

OUTLINES OF HINDUISM

T. M. P. MAHADEVAN

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by

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With a Foreword by

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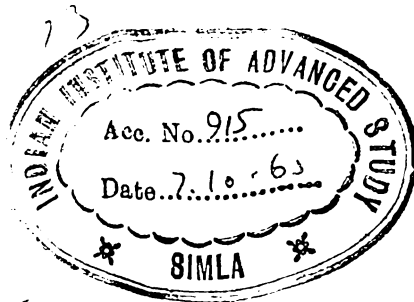
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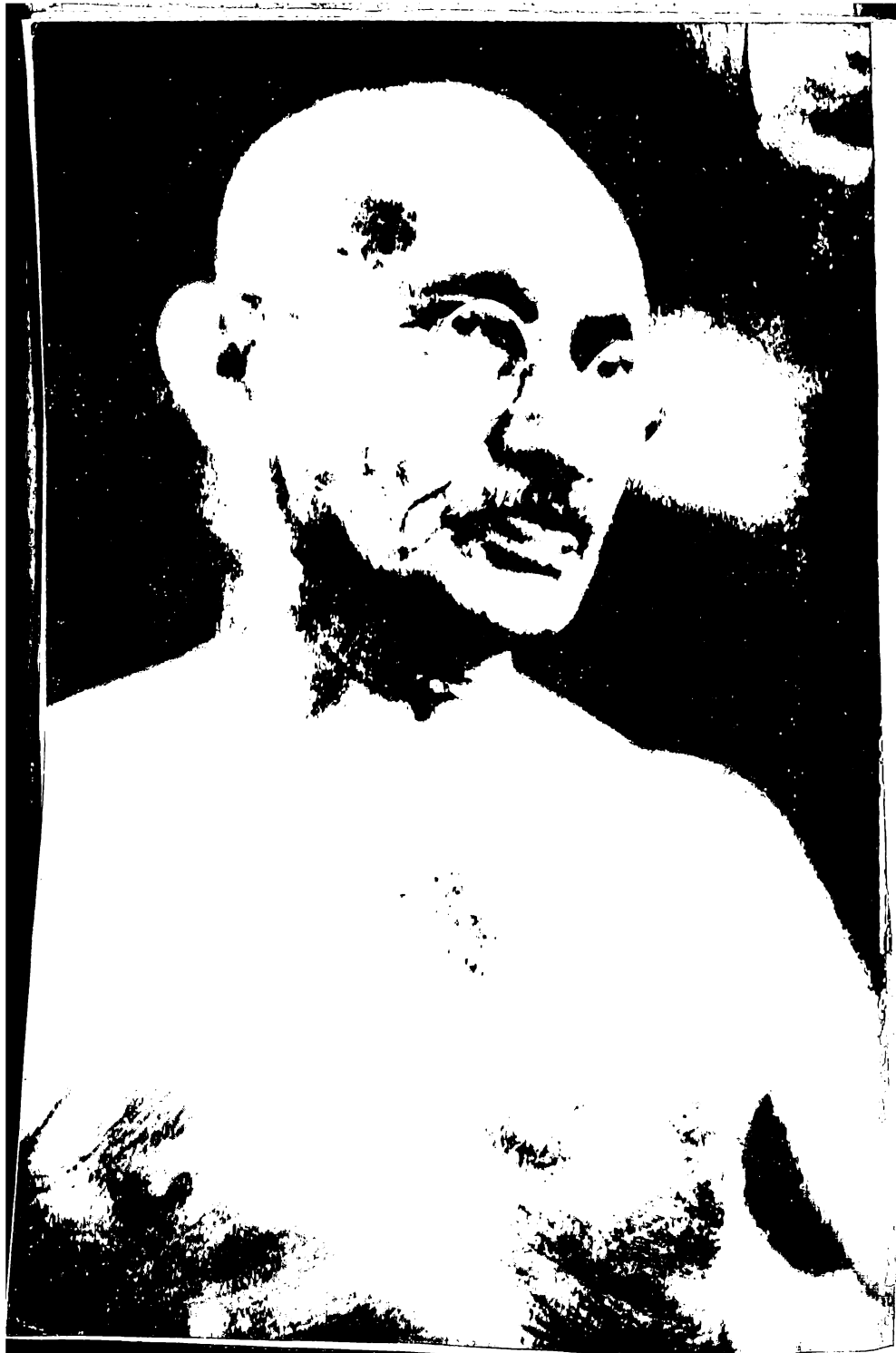


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TO
MAHĀTMĀ GĀNDHI

I have no other wish
in this world but to find
light and joy and peace
through Hinduism.

—*Mahātmā Gāndhī*

FOREWORD

PROFESSOR T. M. P. Mahadevan has written a very valuable introduction to the study of Hinduism in its religious, philosophical and ethical aspects. For the Hindu, the aim of religion is the integration of personality which reconciles the individual to his own nature, his fellowmen and the Supreme Spirit. To realize this goal there are no set paths. Each individual may adopt the method which most appeals to him, and in the atmosphere of Hinduism, even inferior modes of approach get refined. A mediæval Indian mystic wrote: "There may be different kinds of oil in different lamps, the wicks may also be of different kinds, but when they burn, we have the same flame and illumination."

Those who are anchored in spirit suffer for mankind as a whole, regardless of distinctions of caste, class, creed or community. Whereas the truths of religion are eternal, the social forms and institutions are temporary. They have to be judged by each generation as to their capacity to implement the permanent values. Some of our institutions have become out of date and require to be modified if not scrapped. In the past religious emotion has attached itself to ugly customs. It has prompted and sanctioned animal sacrifices, obscure

rites and oppressive caste regulations. Our sacred literature repudiates discrimination based on birth or *jāti* and emphasises *guṇa* and *karma*. Look at the following verses :

*nartako garbha-sambhūto vasiṣṭho-nāma mahā-ṛṣiḥ
 tapasā brāhmaṇo jātaḥ, tasmāt jātir na kāraṇam
 caṇḍālo garbha sambhūtaḥ śaktir nāma mahā-muniḥ
 tapasā brāhmaṇo jātaḥ, tasmāt jātir na kāraṇam
 śvapaṅko garbha sambhūtaḥ parāśaro mahā-muniḥ
 tapasā brāhmaṇo jātaḥ, tasmāt jātir na kāraṇam
 matsya-gandhyās tu tanayo vidvān vyāso mahā-muniḥ
 tapasā brāhmaṇo jātaḥ, tasmāt jātir na kāraṇam.*

Tirukkural says: “All men are born equal. The differences among them are entirely due to occupations.” (972).

We live in an age when creeds are shaken, dogmas are questioned and traditions are dissolving. The Hindu religion with its emphasis on the experience of Reality in diverse ways and the practice of love has an appeal to the modern mind. I hope that Professor Mahadevan’s book will have a large number of readers both in India and outside.

PREFACE

It is now many years since my book with the same title as the present one went out of print. It was specially written for the purpose of introducing Hinduism to college students. I had attempted in that book to present only a bare outline of Hindu religion and philosophy. To make the book serve its purpose, I had to avoid too many details. While keeping that objective in view in the present work, I have made the exposition more comprehensive, and added several important aspects of Hindu doctrines and practices which were not included in the first book. Chapters one, eight and nine, and the appendices are new additions. The other chapters have been thoroughly revised and fresh material has been added to each. It is to be hoped that the present handbook will serve as a useful guide to all those who wish to understand Hinduism.

In the first chapter, the reader is introduced to the essentials of religion in general. In the second is set forth the essence of Hinduism. Then follow chapters expounding the scriptures, the rituals, ethics and spiritual disciplines of Hinduism. In chapter seven, the doctrines of the Hindu philosophies are explained. In chapter eight, an account is given of the beliefs and practices of the Tāntrik cults. The concluding chapter entitled

‘Living Hinduism’ is devoted to the teachings of four great sages of modern India: Śrī Rāmakrishna, Mahātmā Gāndhi, Śrī Aurobindo, and Śrī Ramaṇa. The two broadcast talks constituting Appendix One recapitulate the essential doctrines and practices of Hinduism. And, the article given as Appendix Two makes a survey of the state of religion in India today.

I am grateful to the Director of External Services, All India Radio, New Delhi, for the permission to reproduce the two broadcast talks here. A French version of these talks was broadcast from New Delhi on July 1st and 7th, 1954. The article on ‘Religion Today in India’ appeared in *The Vedanta Kesari*, Madras, in May-June, 1955. I am indebted to the Editor of this journal for permitting me to include the article in the present publication. To Messrs. Ganesh & Co., Madras, I offer my sincere thanks for their courtesy in allowing me to use the tri-colour picture of the six *cakras*.

I wish to record my feeling of indebtedness to Professor D. S. Sarma who suggested that I should write a book on Hinduism and published the earlier book; to Dr V. A. Devasenapathy, Reader in Philosophy, University of Madras, for reading the proofs; and to Mr J. F. Staal, Government of India Research Scholar from Holland, for preparing the glossary and index. To Sri S. Dikshit and his colleagues of Chetana Ltd., Bombay, I am deeply grateful for sponsoring this publication. This enterprising Publishing House has for its aim the education of the world through philosophy,

religion and culture. I am particularly glad that the present book on Hinduism goes out under the seal of Chetana.

I desire to express my profound gratitude to Dr S. Radhakrishnan, Vice-President of India, who has kindly contributed a Foreword.

To that great spiritual leader who made our nation free so that we may have a better world, Mahātmā Gāndhi, I dedicate this book.

Madras,
8th January, 1956.

T. M. P. MAHADEVAN.

NOTE TO SECOND EDITION

No major changes have been made in this edition. I am grateful to my colleague, Dr P. K. Sundaram, for reading the proofs.

Madras
9th September, 1960

T. M. P. MAHADEVAN.

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CHAPTER ONE
THE CONCEPT OF RELIGION

1

The Lure of the Infinite

RELIGION is as old as man; and however much he might fight shy of it sometimes, he cannot get away from it, for religion is his real life, a light unto his soul and a lamp unto his feet. The Reality which is to be realized through religion is 'the soul of truth, the delight of life and the bliss of mind, the fullness of peace and eternity'.¹ It is the innermost core of man and the essence of all existence. Man gets intimations of its glorious presence even in his commerce with the world. And the task of religion is to confirm these intimations and lead man to perfection.

That the religious spirit is innate in the human race may be illustrated even from the experience of primitive man. When the prehistoric man deified natural phenomena and offered worship to the unseen powers, he expressed his dissatisfaction with the first view of things and was conscious of a Beyond. And 'consciousness of the Beyond is the raw material of all religion.' At a very early stage of his existence man discovered that the sphere of his senses was not all that which

¹ *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, i, 6. *satyātma prāṇārāmaṃ mana ānandaṃ, śānti-samṛddhaṃ amṛtam.*

was. The testimony of the senses was not the only evidence. The physical world was not the only reality. Thus primitive man was able to touch the hem of the garment of the Infinite. Whatever level in the evolution of man we may examine, we find that the religious sense was never absent from the domain of his experience. If he has sacrificed so often the concrete pleasures of the world for the impalpable truths of faith, it is because the lure of the Infinite is irresistible and therein he finds his natural element.

2

The Essence of Religion

What is that lure, one may ask. What is there in religion which it is impossible to do without? In short, what is religion?

Attempts have been made to define religion from different points of view. The chief standpoints are provided by the multiple nature of the human mind itself. The older psychologists who were obsessed with the tripartite division of mental processes into thought, feeling and will, sought to account for the religious consciousness in terms of the one or the other of these mental faculties. Some thought that the dominating influence in religion was played by the faculty of judgment. Others shifted the role from cognition to feeling. Yet others believed that the will was the predominant factor in religious life. Below the conscious layers of the mind there is a vast subliminal sphere called the

subconscious. A great American psychologist, William James, finds the roots of religion in this region. Through the subliminal door, he says, transmundane energies operate within our ordinary world. Following him, many psychologists regard instinctive drives as supplying religious motives. No wonder, then, that those who scoff at religion should characterize God as a sort of wet-nurse to humanity and religion as a narcotic. Feeling, especially fear, has frequently been regarded as the driving force which pushes man to religion. There is another view which holds that religion arises out of a feeling of absolute dependence. Those who approach religion from the conative side of consciousness say that the religious attitude is an answer to a practical need. Man meets with obstacles in his struggle for existence. He finds himself distressed and down and out, and so he requisitions help from something higher and more powerful than himself. The rise of religion has also been traced to intellectual motives like curiosity, the desire to find a cause of things, etc.

