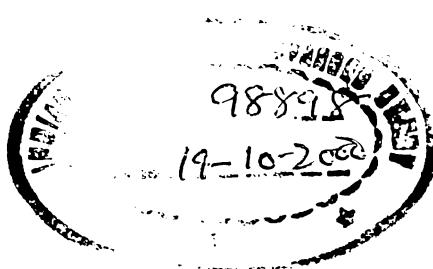
The great *Maharshi* who composed the *Mahabharata* and the eighteen *Mahapuranas* at the end of *Dvapara Yuga*. It is said that Vishnu manifests as Vyasa in every *Dvapara Yuga*, and compiles the *Veda* into four *Samhitas*, compilations. *Maharshi Krishna Dvaipayana* is the Vyasa of the current *Chaturyuga*, who compiled the *Vedas* in the form available to us, and later composed the *Mahabharata* and the *Puranas*.

Yadava Vamsa यादव वंश

The lineage of king *Yadu*, rulers of *Mathura*, in which *Srikrishna* was born as the son of *Vasudeva*.

Yuga युग

An epoch. One of the four large periods into which the basic *Chaturyuga* cycle is divided. Also see *Chaturyuga* above.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND THE BOOK

Dharampal was born in 1922 at Kandhala in the Muzaffarnagar district of Uttar Pradesh. He has been associated in various ways with the resurgence of the skills and talents of the people of India and the restoration of their social, political and economic organisations centered around the locality and the community. After being active in the Quit India Movement, he worked for some years with Mirabehn, an associate of Mahatma Gandhi, and in the 1950's also attempted to found a cooperative village near Rishikesh. He was General Secretary of the Association of Voluntary Agencies for Rural Development (1958-64) and Director, Study and Research, All India Panchayat Parishad (1963-65). He was closely associated with the Sri Jayaprakash Narayan, who deeply appreciated his research and writings.

From the middle sixties, Dharampal devoted himself, for almost two decades, to an exploration of Indian archives spread over the British Isles. His published works of this period include: Indian Science and Technology in the Eighteenth Century: Some Contemporary Indian Accounts (1971), Civil Disobedience and the Indian Tradition (1971) and The Beautiful Tree: Indigenous Indian Education in the Eighteenth Century (1983). He has also authored Panchayat Raj as the Basis of Indian Polity: An Exploration into the Proceedings of the Constituent Assembly (1962) and The Madras Panchayat System: A General Assessment (1973).

Dharampal's aspiration is to convince leaders of public opinion in India that the system bequeathed by the British is an alien imposition, and that if India is to revive and renew herself, she would have to rediscover her own indigenous genius, talents and traditions. In this book he approaches the same problem from the perspective of the Indian classical literature, and sketches the basic contours of Indian Consciousness, Indian Mind and the Indian sense of the flow of Time, Bhāratīya Chitta, Mānas and Kāla, within which all Indian genius and tradition is anchored. The book makes a strong case for a concerted effort for the rediscovery of the Indian spirit and the return of India to the sure anchorage of her civilisational Chitta, Mānas and Kāla.



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