All these definitions are defective because in parceling out the human mind they ignore its fundamental unity. The compartmentalized view of life is inadequate and it can never give us a comprehensive vision of religious truth. Religion, if anything, must conserve, transform and sublimate all the aspects of mental life. The definitions we have given so far are not so much false as partial, and are comparable to the attempts of the blind men in the story to describe the elephant.²

² See Chapter Two, p. 18.

The prophets and God-men tell us that religion is the whole of life, and not a part thereof. The summit of religious experience is the intuition of unity. 'The overcoming of all the usual barriers between the individual and the Absolute is the great mystic achievement. In mystic states we become one with the Absolute and we become aware of our oneness. This is the everlasting and triumphant mystical tradition, hardly altered by differences of clime and creed. In Hinduism, in Neoplatonism, in Sufism, in Christian mysticism, in Whitmanism, we find the same recurring note, so that there is about mystical utterances an eternal unanimity which ought to make a critic stop and think, and which brings it about that the mystical classics have, as has been said, neither birthday nor native land. Perpetually telling of the unity of man with God, their speech antedates language, and they do not grow old.'³ Religious experience is the same all the world over. It is the crowning glory and consummation of man's existence on earth.

3

The Characteristics of Religious Experience

It is impossible to brush aside the evidence of the messengers of God. It is illogical to think that we have a right only to believe in the testimony of our sense perceptions and not to place our trust in the genuineness of mystic experience. God is as real to the mystic

³ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (Longmans, Green, and Co., London, 16th impression, 1908), p. 419.

as matter and life are to us. The first question put by Swami Vivekānanda, then a youth fresh from college, to Śrī Rāmakrishna, his future master, was, 'Have you seen God?' Śrī Rāmakrishna gave the reply, 'I have seen Him. My seeing Him is more real than my seeing you. And, what is more, I can show Him to you.' Such is the testimony of God-men. The experience of God to them is 'as much a fact as a green leaf or the sun is for a dispassionate observer.' The limited understanding of the unlettered folk cannot grasp the subtle truths of science. But this does not mean that scientific truths are myths. To us who cannot rise above the intellectual level of knowledge, the mystic experience of the saint and the sage appears mythical. But when we too are blessed with spiritual vision (*divyacakṣus*), God will become to us the real of the real (*satyasya satyam*). Spiritual things are to be spiritually discerned. Higher than the perceptual, imaginative and intellectual ways of knowing, there is intuition which is the instrument of God-realization. We are not utter foreigners to the intuitive way; for we get its broken arcs in artistic experience and in the life of disinterested love and service.

Religious experience is unique in the sense that it removes the barriers between subject and object, knower and known, and the distinctions of space and time. As we remarked above, it is unitive experience. It is integral and undivided, self-certifying and unsublated. Whether the supreme object of religious experience be regarded as the impersonal Absolute or as the personal God, there is no room for the pettiness of the ego in that Divine Flood. The experience is 'sovereign in its own rights and

carries its own credentials,' says Dr S. Radhakrishnan, 'It is self-established (*svatassiddha*), self-evidencing (*svasamvedya*), self-luminous (*svayamprakāśa*).' ⁴ To us it appears to be super-normal. In fact, however, it is the fulfilment of the normal.

A second characteristic of this experience is that it is the expression of perfect freedom. Freedom implies absence of fear. Fear arises when there is awareness of another, suspicion of discord and expectancy of strife. Since religious experience is unitive and subversive of all limitations, there can be no fear there. Hence it is that this supreme state has been called *abhaya*, fearlessness, and the end of the religious quest has been defined as *mokṣa*, freedom.

Thirdly, there is a positive content for this experience. It is not merely a negative state of being free and fearless; it implies also positive peace (*śānti*) and the highest happiness (*ānanda*). There is a significant prayer in the *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*: 'From the unreal lead me to the real. From darkness lead me to light. From death lead me to immortality.' ⁵ Mystic experience is a fulfilment of this prayer. To the popular mind heaven is painted in glowing colours and is described as a land flowing with milk and honey. This is figuratively true. In religious experience man discovers his lost soul, and this certainly means supreme felicity and joy.

The mention of words like 'joy' and 'happiness' should not make us think that religious experience is on

⁴ Dr S. Radhakrishnan, *An Idealist View of Life* (George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1932), p. 92.

⁵ *Bṛhadāranyaka*, I, iii, 28.

a par with sense-pleasures. When creature comforts are attended to, there is a feeling of satisfaction which may be called *pleasure*. When desires which are intellectual and reflective in character are satisfied, there is *happiness*. Higher than either of these is *blessedness* or *joy* which belongs to the universe of religious experience. This is gained not by attaching oneself to sense-objects but by getting away from them. The truly religious man lives *in* the world but is not *of* it. The very first words used by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in describing the state of a man who has attained to spiritual wisdom are these: ‘When a man puts away all the desires of his mind, and when his spirit finds comfort in itself—then is he called a man of steadfast wisdom.’⁶

This inner renunciation does not mean running away from the world. In truth, it is only the man of perfection that can see the world in its proper perspective. He enjoys by renouncing—by renouncing the sense of ‘I’ and ‘mine’. He sees the world wrapped in the mantle of God; and his love knows no bounds.⁷ It covers not only men but also birds and beasts. The man of spirit prays for the well-being of all creatures. There is this prayer in the *Bhāgavata*; ‘I desire not the supreme state with all its eight perfections nor the release from rebirth; may I assume the sorrow of all creatures who suffer, and enter into them so that they may be made free from grief.’

The characteristics of religious experience set forth above are not peculiar to any particular religion. They

⁶ *Gītā*, ii, 55.

⁷ *Īśāvāsya*, 1.

are illustrated in the lives of all prophets. The essence of religion is the same, though the outer dress may vary; even as human nature is the same in spite of variations in colour and costume.

4

The Evolution of Religious Consciousness

We have given above an analysis of the religious experience of seers and saints. There are several stages to be traversed before attaining to that level of mystic communion. Three principal stages are usually distinguished in the development of religious consciousness—tribal, national and universal.

Among primitive tribes religion and magic are inextricably interwoven. Things in nature like river and cloud, rain and sun are deified and invested with souls (animism). Man thinks that he is surrounded by subtle and incalculable spirits influencing his actions (spiritism). Special objects like a stock or stone, a claw or even a stray bit of a body are chosen for veneration (fetishism). The spirits of departed ancestors are believed to roam the earth; and worship is offered to them (ancestor-worship). The life of some individual animal or plant is conceived to be bound with the life of the tribe; and so the animal or plant is worshipped and regarded as sacred (totemism). The primitive man sees no vital distinction between the organic and the inorganic, man and animal, mind and matter. The

objects of worship are not lofty and the motives for worship are not noble.

The transition from the religion of the tribe to the religion of the nation makes for a widening of man's mental horizon. With the growth of national consciousness and civilized ways of life religion becomes ethical and reflective. The crude tribal cults with their local prejudices and superstitions are no longer adequate and suitable. Hence the need for new gods and new modes of worship. A sudden break with the old, however, is impossible and will be injurious. And so, the infant nation chisels new forms out of old material; on the basis of the nature-worship of the tribe a polytheistic system is built. Great gods are shaped out of the powers of nature revered in tribal religion; and they become now national deities. The process does not stop there. The new gods acquire new attributes. Some of the attributes of the lesser gods are taken over by the greater deities. Ethical qualities come to be attributed to the gods. Some of them are regarded as maintainers not merely of the physical order but also of the moral order. As the nation develops in its social relations, the gods also are found to constitute not a crowd but a hierarchy. All the gods are brought under the sway of a supreme God. The process of unification progresses still and culminates in the thought that there is no God but the one God (monotheism). The tendency to unification may take a different turn. Instead of raising one God to headship, a divine principle may be recognized to be working in and through the clan of gods. From this point of view the various

gods appear to be but the shifting forms of the one divine principle (absolutism); and the dominating religious idea is: 'The Truth is one, and sages call it by various names.'⁸

When we reach this point, we are already at the next stage in the evolution of religious consciousness. The religion of the nation can govern only the external acts of the citizen and not his inner beliefs. Conformity and conviction is what is demanded by a national religion. Religion, whether of a tribal group or of a nation, is mainly a social function. The personal element is lacking. Man receives his religion just as he inherits his property. But religion cannot be kept as a thing apart. In the words of Whitehead, religion is 'what the individual does with his own solitariness.'⁹ The leaders of the movement which made religion a matter of life and death, intimately personal, taking the first place in the scheme of human affairs, were the prophets. Among all the peoples of the world and in all ages prophets have appeared to raise the tone and timbre of religious experience. Their appeal is direct and their voice imperious. Their teachings bear no vestiges of provincialism, for they speak with the authority of God. Instead of religion for a tribe or a nation they give a religion for humanity. The details in the teachings of the prophets may vary from place to place and from age to age; but the spirit remains the same.

⁸ *Rg-veda*, I, clxiv, 46.

⁹ A. N. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making* (Cambridge University Press, 1927), p. 6.

World-Religions

All the great world-religions may be regarded as universal in spirit. Some of them were founded by individual prophets. The others are considered to have been revealed to a number of seers. Buddhism, Christianity and Islam are 'founded' religions. Hinduism has no single founder; the ancient seers served as but channels for the transmission of religious truths to humanity. All these religions are universal by virtue of their appeal to the spirit in man. None of them is professed by all the men in the world. There can be no such dictatorial religion. The universality of the world-faiths consists in the provision they make for the perfection of man. Each of them has a system of rituals which, besides shaping the artistic instincts of the individual on the right lines, exert a stabilizing influence over the institutions of the religion, a scheme of ethics to make man morally perfect, a path or paths to conduct the pilgrim to his destination, namely God, and a philosophy to satisfy the most rigorous intellectual demands and serve as a portal to the intuitive experience of the Absolute.

CHAPTER TWO
WHAT IS HINDUISM? ¹

1

A Faith that Enquires

HINDUISM, which is the oldest of the world-religions, had its origin in India, and is still professed by the majority of its people. The name had originally a geographical significance. The Persians who invaded India through the north-western passes of the Himalayas gave the name Sindhu to the region watered by the river Indus; and the word 'Hindu' is only a corrupt form of 'Sindhu'.² Hinduism meant the faith of the people of the Indus-land. This significance was lost even in the distant past. Not only did Hinduism become the religion of the whole of India, but it spread far and wide and became the faith of the colonies of Greater India, like Java, Malaya and Borneo. The indigenous names by which Hinduism is known are *sanātana-dharma* and *vaidika-dharma*. *Sanātana-dharma* means eternal religion and is expressive of the truth that religion as such knows no age. It is coeval with life. It is the food of the spirit in man. The other name, *vaidika-dharma*,

¹ Although the entire book is an answer to this question, an attempt is made here to set forth the general characteristics of Hinduism.

² The word 'India', too is derived from 'Sindhu' and means the land of the Indus.

means the religion of the Vedas. The Vedas are the foundational Scriptures of the Hindus; and, as we shall learn in the next chapter, they imply not merely the four Vedas, *R̥g*, *Yajus*, *Sāma*, and *Atharva*, but all words that speak of God. 'Veda' is a significant name, meaning God-knowledge or God-science. Hinduism regards as its authority the religious experience of the ancient sages of India. It does not owe its origin to any historical personage or prophet. Buddhism, Christianity and Islam are founded religions. Their dates are definite, since their authors are known. No such date or founder can be cited as marking the beginning of Hinduism. Hence it is called *sanātana* and *vaidika*, ancient and revealed.

Though Hinduism accepts the authority of the Veda, it is not a dogmatic or 'authoritarian' religion. 'In India religion is hardly a dogma,' says Mr Havell, 'but a working hypothesis of human conduct adapted to different stages of spiritual development and different conditions of life.'³ The allegiance to the Veda does not mean the slavery of reason. There is a popular saying to the effect that not even a thousand scriptural texts will be capable of converting a pot into a piece of cloth. A great philosopher by name Vācaspati claims authority not for all Scriptures as such but only for purportful Scripture. And for determining the purport one has to use one's intelligence. *Upapatti* or intelligibility in the light of reasoning is one of the canons of scriptural interpretation recognized by orthodox Hinduism.

³ E. B. Havell, *The History of Aryan Rule in India* (George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd., London, no date), p. 170.

The variety of views that we find in Hinduism are all due to the freedom of scope that is given for intellectual inquiry. Even from the earliest times rational reflection was allowed to serve as a corrective to religious belief.

The alliance of reason and revelation is responsible for the kinship of religion and philosophy in India. Philosophy, as understood in the West, arises out of intellectual curiosity, a sense of wonder, as they call it. It is a world-view (*Weltanschauung*), a theory of reality. In the East, however, philosophy has always been regarded as a way of life, an avenue to spiritual realization. *Tattva-vicāra* or inquiry into truth is a means to *mokṣa* or spiritual freedom. It is the realization of the fact of moral and physical evil that makes man reflect and ponder over the mystery and meaning of life. Philosophy, like religion, is an answer to practical need. The avoidance of misery and the acquisition of *śānti* (peace) is the supreme human end. Man engages himself in several pursuits for this purpose. He runs after wealth and outer pleasures in the hope that they will give him satisfaction. But he soon finds that undisturbed peace is not gained through such methods. He turns inward (*āvṛtta-caḥṣuḥ*) and beholds within himself the resplendent spirit of God who is the seat of supreme felicity and bliss.⁴ Thus philosophy in India is the pathway to religion. And by this happy co-ordination the Hindu thinkers succeeded in preventing philosophy from becoming barren, and religion from becoming blind. It is interesting to note,

⁴ See *Kaṭha*, iv, 1.

in this connection, that philosophy is called *darśana* which means 'intuition', and religion, *mata* which means 'what has been reflected upon'.

2

Life-Religion

The charge of pessimism is often levelled against Hinduism. It is said that the Hindu mind takes too grave a view of life and its problems. Life is regarded as fundamentally evil and escape therefrom as the final good. Hinduism does take account of the misery and suffering of the world. It is these in fact that provoke the problems of philosophy and religion. If optimism means an 'unjustifiable acquiescence in evil,' it is not worth having. The grim side of existence cannot be ignored. It was the perception of woe and evil that led the Buddha to found a religion of hope. *Samsāra* (transmigration) is a vicious circle. Even the choicest goods therein have a core of evil. But evil is not the essence of reality. Hinduism admits that there is a soul of goodness in things evil. Transcendence of evil is the end; and it is possible to achieve it even here in this life. It is a peculiar trait of Hinduism that it regards *mokṣa* not as a hypothetical state to be attained after death in some far-off region but as realizable in this life. The Upaniṣad says: 'When all the desires that the heart harbours are gone, man becomes immortal and reaches Brahman here.'⁵

⁵ *Bṛhadāranyaka*, IV, iv, 7; *Kaṭha*, vi, 14.

All the sects of Hinduism, whatever be their creed and dogma, emphasize the need for ethical life as an indispensable condition of spiritual realization. He whose life is disorderly and who maintains no right relations with his fellow-men will not be able to have the vision of God. It will be easier for the camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for the unrighteous man to enter the kingdom of God.⁶ Right speech, right thought and right action are insisted upon by every school of Hindu thought. Conduct counts more than creed. If a person takes care of his morals, right belief will follow. Hinduism, both as philosophy and religion, is not so much a way of thought as a way of life.

3

Universality

The greatest feature of Hinduism, which is at once unique and lofty, is its catholicity. Dictatorship in religion is as much to be detested as other forms of totalitarian ideology. Provincialism of spirit has been the source of bigotry and bloodshed. They are the worshippers of the false God who take the sword in the name of religion. Hinduism realizes this truth and allows the widest freedom in matters of faith and worship. The foreigner is amazed at the almost unending variations in creed that are found in Hinduism. But these variations are an ornament (*bhūṣaṇa*) to the faith and do not import into it any defect (*dūṣaṇa*). The

⁶ *St. Mark's Gospel*, x, 27.

fundamental tenet of Hinduism is: as many minds, so many faiths. The celebrated text of the *R̥g-veda* which proclaims the One Truth which is called variously by the sages, we have already quoted. The Upaniṣads declare that just as cows which are of varied hues yield the same white milk, all the different paths lead to the same goal. ‘Howsoever men approach me, even so do I accept them; for, on all sides, whatever path they may choose is mine,’ says the Lord in the *Gītā*.⁷ There is a *Smṛti* text which declares, ‘Some speak of it as Agni, some as Manu, Prajāpati, some as Indra, others as Prāṇa, yet others as the eternal Brahman.’⁸ Aśoka had this inscribed on his rock pillars: ‘The king, beloved of the Gods, honours every form of religious faith, but considers no gift or honour so much as the increase of the substance of religion, whereof this is the root, to reverence one’s own faith and never to revile that of others. Whoever acts differently injures his own religion while he wrongs another’s.’⁹ Śrī Rāmakrishna made a series of successful experiments with God, realized him in several ways, and taught as the essence of his experience that the different faiths were like the *ghats* that lead to the same Ganges. Mahātmā Gāndhi observed while consecrating a temple in New Delhi: ‘It must be the daily prayer of every adherent of the Hindu faith that every known religion of the world should grow from day to day and should serve the whole of humanity.’

⁷ *Gītā*, iv. 11.

⁸ Quoted by Śaṅkara in his *Aitareya-upaniṣad-bhāṣya*.

⁹ See Rock Edict, xii.

This is the tradition of Hinduism—reviling no religion and honouring truth, wherever it may come from and whatever vesture it may wear.

Buddha, the Blessed One, gives the parable of the blind men and the elephant to illustrate that partial *knowledge always breeds bigotry and fanaticism*. Once a group of disciples entered the city of Śrāvasti to beg alms. They found there a number of sectarians holding disputations with one another and maintaining ‘This is the truth, that is not the truth. That is not the truth, this is the truth.’ After listening to these conflicting views, the brethren came back to the Exalted One and described to him what they had seen and heard at Śrāvasti.

Then said the Exalted One:

“These sectarians, brethren, are blind and unseeing. They know not the real, they know not the unreal; they know not the truth, they know not the untruth. In such a state of ignorance do they dispute and quarrel as ye describe. Now in former times, brethren, there was a Rājā (king) in this same Śrāvasti. Then, brethren, the Rājā called to a certain man, saying: ‘Come thou, good fellow! Go, gather together all the blind men that are in Śrāvasti!’

“‘Very good, Your Majesty,’ replied that man, and in obedience to the Rājā, gathered together all the blind men, took them with him to the Rājā, and said: ‘Your Majesty, all the blind men of Śrāvasti are now assembled.’

“‘Then, my good man, show the blind men an elephant.’

“ ‘ Very good, Your Majesty,’ said the man and did as he was told, saying: ‘ O ye blind men, such as this is an elephant.’ ”

“ And to one he presented the head of the elephant, to another, the ear, to another a tusk, the trunk, the foot, back, tail and tuft of the tail, saying to each one that that was the elephant.

“ Now, brethren, that man, having presented the elephant to the blind men, came to the Rājā and said: ‘ Your Majesty, the elephant has been presented to the blind men. Do what is your will.’ ”

“ Thereupon, brethren, the Rājā went up to the blind men and said to each: ‘ Have you studied the elephant? ’ ”

“ ‘ Yes, Your Majesty.’ ”

“ ‘ Then tell me your conclusions about him.’ ”

“ Thereupon those who had been presented with the head answered ‘ Your Majesty, an elephant is just like a pot.’ And those who had only observed the ear replied: ‘ An elephant is just like a winnowing basket.’ Those who had been presented with the tusk said it was a ploughshare. Those who knew only the trunk said it was a plough. ‘ The body,’ said they, ‘ is a granary; the foot, a pillar; the back, a mortar; the tail, a pestle; the tuft of the tail, just a besom.’ ”

“ Then they began to quarrel, shouting, ‘ Yes, it is! ’ ‘ No, it isn’t! ’ ‘ An elephant is not that! ’ ‘ Yes it is like that! ’ and so on, till they came to fisticuffs about the matter.

“ Then, brethren, that Rājā was delighted with the scene.”

Just so are these sectarians who are wanderers, blind, unseeing, knowing not the truth, but each maintaining it is thus and thus.¹⁰

Those who think that truth is in their exclusive keeping and that their religion is the only approach to God, 'see only one side of a thing' like the blind men in the parable. Hinduism does not commit this mistake. It believes in the sanctity and efficacy of all religions.

At the same time the universalism that is envisaged in Hinduism is not an amalgam of all that is good in every religion. A universal religion put together in that way would be a bouquet, exquisite no doubt, but lifeless. Hinduism recognizes different levels of religious experience and arranges them in their order of excellence. Real conversion is vertical—*i.e.*, from the lower to the higher conception of God, and not horizontal—*i.e.*, from one formal faith to another. The spiritual growth is from the crude forms of worship to the highest contemplation of God. Dr S. Radhakrishnan explains the Hindu attitude by comparing the religions to colleges. 'As students are proud of their colleges,' he says, 'so are groups of their gods. We need not move students from one college to another, but should do our best to raise the tone of each college, improve its standards and refine its ideals, with the result that each college enables us to attain the same goal. It is a matter of indifference what college we are in, so long as

¹⁰ See *Buddhist Parables*, tr. from original Pali by E. W. Barlingam (Yale University Press, New Haven, U.S.A., 1922), p. 75.

all of them are steeped in the same atmosphere and train us to reach the same ideal'.¹¹

There are various cults in Hinduism and a variety of creeds. But conflict among them is avoided by the twin doctrines of *adhikāra* and *iṣṭa*. *Adhikāra* means eligibility. A person's faith is determined by the kind of man he is. There is no use, for instance, in putting a boy in the Honours Class, if he is fit only for the Pass Course. What is meat for one may be poison for another. A man's creed depends upon his *adhikāra*. And it is his eligibility that determines his *iṣṭa* or ideal. Hinduism prescribes to each according to his needs. Hence it is not to be considered as a single creed or cult, but as a league of religions, a fellowship of faiths.

4

The Spirit of Hinduism

The richness, beauty and greatness of Hinduism lie, no doubt, in its spirit of accommodation. But that does not mean that Hinduism is a medley of ill-assorted creeds, with no cohesion, no common purpose, and no unified understanding. The very fact that it has survived to this day in spite of the vicissitudes of history, and does not show any great sign of decay, proves that there is a soul to it which holds together its different limbs in an indissoluble unity. It is true that Hinduism gathered round it, with the march of time, certain

¹¹ *The Hindu View of Life* (George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 8th impression, 1949), pp. 47-48.

encumbrances and unessentials, as was the case with every other religion. But a unique feature of India's religious history has been the appearance of great reformers—seers of the truth—from time to time, whose especial mission it was to reorganize the people's faith, and infuse in them a sense of unity and purpose. Nowhere else in the world has there been such a galaxy of spiritual leaders who, after having realized the supreme truth, came down to the level of the masses and conveyed to them intimations of the high dignity and glory of their faith.

Is it possible to give a definition of Hinduism, which all its adherents would approve of? What is the greatest common measure of agreement among the Hindu cults? Though it is difficult to express adequately in words the spirit of Hinduism, it is not impossible to indicate its nature. At the outset it should be noted that all Hindus are agreed in their allegiance to the Vedas. Even the Tāntric cults recognize the authority of the Vedas. Many of the latter-day rituals and practices are based on the teachings of the Tantras, and cannot be traced to the Vedas. Yet the common belief is that the Tantras derived their teachings from certain texts of the Vedas, now lost to us. Whether there were such texts or not, it is clear that, in the view of the Hindus, the Vedas constitute the primary source of Hinduism. The Hindu beliefs and practices, philosophies and faiths are, thus, held to have the sanction of the Vedas behind them.

One of the fundamental beliefs of Hinduism is that there is one all-pervading and all-transcending Spirit

which is the basic reality—the source and ground of all beings. This is usually referred to as God (*Īśvara*); but the wise realize it as the impersonal Absolute (*Brahman*). The reality conceived of as God is the cause of the universe—its sole and whole cause. The universe rises from, remains in, and returns to God. There is no other creator alongside, or opposed to God. God does not create the world out of nothing, nor out of any stuff external to him. It is only a convention that refers to God in the masculine gender. If it is legitimate to address God as Father, it is equally legitimate to address that reality as Mother. In an exquisite passage the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* addresses God thus: ‘Thou art woman; thou art man; thou art the youth and also the maiden; thou as an old man totterest with a stick; being born thou standest facing all directions’.¹²

It is God that has taken, as it were, all the forms that we see. This is explained in one of the Upaniṣads on the analogy of Fire and Wind. Just as the one Fire or the one Wind enters the world and assumes various shapes and configurations, even so the inner Self of all beings takes on the several forms and yet is not exhausted by them.¹³ It is, of course, difficult to see God in everything. In fact, to realize the Self in and as all is the highest of spiritual experience. So, as a discipline that will eventually lead to the goal, one is asked to see the face of God in whichever thing that has prowess, splendour and rectitude. Illustrating this truth in the

¹² *Śvetāśvatara*, iv, 3.

¹³ *Kaṭha Upaniṣad*, v, 9-10.

tenth chapter of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa identifies himself with the best of every kind, *e.g.*, the Himālaya among the mountains, the Gaṅgā among the rivers, Vāsudeva among the Vṛṣṇis, and Arjuna among the Pāṇḍavas.¹⁴ The great mountains and the big rivers, majestic trees and fine animals, heroic men and women—in fact, all things that have excellence, thus, become objects of veneration. When the Hindu worships these or the idols in the shrines, he is aware that it is to God that he really offers his worship. It is wrong, therefore, to characterize Hinduism as an idolatrous religion. The idols are symbols of the invisible Spirit. It is after the devotee has invoked the presence of God therein that they become sacred objects of worship. The Hindu, it is true, bows his head before many a form of the Deity. On that account, however, he is not to be dubbed a polytheist. What the Hindu adores is the One God in the many gods. Even as early as the *Ṛg-veda* we have a philosophical monotheism culminating in monism or non-dualism. What Max Müller characterizes as the henotheism of the Vedas—*viz.*, the worshipping of each divinity in turn, as the occasion demands—is really a tendency towards a philosophical monotheism. The Hindu mind is averse to assigning an unalterable or rigidly fixed form or name to the Deity. Hence it is that in Hinduism we have innumerable god-forms and countless divine names. And, it is a truth that is recognized by all Hindus that obeisance offered to any of these forms and names reaches the one supreme God.

¹⁴ *Gītā*, x, 25-37.

It is the unique conception of the Godhead that we have in Hinduism that led to the formulation of the doctrine of incarnation (*avatāra*). God is not a detached spectator of the world-process. He guides it and actively participates in it, though he is not defiled by it. Whenever there is the need, he incarnates himself, *i.e.* appears in a tangible living form, so that the world may be saved and helped to move higher in its spiritual evolution. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the *Gītā*: ‘Whenever there is a decline of righteousness and a rise of unrighteousness, I incarnate myself. For the protection of the pious, for the destruction of those given to wicked ways, and for establishing righteousness firmly, I am born from age to age.’¹⁵ In certain schools of Hinduism such as Śaivism, the doctrine that God is born of parents like mortals is not accepted. But even then it is admitted that God appears in a body when he wants to save a devotee through that way. The spiritual preceptor (*guru*), it is believed, is God in human form. The Hindus hold the teacher in the highest esteem. Whatever honour is shown to God is shown to him also.

Of all the religions of the world it is well-known that Hinduism—with the two other faiths, Jainism and Buddhism, which have stemmed from it—lays the greatest stress on non-violence (*ahimsā*). This is as it should be. If God is all, then all must be sacred, and no injury should be caused to any living being. The highest virtue is non-violence. The implication of this negative term is this. If in order to do some good to a person you have to injure another, then your duty is

¹⁵ *Gītā*, iv, 7-8.

not to do that good. Saving a being from pain is more of a duty than causing pleasure. Total non-violence is, of course, an ideal. But it is the constant endeavour of the Hindu to approximate to it. If God is Truth (*satya*), non-violence (*ahimsā*) is the way to realize him. 'If I were asked to define the Hindu creed', wrote Mahātmā Gāndhī, 'I should simply say, search after Truth through non-violent means'.¹⁶

The central teaching of Hinduism in its quintessential form may be found in many of the spiritual texts. We may quote here the opening passage of the *Īśāvāsya* which ranks first in the traditional list of the Upaniṣads. Referring to this passage, Gāndhīji once said, "I have now come to the final conclusion that if all the Upaniṣads and all the other scriptures happened all of a sudden to be reduced to ashes and if only the first verse in the *Īsopaniṣad* were left intact in the memory of Hindus, Hinduism would live for ever".¹⁷ The text runs thus:

*īśā-vāsyam idam sarvam
yat-kim ca jagatyām jagat,
tena tyaktena bhūñjīthā
mā gṛdhaḥ kasya svid-dhanam.*

'By the Lord is enveloped all this, whatever moving thing there is in the moving world. Through renouncing this, thou mayest enjoy. Covet not the wealth of anyone.'

¹⁶ *Young India*, April 10, 1924.

¹⁷ *Harijan*, January 30, 1937.

This text can be expressed in the following statement:

1. God is all: the entire universe is an expression of him.
2. Joy is not in hoarding but in giving. Attachment to the finite and the perishing things is evil, and is the cause of sorrow. Renunciation of attachment is the highest good.

Here we have all that is important in Hinduism—a vision of God and a rule of life. The same may be said of the *Gāyatrīmantra* which constitutes the main text of the daily Hindu prayer.

om bhūr bhuvah suvah!
tat-savitur varenyam bhargo devasya
dhīmahī, dhiyo yo nah pracodayāt.

‘God whose sound-symbol is *Om* appears as the earth, the sky, and the heaven. We meditate on the most resplendent and adorable splendour of the self-luminous God. May he guide our minds!’¹⁸

Here again we have the same emphasis laid on the truth of the all-pervading self-luminous Reality, and on the need for its guidance in life.

Fortunately we have a great number of Hindu Scriptures to tell us what Hinduism is. One may choose any of them, either in Sanskrit or in any of the popular languages of India, and find there all that is required for a complete spiritual life.

¹⁸ *Śukla-yajur-veda*, xxxvi, 3.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SCRIPTURES

INDIAN literature is predominantly religious. It has always been held in India that the religious consciousness is supreme and that the religious point of view must be dominant in all the affairs of life. Hence the greatest seers and writers have used their talents in expounding the faith of the Hindu race. Even such secular sciences as grammar (*vyākaraṇa*) and astronomy (*jyotiṣa*) were regarded as auxiliaries to Scripture. In Sanskrit as well as in the popular languages there are innumerable treatises on religion and philosophy. Many of the old books are lost. But even those that are still available are legion.

1

The Vedas

The foundational Scriptures of the Hindus are the Vedas. They are usually designated ‘*Śruti*,’ while all the other scriptural texts go under the omnibus term ‘*Smṛti*’. The authority of the *Śruti* is primary, while that of the *Smṛti* is secondary. *Śruti* literally means what is heard, and *Smṛti* means what is remembered. *Śruti* is revelation; *Smṛti* is tradition. As between the two, *Śruti* is primary because it is a form of direct experience, whereas *Smṛti* is secondary, since it is a recollection of that experience.

The Hindus believe that the Vedas which constitute *Śruti* are not compositions of any human mind. The Vedas are eternal (*nitya*) and impersonal (*apauruṣeya*). They are the breath of God, eternal truths revealed to the great *ṛṣi*s of yore. The word 'ṛṣi' is significant. It means a seer, from *ḍṛś* to see. The *ṛṣi*s saw the truths or heard them. Hence the Vedas are what are heard (*Śruti*). They represent the spiritual experiences of the ancient sages, the glorious heritage of *Āryāvarta*.

Hinduism does not swear by any single prophet. It takes its stand on revelation. The seer is only a medium to transmit to posterity the insight which he receives. He is no more the inventor of the Veda than is Newton the generator of the law of gravity. The Vedic truths are discovered and not produced, revealed and not manufactured. And so they are impersonal (*apauruṣeya*). Unlike natural laws which govern the temporal universe and are bound to pass therewith, the Vedic truths belong to the spiritual realm; they are everlasting values and hence eternal (*nitya*).

The word 'Veda' means knowledge or wisdom; and as applied to Scripture it signifies a book of wisdom. The Vedas are four: the *R̥g-veda*, the *Yajur-veda*, the *Sāma-veda* and the *Atharva-veda*. Of these, the first is the most important because it lends many of its *mantras* (hymns) to the others and is reputed to be the earliest collection (*samhitā*). In the *Atharva-veda* we find a *rap-prochement* made between the worship of the higher Gods and the popular cults.

Each Veda consists of four parts: *Mantra*, *Brāhmaṇa*, *Āraṇyaka* and *Upaniṣad*. The *Mantras* are hymns

in praise of the Vedic Gods; they are prayers addressed to the deities in order to gain prosperity here and happiness in a hereafter. The *Brāhmaṇas* are guide-books for the performance of sacrificial rites which were then the principal modes of pleasing the Gods. The *Āraṇyakas* or 'forest-books' give philosophical interpretations of the rituals by allegorizing them. And the *Upaniṣads* which are the concluding portions of the Veda (*i.e.*, *Vedānta*) are speculations in philosophy, as also mystical utterances revealing the most profound spiritual truths. And it is they that constitute, in fact, the foundation of Hinduism. Even western scholars have been amazed at the lofty heights scaled by the Upaniṣadic thinkers. Max Müller compares the philosophy of the Upaniṣads to the light of the morning and to the pure air of the mountains—so simple, so true, if once understood. Schopenhauer, who was in the habit, before going to bed, of performing his devotions from the pages of the Upaniṣads, regarded them as the solace of his life and felt sure that they would be the solace of his death.¹

There are many works bearing the name *Upaniṣad*. The chief of them are twelve: *Īśa*, *Kena*, *Kātha*, *Praśna*, *Muṇḍaka*, *Māṇḍūkya*, *Taittirīya*, *Chāndogya*, *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, *Kauṣītakī* and *Śvetāśvatara*.

The division of the Veda into *Mantra*, *Brāhmaṇa*, *Āraṇyaka* and *Upaniṣad* is to suit the four stages in a man's life, *viz.*, *Brahmacarya*, *Gṛhastha*, *Vānaprastha*, and *Sannyāsa*. The *Brahmacārin* or the student-celibate learns to recite the *Mantras*; and incidentally he studies

¹ See Max Müller, *Sacred Books of the East Series Vol I*, p. 61, where he quotes from Schopenhauer's *Ponega*, 3rd edn., II, p. 426.

also the other portions of the Veda so that he may be well equipped for the conduct of his entire future life. When he becomes a householder (*Gṛhastha*) he has to tend the sacred fires and offer sacrifices to the Vedic Gods; these he learns from the *Brāhmaṇas*. When he retires to the forest as a hermit (*Vānaprastha*), the *Āraṇyaka* provides him with a substitute for the rituals and prepares him for receiving the philosophical wisdom of the Upaniṣads. As a *Sannyāsin* (monk) he seeks to realize *Brahman* or the Absolute which is taught in the Upaniṣads.

The content of the Veda may also be reclassified into (1) *karma-kāṇḍa* or ritual section, (2) *upāsana-kāṇḍa* or meditation section, and (3) *jñāna-kāṇḍa* or knowledge section. The *Mantras* and the *Brāhmaṇas* constitute *karma-kāṇḍa*, the *Āraṇyakas*, *upāsana-kāṇḍa*, and the Upaniṣads *jñāna-kāṇḍa*.

2

The Smṛtis

Next in importance to *Śruti* are the *Smṛtis* or secondary scriptures. 'Smṛti' is a word which is so elastic that it includes a variety of works on religious duty and philosophy. Besides the books which are specifically called *Smṛti*, there are the *Itihāsas*, *Purāṇas*, *Āgamas*, the *Darśana* literature and treatises and poems written in the popular languages. All these may be called *Smṛtis* because they draw inspiration from the Veda and regard the Veda as the final authority.

The works which are expressly called *Smṛti* are law-books *dharma-śāstras*. Their purpose is to lay down the laws that should guide individuals and communities in their daily conduct and to apply the eternal truths of the Veda to the changing conditions of time and clime and thereby preserve the integrity and ensure the progress of Hindu society. From time to time a great law-giver would arise, codify the existing laws, eliminate those which had become obsolete, and see to it that the ways of the Hindus are in a manner consistent with the spirit of the Veda. Of such law-givers the names of three have become immortal—Manu, Yājñavalkya and Parāśara. And the *Smṛtis* are named after them. Manu is the oldest giver of law. His work is called ‘*Mānava-dharmaśāstra*,’ the Laws of Man or the Institutes of Manu. Here as well as in the other *Smṛtis* we find instructions to all classes of people regarding their duties in life.

Much disservice has been done to Hindu society by overlooking the obvious limitations of the *Smṛtis*. It must never be forgotten that whenever there is a conflict between the injunctions of the Veda and the ordinances of the *Smṛti*, the latter must be rejected. And as society advances it may outgrow certain laws which were valid at a particular stage of its development, and it is no use insisting that those out-of-date codes should still be applied. That there are different *Smṛtis* for different times is declared in a Sanskrit verse which reads: ‘The laws of Manu are intended for the *Kṛta-yuga*; those of Yājñavalkya are for the *Tretāyuga*; those of Śaṅkha and Likhita are for the *Dvāparayuga*; and those

of Parāśara are for the *Kaliyuga*.² It is always open to a great reformer or an assembly of wise men to readjust old laws to suit the requirements of the age. Another factor which should be remembered is that Manu himself gives an important place for conscience along with the *Veda*, *Smṛti* and *Ācāra*.³ We are not to stifle the inner voice in order to conform to external codes. The God within us is the supreme authority in matters of moral action. As the ears of the generality of mankind however are not tuned to this still small voice, there is a need for law-givers and leaders.

3

The Itihāsas

The *Itihāsas* are the two great epics, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*. They are stories in song of the noble deeds of great national heroes, illustrative of the proper application of the laws of the *Smṛtis* to concrete situations in life. Principles in the abstract seldom appeal to the common man. The purpose of reading the life stories of great men is to understand the use and excellence of the laws of virtue.

Many a moral and spiritual problem may present formidable difficulties, when considered in abstraction. Rules and principles may read all right as copy-book maxims. But how they are to be applied, when, and in what form—one may find it hard to decide. In such matters the Epics offer valuable guidance for clearing one's understanding and straightening one's conduct.

² *Parāśara-Smṛti*, i, 24.

³ See *Manu*, ii, 1.

The *Rāmāyaṇa*, whose author is Vālmīki, relates the story of Rāmacandra, the ideal man. How an individual should behave towards his elders, equals and inferiors, how a king ought to rule his kingdom, and how a community may live in harmony and peace may all be learned from this master-piece of Sanskrit literature which has been characterized as the *ādi-kāvya*, the first epic poem.

The other *Itihāsa*, viz., the *Mahābhārata*, whose compilation is attributed to Vyāsa, deals with the feuds between the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas who were cousins and scions of the lunar race. The natural enmity culminated in the Great War in which the Pāṇḍavas representing the virtuous were victorious through the good offices of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, their friend, philosopher and guide. Besides the main story, there are innumerable parables and dialogues setting forth the principles of morals and metaphysics. One such dialogue is the *Bhagavad-gītā* which forms the most important part of this great epic. The Gospel was given to Arjuna by Śrī Kṛṣṇa on the eve of the Great War when the valiant warrior grew faint of heart and refused to fight his kinsmen. It was primarily a call to disinterested action, a command to stick to one's post of duty in scorn of consequence. But the Lord made use of the occasion to impart to Arjuna the quintessence of Hindu philosophy—the indestructibility and immortality of the self, its divine heritage, and the realization of the ultimate oneness of existence through selfless work, self-forgetting love, and self-knowledge. The *Gītā* ranks high in the religious literature of the world. A great German

philosopher calls it 'the most beautiful, perhaps the only true philosophical song existing in any known tongue.' A popular verse compares the Upaniṣads to the cows, Śrī Kṛṣṇa to the cowherd, Arjuna to the calf, the *Gītā* to the milk and the wise men to those who drink the milk.

4

The Purāṇas

The *Purāṇas* are of the same class as the *Itihāsas*. The two together are known as the fifth Veda (*pañcama vedah*). The aim of the *Purāṇas* is to broadcast religious knowledge and evoke religious devotion among the masses, through myths and stories, legends and chronicles of great national events. Even to this day the *Purāṇas* are popular. Children learn the legends from their grandmothers; peasants and labourers spend their evenings in listening to the exposition of these stories by the Paurāṇikas; many of the plots for the stage and the screen in India are taken from the *Purāṇas*.

Tradition recognizes eighteen main *Purāṇas* and an equal number of subsidiary ones (*Upa-purāṇas*). The chief *Purāṇas* are:

Brahma, Padma, Viṣṇu, Śiva, Bhāgavata, Nārada, Mārkaṇḍeya, Agni, Bhaviṣya, Brahmavaivarta, Liṅga, Varāha, Skanda, Vāmana, Kūrma, Matsya, Garuḍa and *Brahmāṇḍa*.

Of these, the most popular is the *Bhāgavata-purāṇa*. It is a chronicle of the various incarnations of the Bhagavān or Viṣṇu. Viṣṇu is said to have descended (*avataraṇa*) nine times and it is predicted that he will come again at the end of the Kali age. The ten incarnations

(*avatāras*) are: (1) Matsya (the Fish), (2) Kūrma (the Tortoise), (3) Varāha (the Boar), (4) Nārasimha (the Man-lion), (5) Vāmana (the Dwarf), (6) Paraśu-rāma (the destroyer of the Kṣatriya race), (7) Rāma-candra (the son of Daśaratha and consort of Sītā, who put an end to Rāvaṇa, the ten-headed *asura*), (8) Śrī Kṛṣṇa (the Lord of the Gopīs and the Teacher of the *Gītā*), (9) Buddha (the Prince-ascetic who founded a new faith of Love and Service), (10) Kalkī (the Future *Avatāra* for the destruction of the world). Sometimes in the place of the Buddha, the name of Balarāma, half-brother of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is given. In truth, the number of descents is not limited to ten. Whenever there is a need, the Lord comes and saves his creatures.

Śiva is not said to have incarnated himself like Viṣṇu. But nevertheless he comes to the aid of man, appears in flesh and blood in different capacities to alleviate human misery. In some of the Tamil works, which are also called *Purāṇas*, the divine sports of Śiva are recorded, the purpose of these manifestations being the same, *viz.*, to protect the devout and to put down the wicked.

5

The Āgamas

The *Āgamas* are theological treatises and manuals of worship. The three main sects of Hinduism, *viz.*, Śaivism, Śaktism and Vaiṣṇavism, base their doctrines and dogmas on their respective *Āgamas*. The Śaivas recognize twenty-eight *Āgamas* of which the chief is the

Kāmikā. Southern Śaivism, which is known as *Śaiva Siddhānta*, as well as Kashmir Śaivism, which is called the Pratyabhijñā system, regard these *Āgamas* as their authorities besides the Vedas. To the Śākta cult belong seventy-seven *Āgamas* known also as the Tantras. They glorify Śakti as the World-Mother and teach several occult practices some of which are intended to develop magical powers, while the others result in knowledge and release. Śaktism has now largely ceased to be an independent cult, since it is regarded as a complement to Śaivism. Śakti is the consort of Śiva, his creative power. The Vaiṣṇavas consider the *Pāñcarātra Āgamas* to be authoritative. According to them, these *Āgamas*, were revealed by Nārāyaṇa himself. If Śiva is the central Deity in the *Śaiva Āgamas*, Viṣṇu is the supreme Lord in the *Pāñcarātra Āgamas*. As the *Nārada Pāñcarātra* declares: 'Everything is Kṛṣṇa from Brahmā to a blade of grass.'

6

*Darśana Literature*⁴

If the *Āgamas* are mainly theological in character, the *Darśana* literature is philosophical. '*Darśana*' (literally 'sight' or 'vision') means a system of philosophy. There are six systems of philosophy grouped into three pairs: (1) the Nyāya and the Vaiśeṣika, (2) the Sāṅkhya and the Yoga, (3) the Mīmāṃsā and the Vedānta. Each

⁴ For an account of the Hindu systems of philosophy see Chapter Seven.

of these systems has its *sūtra-kāra*, *i.e.*, the one who systematized the tenets of the school and stated them in the form of short aphorisms or *sūtras*. Gautama systematized the principles of Nyāya. Kaṇāda is said to be the author of the *Vaiśeṣika-sūtras*. The authorship of the Sāṅkhya system is ascribed to Kapila. The earliest available and the best known work of this school, however, is the *Sāṅkhya-kārikā* of Īśvarakṛṣṇa. The first systematizer of the Yoga school is Patañjali whose *Yoga-sūtra* is the basic text. Mīmāṃsā, which is based on the ritual sections of the Veda, has its own *sūtras* whose author is Jaimini. The teachings of the Upaniṣads are strung together in the *Vedānta-sūtras* by Bādarāyaṇa, and it is on the foundation of these *sūtras* that the different Vedānta schools are built.

The *sūtras* being too brief require commentaries to make them intelligible. In the productive period of Indian philosophy there arose many commentators (*Bhāṣya-kāras*); and their commentaries constitute the second class of *Darśana* literature. Besides these there are several independent works—some of them polemical—both in verse and prose on each of these six systems.

7

Popular Literature

For a long time in the history of Hinduism it was considered a sacrilege to write a religious or philosophical work in any of the popular languages of India. But, if the truths of religion and philosophy are to be brought home to the mind of the commoner, Sanskrit which is

a difficult tongue to learn, requiring considerable effort and application, will not be of much avail. Even from the earliest times we find the protest movements making use of the local dialects for purposes of propagating their views. The early Buddhist literature is in Pāli. The Jainas wrote their early books in Ardhamāgadhī. But these two schools soon realized that they would not gain philosophical recognition if their thoughts were not dressed in Sanskrit, with the result that the later works of these schools came to be written in that language. But with the march of time this attitude changed, and we have to-day a mass of philosophical and religious literature in each of the popular languages. To instance but a few, the *Tēvāram* and the *Tiruvācakam* are well-known among the hymns of the Śaiva saints of South India; the Vaiṣṇavas have correspondingly the *Divya-prabandham* and other devotional songs; the Caitanya movement and the songs of Tagore are responsible for the enrichment of Bengali devotional literature; the songs of Kabir, the *Abhaṅgas* of the Mahārāṣṭra saints, the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Tulasi Dās are all outpourings of God-intoxicated souls. If the essentials of Hinduism have found a place, difficult to dislodge, in the homes of even the lowliest and the last in this vast country, it is not a little due to these devotional poems in the languages of the people. To all of them the name 'Veda' may be given, for has not the Veda itself declared that the Vedas are many, unending (*anantā vai vedāḥ*) ? ⁵

⁵ *Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa Kāṭhaka*, I, xi, 4.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE RITUALS

1

Kinds of Ritual

THE Hindu rituals are of two kinds: Vedic¹ and *Āgamic*. The Vedic rituals are of the nature of sacrifices to the Gods. The *Āgamic* rites are mainly connected with the worship of idols. Each Veda, we said, consists of four parts: *Mantra*, *Brāhmaṇa*, *Āraṇyaka* and *Upaniṣad*. Of these, the first two constitute the ritual section. The *Mantras* are to be used in sacrifices. The *Brāhmaṇas* explain how they are to be used. Further explanations are to be found in what are known as the *Kalpa-sūtras*. The *Smṛtis* also detail several of these Vedic rites. When, as a consequence of the Buddhist revolt, faith in the sacrifices came to be shaken, the *yāgas* which involved injury to animals fell out of use; and with the institution of temples, the worship of idols took the place of mere sacrifices, though in the elaborate processes of worship some of the Vedic rites were incorporated. We have different *Āgamas* for the different parts of India giving details about the construction of temples, installation of idols, the modes of worship, etc.

¹ Vedic rites include *śrauta* and *smārta skarma*. *Śrauta karmas* are those rites which are ordained in the *śruti*. *Smārta karmas* are those which are learned from the *smṛtis* but which are supposed to have been enjoined by *śruti* text lost to us.

2

Vedic Sacrifices

The earlier portions of the Veda teach mainly a sacrificial religion. Later a philosophy was built thereon by one of the six systems, *viz.*, the Pūrva-mīmāṃsā which regards *karma* or performance of ritual as the sole purport of the Veda. A *yajña* or sacrificial rite consists in offering some material as oblation to a deity. The materials that were usually offered were melted butter, grains, soma juice, and, in some sacrifices, animals. The deities that were propitiated were the Gods like Indra, Mitra and Varuṇa. The offerings were either spread out on the sacrificial litter or consigned to the sacred fire lit on the sanctified altar, the latter method being the more common. It was in this way that Agni (the Fire-God) assumed importance. He became the mediator between Gods and men. A Vedic hymn addressed to Agni says:

‘O Agni, bring hither Varuṇa to our offering. Bring Indra from the skies, the Maruts from the air.’² At first the sacrifices were simple, and the person who desired to perform a rite could himself accomplish it. But as the system of sacrifices grew complex, the aid of priests had to be sought. The duties of the priests were defined. The sacrifices were apportioned to the different classes. And the occasions and conditions were laid down.

It is no doubt true that the sacrificial religion of the *Brāhmaṇas* is commercial and utilitarian based on the

² See Dr S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy* (George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London), Vol. I, p. 83.

principle of reciprocity as between men and Gods. In the *Gītā* Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that Brahmā created men and asked them to regard sacrifice (*yajña*) as the cow of plenty. The Gods had to be cherished so that they in return might cherish men. 'For,' the Creator adds, 'cherished by sacrifice the Gods will bestow on you the pleasures ye desire. He is verily a thief who enjoys the things they give without giving them anything in return.'³ This is the principle underlying Vedic ritualism, which marks the beginnings of religion. The beneficent Gods had to be pleased so that they might do good unto man, and the maleficent Gods had to be appeased so that they might refrain from doing harm. And the recognized mode of pleasing and appeasing was the sacrifice.

There is a meaning in this medley of sacrifices. The essence of sacrifice is to surrender (*tyāga*) one's substance to God, though at first for a selfish purpose; and this surrender should be sincere and should be made with faith (*śraddhā*). One of the Upaniṣads, the *Kātha*, relates a lovely story to illustrate the futility of sacrificial acts that are not accompanied by faith. An old man Vājaśravasa by name, well versed in the Vedas, performed a sacrifice, desiring heaven. In accordance with the rules governing the sacrifice, he had to give away as gifts all his possessions. But owing to his attachment to property, which is hard to get over, Vājaśravasa gave away old decrepit cows which would only be a burden to those who received them. Naciketas, Vājaśravasa's

³ *Gītā*, iii, 11-12.

son, was watching all this with faith. He thought that a defectively performed sacrifice would not be to the benefit of his father; and so he went up to his sire and asked him, 'To whom wilt thou give me?' At first the old man did not heed his boy's words. But when Naciketas persisted, he got angry and said, 'Unto Death do I give thee.' And as the story goes, the lad Naciketas went to the land of Death in fulfilment of the angry words of his father, and learned from Yama the secret of the life beyond. From this episode it is clear that what is important in a sacrifice is sincerity. More than the sacrifice, what matters is the spirit which prompts it. The *R̥g-veda* says: 'Utter a powerful speech to Indra which is sweeter than butter or honey.' The *Sāma-veda*: 'O ye Gods! we use no sacrificial stake. We slay no victim. We worship entirely by the repetition of the sacred verses' ⁴

3

Mīmāṃsā Ritualism

The systematization of rituals, evidences of which are found even in the *Brāhmaṇas*, was completed by Jaimini in his *Pūrva-mīmāṃsā-sūtras*, and by the later commentators. Here we are concerned, not with the philosophy of Pūrva-mīmāṃsā (which will be dealt with in a later chapter), but with the technique by which the Mīmāṃsā brings order into the bewildering maze of Vedic ritualism. Ritual is literally the central purport

⁴ See Dr S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 107.

of the Veda for the Mīmāṃsaka. In the Vedic hymns and the *Brāhmaṇas* the Gods have a dominating place. But the Mīmāṃsā relegates the Gods to back seats who now become mere appendages to the rituals. The sacrificial rites have to be performed because they are enjoined in the Veda which is the infallible and final authority. The Veda can have no other purport than *karma* because words have meaning only as associated with a deed, and the Veda consists of meaningful words. And so the aim of the Veda is to prescribe certain actions and prohibit certain others. The Vedic *dharma* is of the nature of commands.

Of the Vedic rites, some are optional (*kāmya*) and the others obligatory (*nitya*). The optional rites are for the benefit of those who seek certain ends. He who desires a son, for instance, should perform the *Putrakāmeṣṭi*. He who desires universal empery should perform the *Rājasūya* sacrifice. These are, however, ends to be accomplished in this world. The sacrifices which lead to happiness in heaven are superior. Such a sacrificial rite is the *Jyotiṣṭoma*.

The *kāmya-vidhi* or the injunction of an optional rite is of the nature of a hypothetical imperative. The *nitya-karma* or the obligatory rite, on the contrary, is an unconditional duty. The unconditional or obligatory duties are to be performed not because they will bring in beneficial results but because we *ought* to perform them. Such are the twilight prayers (*sandhyāvandana*). Under this category come also the *naimittikakarmas* which are prescribed for performance on specified occasions, e.g. the *śrāddha*.

The *kāmya-karmas* are not in vogue to-day. Instead of offering oblations through Agni, the pious Hindu appeals to the Deity of his heart for the accomplishment of his desired ends. In this respect he has gone back to the simple mode of worship found in the early *Mantras*, viz., prayer. Of the obligatory rites, many are still current in the orthodox households. Of these, the *sandhyā* is offered daily at dawn and at dusk. It consists of a prayer to the Sun-God who is the vivifier of our intellect. The *naimittika-karmas*, many of which bear a social as well as sacred significance, are even now performed by the average Hindu. The aim of these is to give a spiritual touch to the important events in the life of an individual from the cradle to the grave. These rituals are called *samskāras* or purificatory rites. A *samskāra* is a socio-religious rite by the performance of which the life of the Hindu is sanctified.

The principal *samskāras* are: (1) *Jātakarma*: the rites performed immediately after the birth of a child; (2) *Nāmakaraṇa* or the naming ceremony, i.e., on the tenth or the twelfth-day the new-born child is given a name; (3) *Annaprāśana*, i.e., oblations are offered to the various deities when for the first time the child is fed with solid food; (4) *Upanayana* is an important *samskāra* as it is a land-mark in the life of the child. It is its second or spiritual birth marking the commencement of its education. The important features of this ceremony are the investiture of the boy with the sacred thread and the instruction of the *Gāyatrī* mantra; (5) *Samāvartana* is the graduation ritual signifying the termination of the scholastic life; (6) *Vivāha* is wedding,

i.e., entry into the second *āśrama*; (7) *Pretakarma* is funeral rite, the final obsequies.

4

Āgamic Rites

Let us now turn to a consideration of the *Āgamic* rites connected with the worship of idols and the observance of fasts and feasts which are all a part of popular Hinduism.

In the Vedas there is no reference to idol-worship. From the excavations at Mohenjodaro we know that idol worship must have been a characteristic feature of the Indus valley civilization. The *Purāṇas* provide objects for idolizing. And the *Āgamas* systematized and brought under rule the worship of idols both in the homes and in the temples.

Idol-worship is not peculiar to Hinduism. It is the expression of the exuberance of religious sentiment at a particular stage of its development all the world over. Child humanity cannot help thinking in terms of images. Even the professed iconoclasts are idolators without their knowing it. What are the Cross and Kaaba stone if they are not reminders of divinity? The idol is only a token for the supreme, a symbol of the divine. When the Hindu worships an idol, he does not see therein a block of stone or a mass of metal; to his eye it appears as an emblem of God. Maximus of Tyre, as quoted by Gilbert Murray in his *Four Stages of Greek Religion*, puts up a magnificent defence of idol-worship.⁵ ‘God

⁵ See Dr S. Radhakrishnan, *Heart of Hindusthan*, p. 13.

Himself, the father and fashioner of all that is, older than the sun and the sky, greater than time and eternity, and all the flow of being, is un-nameable by any law-giver, unutterable by any voice, not to be seen by any eye. But we, being unable to apprehend His essence, use the help of sounds and names, and pictures, of beaten gold and ivory and silver, of plants and rivers, mountain-peaks and torrents, yearning for the knowledge of Him, and in our weakness naming all that is beautiful in this world after His nature—just as happens to earthly lovers. To them the most beautiful sight will be the actual lineaments of the beloved, but for remembrance's sake they will be happy in the sight of a lyre, a little spear, a chair perhaps, or a running ground, or anything in the world that wakens the memory of the beloved. Why should I further examine and pass judgement about images? Let men know what is divine, let them know that is all.' Had not the name of Maximus been given at the beginning of this quotation, these words would easily pass for those of Hindu Scriptures. The function of the idol is symbolic. No Hindu, however unlettered he may be, regards the idol as exhausting the being of God. To see God everywhere and to practise the presence of God always is impossible for the ordinary individual. And so he is asked to behold the manifestation of God wherever there is splendour, beauty and love. 'Whatever being there is, endowed with grandeur, beauty or strength,' says Śrī Kṛṣṇa, 'know that it has sprung only from a spark of my splendour.'⁶ Temples are built on beautiful spots in order that man may be reminded

⁶ *Gītā*, x, 41.

of God, the master-artist, and get into communion with Him.

The Hindu Scriptures are not unaware of the dangers of overdoing this form of worship. Idolatry is the beginning of religion and not its end. The *Śiva-purāṇa* says: 'The highest state is the natural realization of God's presence, the second in rank is meditation and contemplation, the third is the worship of symbols which are reminders of the Supreme, and the fourth is the performance of ritual and pilgrimages to sacred places.' Another Sanskrit verse arranges the different grades of worship thus: 'The first is the worship of idols; the next is muttering of *mantras* and offering of prayers; superior to that is mental worship; and the best of all is contemplation of the Absolute.' The strong in spirit find God everywhere. For the feeble-minded the idol is an index of the Supreme. The Yogins see the blissful Lord in the self. The less developed require a concrete peg to hang their convictions on. Transition from the lower to the higher form of worship is the mode of the pilgrim's progress. This is recognized clearly by the Hindu Scriptures. The individual should evolve from the crude and the grotesque to the lofty and the sublime in religious experience.

5

Ritual Worship

The images of Viṣṇu and of his incarnations, and the images of Śiva and Śakti are the popular idols that are worshipped both in temples and in the households. The

most democratic of the deities having innumerable representations, however, are Kṛṣṇa in the North and Kārtikeya (son of Śiva and Pārvatī) in the South. The Hindu masses frequent temples dedicated to these deities without any distinction and see the same God and adore Him. In his home the Hindu treats the deity as he would an honoured guest, and to the temple he goes with flowers and fruits to pay homage to the King of kings.

The mode of worship (*pūjā*) is a replica of the services that are usually rendered to a beloved guest or an honoured king. The presence of the deity is invoked (*āvāhana*); a seat is offered (*āsana*); the feet are washed (*pādya*); an offering of sandal-wood paste and rice as a sign of respect is made (*arghya*); the sacred thread is put on the idol (*upavīta*); sandal-wood paste is smeared (*candana*); flowers (*puṣpa*) are offered; incense (*dhūpa*) is burned; the lamps (*dīpa*) are waved; food (*naivedya*) is offered and then betel (*tāmbūla*); next camphor (*nīrājana*) is burned and gold is given as a gift (*suvarṇa-puṣpa*); finally the Deity is bidden farewell to (*visarjana*).

In the temples the priest is expected to attend on the Deity as he would on a king. The King of kings is roused from sleep with music early in the morning. Then after the ceremonial bath He is dressed in royal robes and decked with ornaments and flowers. Artistic lights are waved before Him. Food is offered at regular intervals. The King holds His daily court, gives audience to His devotees, hears their complaints and bestows on them His grace. On festive occasions He goes out in state with all the regalia befitting the King of kings.

This mystery play God enacts in all the temples of India for enticing those who are not enlightened from their hum-drum ways of life that lead only into regions of blinding darkness.

6

Festivals

The observances of fasts and feasts are spread over all the months of the year, and are intended to serve as occasions for intensive contemplation of God. They are meant to be holidays from worldly life, especially the fasts, giving opportunities to man to look within and search his heart. Many of these festivals are commemorations of great events recorded in the *Purāṇas*. The advent of *avatāras* like Narasimha, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa, and momentous events like the vanquishment of the demon Naraka by Viṣṇu and the burning of the god of lust by Śiva are celebrated. One observes colourful scenes on such festive days in Indian cities and villages alike, because they are meant to be occasions for joy and thanksgiving. Each one of these festivals commemorates the glory of God which puts down evil and enables good to prevail. Symbolically these feasts mean the overcoming of all that is base in us by the higher or real self.

A different group of festivals are the purificatory fasts. The followers of each cult have their own special days in the year which they spend exclusively in prayer and worship. Many people on these occasions fast and keep vigil during the night, read from the sacred texts and keep their minds engaged in thoughts on God. The day known as Vaikuṇṭha-ekādaśī is sacred to Viṣṇu. Not

only Vaiṣṇavas but even others among the Hindus observe this day as a day of fast and prayer. The holy night which is thought to be auspicious for the worship of Śiva is the Śiva-rātrī. There are days again on which the women fast and offer prayer to the Devī in Her various manifestations like Gaurī and Lakṣmī. These fasts are significantly named *vratas* or vows. They are intended for the purification of the soul and providing it with spiritual food. A verse of the *Gītā* says, ‘What is night for all beings, therein the man of self-control is awake; and wherein all beings are awake, that is night for the sage who sees.’⁷ For the wise God is day and the world is night, for they are awake in the former and asleep in the latter; for the ignorant and the worldly-minded the reverse is the case. Keeping vigil as a part of *vrata* is but symbolic of this truth.

Birthdays of great spiritual teachers are also celebrated. Hinduism has always given the pride of place to the *Ācāryas*. In the temples are honoured not only the idols of the *Bhagavān* but also the images of his *bhaktas*. The true leaders of humanity are they who lift the veil of ignorance and let the lamp of God-knowledge shine. They are the real heroes (*dhīras*) who through spiritual valour and divine courage conquer the forces of evil and help their fellow-men to cross safely the sea of *samsāra*. It is but fitting, therefore, that the dates of their advent should be commemorated every year.

⁷ *Gītā*, ii, 69.

The one purpose that runs through all the festivals is to create a spiritual climate for the people, a climate in which they could find their spiritual health and cultivate their soul. It is on these days, if properly observed, that one really lives. They are days of renewal of contact with God but for whose presence no creature can live even for a moment. It is true that the ideal life is that which is spent without any break in the contemplation of God and in the service of all beings which are but sparks from the same central Fire. The truly wise do not make any distinction between sabbath and secular days; all days are sacred and holy for them. But the people at large who have a long way to travel on the spiritual road need special days of prayer and religious rest. The festivals which are such days serve the same purpose in *time* as the temples do in *space*. Just as the temples are places which remind us of God, the festivals are times which make us commune with Him.

7

Ritual Symbolism

The symbolic nature of rituals is stressed in the Hindu Scriptures. In the opening section of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, for instance, the horse-sacrifice is interpreted allegorically. Overlordship of the earth may be gained by sacrificing a horse in the prescribed manner. But spiritual autonomy is to be achieved by renouncing the whole universe which the Upaniṣad conceives of in the image of a horse. In the *Chāndogya*, the life of a man is symbolically explained as a *Soma* sacrifice, and oblations to the different manifestations of

breath (*Prāṇa*) take the place of *Agnihotra*. It is a recognized view in the Upaniṣads that meditation on the significance of a sacrifice yields the same result as the actual performance thereof. In later Hinduism, where worship of God in the shape of idols largely replaces Vedic sacrifice, it is admitted, as we saw, that mental obeisance (*mānasa-pūjā*) is higher than outer ceremonial worship. Thus it is clear that ritual in the sense of a ceremonial act is an aid only at the initial stages in inward life. As one progresses in spirituality, the need for dependence on external props diminishes. Injunctions and prohibitions lose their value in the case of the saint and the sage who have realized the absolute spirit which transcends deeds as well as ideas.⁸

⁸ See the present writer's 'Myth and Ritual in Hinduism' in *The Journal of the Madras University*, July 1950, p. 7.

CHAPTER FIVE

ETHICS

1

Definition of Ethics

IN the previous chapter we inquired into a particular aspect of *karma* and *dharma*, *i.e.* *karma* as ritual and *dharma* as performance of the rituals enjoined in the Veda. In the present chapter we shall learn the wider connotations of the two words. ‘*Karma*’ means willed activity, *i.e.* activity which is the result of the will or activity for which the agent is responsible; and ‘*dharma*’ means right activity or duty, *i.e.* activity which is the result of a good will. It will be seen at once that we have used words like ‘will,’ ‘activity,’ ‘right’ and ‘good’ which belong to the branch of philosophy known as ethics.

Ethics is the study of what is right or good in conduct. The words ‘right’ and ‘good’ imply a standard wherewith to adjudge conduct. That is right, we say, which is in accordance with a rule. That is good, we say, which is of value, which is worthy of attainment. An action may be judged to be right or wrong by referring it to a rule or law; or it may be characterized as good or bad in relation to an end. The former way of judging belongs to what is known as legalistic morality while the latter regards morality in the light of a higher reflective ideal. In this chapter we shall study first the nature and

basis of conduct, then the nature of the standard of moral judgment, and finally the application of the standard to the conduct of individuals and of social groups.

2

Character and Conduct

Man's mind consists of various processes the principal of which are knowing (*jñāna*), feeling (*icchā*) and willing (*kriyā*). Every moment of his conscious life is occupied with these functions. He knows objects like pot and cloth; he feels elated or depressed; he wills to do this or not to do that. These processes, however, are not unrelated with one another. The will, for instance, has within it elements of knowledge and feeling. These three are only aspects of consciousness.

In ethics we are concerned with one of these aspects, *viz.*, will. When the will results in an act, it is called conduct. Conduct is voluntary activity. An external act is not so simple a process as it appears to be. First, there is desire (*kāma*) for an object (*artha*) which is considered worthy of attainment. Then there is a contrast between the individual's present state and his future state as associated with the desired object. He feels miserable when he thinks of his present plight and joyous when he contemplates his future gain. This reinforces his desire which is not an isolated phenomenon, but belongs to what may be called a universe or a definite point of view which the individual concerned has come to adopt. The desire becomes dominant, and it is then called wish. A wish is an effective desire. But very often it is abstract in character, its end being a

single element in a concrete event. When the other circumstances, though not wished for, are taken into consideration, the total event is said to be willed. The will is dependent on the individual's nature taken as a whole, *i.e.*, the dominant universe which he habitually occupies. It is from the will that has gathered sufficient force that action ensues. Such actions constitute conduct. The harmonized universe of desire from which conduct issues is character.¹

Moral judgment is passed ultimately on character of which outer acts are but indicators. For ethics inner motives are more important than outer acts. That is why Hindu thinkers speak of three kinds of activity—mental (*mānasika*), verbal (*vācika*) and physical (*kāyika*). We act not only with our muscles but also with our thoughts. A bad thought is more pernicious than a rash act. And so ethical evaluation of a man's conduct will be unsatisfactory if the inner springs of his actions are left out of account. Sometimes the external mode of a person's behaviour may even be misleading. Pestered by a beggar, an irate man may fling a coin at his face. The small money no doubt brings relief to the unfortunate beggar. But this act of unmeant charity does not make the man who threw the coin virtuous. External behaviour is not always a sure guide in judging a person's character. It is indeed difficult to assess character. 'Judge not lest ye be judged.'²

¹ See J. S. Mackenzie, *A Manual of Ethics* (University Tutorial Press Ltd., London, 6th edn., 1929), Bk. I, ch. i.

² *Gospel of St. Matthew*, vii, 1.

3

Theory of Karma

Morality implies conscious responsibility on the part of the agent for his actions. The movements of a machine and the behaviour of a beast do not fall within the domain of morals as far as we know. Automata and animals are neither moral nor immoral ; they are non-moral. Even man is not reprehensible when he is compelled to act in a certain way either by outer circumstances or by inner passions. If a person does something in a fit of passion, later on he regrets and says ' I was not *myself* when I did it.' In such cases the agent is blamed not for what he did but for the irrational state which he allowed himself to be in. Freedom is essential for morality. If a man chooses a course of action out of his own free will, only then is he ethically responsible. But do we experience such freedom to choose what we will? Do we not find ourselves very often in circumstances over which we have no control? Is the will, then, really free or is it fettered?

It is to this problem that Hinduism offers as solution the theory of *karma*—a doctrine which is well known but little understood. Popular mind identifies *karma* with fate and the doctrine of *karma* with a counsel of despair. The theory is made an excuse for indolence and inertia. But this is a travesty of the truth about the law of *karma*. Far from meaning fatality, *karma* stands for the freedom of man's will. Instead of throwing the blame on others for what you are, the theory of *karma* says, you should consider yourself responsible

for your present state. Moral life is not a chaos; it gives no room for the caprice of chance. Moral order implies that a man's actions in the past are responsible for his present state and that his present deeds will condition his future fortunes.

The theory of *karma* is foreshadowed in the concept of *ṛta* in the *Mantras* of the *Ṛg-veda*. *Ṛta* originally meant the ordered course of things, the rising and the setting of the sun, the waxing and the waning of the moon, the orderly procession of seasons, etc. In the *Mantras* its meaning is extended so as to cover not only uniformity of nature but also moral order. The Gods are called 'guardians of *ṛta*' and 'practisers of *ṛta*'. They reward the good and punish the wicked. The good are those who follow the path of *ṛta* and keep their vows. Varuṇa, the ethical god of the *Ṛg-veda*, is the upholder of the physical as well as the moral order. He is the dispenser of justice. No man can escape his vigilant eye. Almost all the hymns to Varuṇa appeal for forgiveness of sin. In the *Brāhmaṇas* where prominence is given to ritual, *ṛta* becomes a synonym for *yajña* or sacrifice. Each sacrificial rite has its own reward. The means to attain prosperity here and happiness in heaven is the ritual. Both these concepts, *ṛta* and *yajña*, anticipate the theory of *karma* in so far as they imply that each action carries its own reward.

It is in the Upaniṣads that the law of *karma* is formulated with a fair measure of precision. '*Karma*' used in this context means not only 'deed' but also the results of deed. According to this law there is nothing chaotic or capricious in the moral world. As we

sow, so we reap. What we are and what circumstances we find ourselves in are dependent on what we were and what we did; similarly what we shall be and how we shall be circumscribed will depend on what we are and what we do at present. That is, the *kārmic* law applies the principle of cause and conservation of energy to the moral world. There is conservation of moral values, just as there is conservation of physical energy. Nothing is lost which has been earned by work; and nothing comes in which is not deserved. Every action has a double effect; it produces its appropriate reward, and it also affects character. It leaves behind an impression in the mind of man. It is this impression that is responsible for the repetition or avoidance of the same action. While character informs conduct, conduct in turn moulds character. ‘A man becomes good by good deeds and bad by bad deeds.’³

If the law of *karma* is the counterpart in the moral sphere of the mechanical law of causality, where, then, is freedom, it may be asked. Modern science no longer believes in an unalterable and absolutely determined mechanical process. On the contrary, it admits that there is indeterminacy or uncertainty in nature. The past, no doubt, is determined and can be calculated. But the future is uncertain, not because of our ignorance but because of the very nature of things. The causal law is not absolute and cannot explain all things. Even there the plurality of causes imports an element of uncertainty. Scientists used to characterize the doctrine of plurality as a popular myth. But now they are

³ *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, IV, iv, 5.

convinced that it is a genuine defect of the causal concept. If there is uncertainty and incalculability even in the realm of physical nature, there must certainly be a greater degree of freedom in human nature. *Karma* does not bind man entirely. The cycle of *samsāra* has not the inevitability of a fate. Man has the freedom to go out of the vicious circle; and if he has the will, *karma* will help and not hinder his progress. There is a certain amount of determination; but it is not to the exclusion of all freedom. In the words of Dr S. Radhakrishnan, 'The cards in the game of life are given to us. We do not select them. They are traced to our past *karma*, but we can call as we please, lead what suit we will, and as we play, we gain or lose. And there is freedom.'⁴

Hindu thinkers distinguish three kinds of *karma*; *sañcita*, *prārabdha* and *āgāmi*. *Sañcita* is all the accumulated *karma* of the past. Part of it is seen in the character of the individual, his tendencies and aptitudes, inclinations and desires, etc. *Prārabdha* is that portion of the past *karma* which is responsible for the present body. *Āgāmi* is the coming *karma* which includes also the *karma* that is being gathered at present. An apt analogy is usually given to bring home to our minds the element of freedom that *karma* involves. Imagine a bowman, with a quiver of arrows, taking aim at a target. He has already sent a shaft; and another arrow he is about to shoot. The bundle of arrows in the quiver on his back is the *sañcita*; the arrow he has shot is *prārabdha*; and the one which he is about to send forth

⁴ *The Hindu View of Life*, p. 75.

from his bow is *āgāmi*. Of these, he has perfect control over the *sañcita* and *āgāmi*; it is only the *prārabdha* that cannot but take effect. Man has the freedom to reform his character and alter his ways. Only the past which has begun to take effect he has to suffer.

Under the rigid law of *karma*, it is said, there is no room for social service; for it does not allow of interference with the working out of a man's *karma*. This is a gross misreading of the law. It goes against the grain of Hinduism to suggest that each individual is an independent entity. The individual is not unrelated to society. He acts on and is acted upon by those that surround him. And naturally he has to share their joys and sorrows. If he brings succour to the suffering it is in part to his own advantage. Social service is not only consistent with the law of *karma* but is also enjoined as a means to release from *samsāra*. Work, when selfish, forges the chains of bondage, and when selfless, makes for freedom from fetters; just as a poison which ordinarily kills becomes a means of cure when it has been medically purified. 'In this way and not otherwise it is,' says the *Īśa Upaniṣad*, 'that *karma* does not cling to you.'⁵ It is this philosophy of selfless work, as we shall see in the next chapter, that is dealt with at length by Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the *Gītā*.

4

Doctrine of Rebirth

The doctrine of rebirth is a corollary to the law of *karma*. The differences of disposition found between

⁵ *Īśa*, 2.

one individual and another even at birth must be due to their respective past *karmas*; and past *karma* implies past birth. Similarly we notice that all our actions do not bear fruit in this life. Hence there must be another birth for enjoying the residual *karmas*. Each soul has a series of births and deaths. ‘Like corn does a mortal ripen; like corn does he spring to life again.’⁶ ‘As a person casts off worn-out garments and puts on others that are new, so does the soul cast off worn-out bodies and enter into others that are new.’⁷ ‘As a caterpillar which has wriggled to the top of a blade of grass draws itself over to a new blade, so does the soul, after it has put aside its body draw itself over to a new existence.’⁸ And here is the testimony of Wordsworth—

‘Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
 The soul that rises with us, our life’s Star,
 Hath had elsewhere its setting,
 And cometh from afar;
 Not in entire forgetfulness,
 And not in utter nakedness,
 But trailing clouds of glory do we come
 From God, who is our home.’⁹

This migration of the soul into a series of bodies is called *samsāra* or *bhavacakra* (wheel of existence). It goes on till the cycle of *karma* is broken through and the soul attains release consisting in its realization of God.

⁶ *Kaṭha*, I, i, 6.

⁷ *Gītā*, ii, 22.

⁸ *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, IV, iv, 3.

⁹ Wordsworth, *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality*.

Till the attainment of release, then, the soul is subject to the law of birth and death. The materialist hypothesis that 'dust thou art and to dust thou returnest'¹⁰ is not acceptable to the Hindu mind. This question is often asked in the Hindu Scriptures: 'Does a man continue to live after death, or does he perish with his body?' The answer given invariably is that the soul never perishes. If its *karmas* have been destroyed through knowledge of *Brahman*, there is no more birth for it. It realizes its eternal nature, and there is no return to *samsāra*. But if the elements of finitude still cling to the soul, it only changes robes. As a great philosopher puts it picturesquely, 'Like the worms that are carried away in a wild stream from one whirlpool to another, the *jīva* (soul) is driven from birth to death and from death to birth in a continuous cycle of *samsāra*.'¹¹ It is tossed from one birth to another, from one state of being to another, like the weaver's shuttle, without cessation. From death to death it travels by the force of its *karma* born of delusion.

Death, then, is the door to life. And the kind of life it leads to depends on the nature of the work done. Those whose conduct has been good attain good births; and those whose conduct has been evil are thrown into sinful wombs. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* declares that, according to the quality of their work and degree of knowledge, souls enter various forms of existence, from man to worm.¹² The mechanism by means of which the

¹⁰ Longfellow, *Psalm of Life*.

¹¹ Bhāratīrtha, *Pañcadaśī*, i, 30.

¹² IV, iv, 5.

migration is made is the *liṅga-śarīra* or the subtle body of the soul. At death only the physical dress gets disintegrated. The subtle body which is 'the vehicle of mind and character' departs and gathers unto itself a new physical body. Thus the wheel rotates, and it stops only when the goal is reached.

5

Standard of Morality

Of the three problems in ethics suggested in the first section of this chapter, the first has now been considered, *viz.*, the nature and basis of conduct, its relation to character and the law governing it. We shall now turn to the next important problem, *viz.*, that of the moral standard. The question is this: what is the criterion by which we judge an action to be right or wrong, good or bad? Why is thieving wrong, and charity right? Why is it bad to murder a fellow-being, and good to save one who is in distress?

We have used here two sets of words: 'right' and 'wrong'; 'good' and 'bad.' Their significance has been pointed out already. 'Right' and 'wrong' refer to the moral standard as Law, while 'good' and 'bad' refer to it as End. Why is thieving wrong? Because it goes against the law—"Thou shalt not steal." Why is charity right? Because it is in conformity with the law—"Thou shalt be charitable." Thus the moral standard at first appears to be of the nature of a law. Later on it is seen that moral judgment is passed on an action from the standpoint of an end. Why is it bad to murder a fellow-being? Because the action makes the murderer descend

to the level of the brute and corrupts his character; and this is not a worthy end. Why is it good to save one who is in distress? Because a man's character becomes noble if he renders help to those who need it, and he realizes his true self by the exercise of virtues like generosity and compassion.

In the case of those who are immature and cannot think for themselves, rules of conduct have to be laid down, and morality consists largely in life according to rule. In order to provide these laws with a sanction, the authority of God or of a law-giver is invoked. The Ten Commandments and the Code of Manu are instances in point. These laws have to be obeyed because they have been spoken by men of God. Sometimes other sanctions besides the authority of a law-giver are forged. It is said, for instance, that if the laws are not obeyed, God's wrath would be incurred and punishment in hell would result, and that if the laws are observed, God would be pleased and there would be enjoyment in heaven. Thus the threats of hell and hopes of heaven exert a powerful influence on men's minds and keep them in the right path. Similarly there are social sanctions. He who abides by the law is respected and honoured, while dishonour and disgrace attend on him who transgresses the code. These sanctions are needed up to a stage, even as the tender plant needs to be fenced and protected. But this attitude towards morality cannot be the final attitude. Man will not allow himself to be coaxed or coerced into modes of activity for all times. When his critical powers mature, he asks: why should I be moral? To answer that he should be moral

because somebody has asked him to be so will not satisfy him. Unless it is shown to him that moral life is a worthy end, he will not rest content. And it is the sort of end that will then determine what he ought to do and what he ought not to do.

The Hindu thinkers were alive to the danger of insisting on a purely juristic view of the moral standard. That was why they evolved a scheme of human ends (*puruṣārthas*). These are four: *artha* (wealth), *kāma* (pleasure), *dharma* (righteousness) and *mokṣa* (freedom). These ends are not all of the same kind. Only the last of them is the supreme end (*summum bonum*), and the others are minor ends. *Artha* and *kāma*, wealth and pleasure, are not intrinsic goods. They are good only in so far as they lead to righteous living or a life of duty (*dharma*).

Those who are oblivious of this truth and pursue these goods as if they were ends in themselves are called hedonists. Hedonism is the name given to those theories which regard pleasure as the supreme end of life. All of them believe that the value of conduct depends on the amount of pleasure it produces. The morality of an action depends on the quantity of pleasure it yields. This is not a doctrine peculiar only to modern times. Even in ancient India there were pleasure-philosophers. They were known as Cārvākas (materialists). For them there is neither soul nor God. There is no spirit over and above the conscious living body. There is nothing which survives the disintegration of the physical body at death. Of the four *puruṣārthas*, the Cārvākas reject *dharma* (virtue) and *mokṣa* (spiritual freedom). They

regard only wealth (*artha*) and pleasure (*kāma*) as the rational ends of man. Of these too, wealth is not the ultimate end; it is good only as a means to pleasure. Pleasure, then, is the *summum bonum*. The wise man should squeeze the maximum pleasure out of life. He should not let go a present pleasure in the hope of a future gain. These are the maxims which the Cārvākas give: 'Rather a pigeon to-day than a peacock to-morrow'; 'A sure piece of shell is better than a doubtful coin of gold.' These are in the spirit of the saying—a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.

It does not require much thought to see the absurdity of a thorough-going doctrine of pleasure. Man will be no better than a brute if he becomes a slave to pleasure. Those who hoard wealth and revel in sense-pleasures are not found to be happy. If these goods are pursued for their own sake, misery increases and there can be no peace of mind. This does not mean, however, that poverty and pain should be sought. Wealth and pleasure are human ends, no doubt; but they become ends of man only in so far as they promote virtue (*dharma*). Virtue consists in leading a life of duty, living in harmony and peace, with development of character and refinement of soul. This is what is known as *śreyas* or the good as opposed to *preyas* which means the pleasing. There are two verses in the *Kāthopaniṣad* which make the contrast clear and stress the duty of choosing the good. 'Different is the good, and different, indeed, is the pleasing. These two, having different purposes, bind man. It becomes well with him who accepts the good; but he who chooses the pleasing falls away

from the purpose. Both the good and the pleasing come to man. One who is wise considers the two all round and discriminates them. He chooses the good in preference to the pleasing. One who is stupid chooses the pleasing out of a desire for acquisition of property.' ¹³ All the Hindu Scriptures warn man against the easy and glamorous way of vice and urge him to take to the steep and narrow road of virtue.

There are moralists who consider virtue (*dharma*) to be an end in itself. 'Duty for duty's sake' is their slogan. This is what is called the categorical imperative of morality. It is not conditional, since there is no higher authority by which it may be set aside. If you ask, 'Why should I do my duty?', the answer is, 'Because it is your duty.' What you *ought* to do you ought to *do*. Those who hold this view regard morality as laying down its commands absolutely and morals as self-sufficient and self-explanatory.

The ideal of 'duty for duty's sake,' though lofty, is barren and unattractive. The inquiring mind will necessarily ask: 'Why should I do my duty?' Duty cannot be an end in itself. Even a soldier needs to be told what he is fighting for. This is well recognized by the Hindu thinkers who regard *dharma* as the means to spiritual freedom (*mokṣa*). Freedom is the essence of the soul of man. It is obscured by ignorance and its trail of evil. To remove this obscuration virtuous life is the means. Morality is desirable only because it is the gateway to religion. We shall study the religious paths that lead to

¹³ *Kaṭha*, ii, 1-2.

freedom in the next chapter, and in what remains of the present we shall give an account of the duties, both collective and individual—the third problem we proposed for discussion.

6

The Castes

The duties are of three classes: those of the castes (*varṇa-dharma*), those of the stages in life (*āśrama-dharma*), and those which are common to all, *i.e.*, cardinal virtues (*sādhāraṇa-dharma*).

The origin of caste is lost in obscurity. Its purpose, however, seems to have been the same as that of Plato's division of the State into three classes, castes, or professions, *viz.*, philosopher-rulers, warriors and masses.¹⁴ The underlying principle is division of labour. Originally the castes were professional and subsequently became hereditary. The system was evolved to keep the social fabric in a harmonious condition; but in later ages it became a divisive force. The original designers built the edifice of caste on the secure foundations of obligations; the lesser men who came after them produced a caricature on the shifting sands of rights with the result that what we have to-day—the labyrinth of castes and sub-castes—resembles the original only in the sense in which the cartoon can be said to resemble its subject.

The earliest reference to the division of Hindu society into the four classes—*Brāhmaṇa*, *Kṣatriya*, *Vaiśya* and *Śūdra*—is found in the *Puruṣa-sūkta*, a section of the

¹⁴ See Plato's *Republic*, Bk. iv.

Rg-veda. The hymn describes the four classes as having come out of the different limbs of the body of the Creator, and thus shows the organic relation between one class and another. They are not intended to be warring communities but complementary classes. If the hands quarrel with the stomach or the head, it is not the stomach or head alone that suffers but the entire body including the hands. The head cannot claim superiority over the feet simply because it trails in the air while the latter tread the dust; the feet are as essential to the body as the head. It is the principle of integration and co-ordination that weighed with the builders of caste. 'It is a law of spiritual economics,' says Mahātmā Gāndhī, 'It has nothing to do with superiority or inferiority.' And as the system of caste is purely a social adjustment, there is nothing that can stand in the way of its revision and re-adjustment except a sense of pride and obstinacy and a demand to preserve the *status quo* on the part of some of its members.

'*Varna*' means colour. Originally it referred to the colour of the skin. India has had to deal with the problem of race in its acutest form. Even at the beginning of her history she had as her inhabitants members of many racial types. Very soon she developed trade relations with the Persians, the Greeks and the Scythians, some of whom settled down in India. Then there was a succession of invaders through the north-western passes of the Himalayas—the Bactrian Greeks, the Parthians, the Sakas, the Kushanas and the Huns. All these alien races mingled with the native groups, and the result was a medley of cultures and

civilizations. Hinduism tackled this problem in its own characteristic way. Not elimination but assimilation was its watch-word. All the different groups including the aboriginal tribes were absorbed into the Hindu fold; and with the progress of time the contrast between colours was toned down by all sorts of permutations and combinations; there was intermixture of race through cross-breeding, though this process was never allowed to become indiscriminate. The result was a composite Hindu society and the term 'varṇa' assumed a new significance—no more the colour of the skin, but the colour of one's character.

The Hindu philosophers assign colours to a man's qualities for the sake of distinguishing them in a pictorial and vivid manner. There are three main qualities (*guṇas*), *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*—purity, virility, and dullness. These three are found in each individual in varying proportions. Those in whom *sattva* is predominant are said to be *Brāhmaṇas*; they are men of thought. Those in whom *rajas* is predominant are said to be *Kṣatriyas*; they are men of action. Those in whom *tamas* is predominant are said to be *Vaiśyas*; they are men of feeling. And those in whom none of these qualities are highly developed are said to be *Śūdras*. As the aptitudes of these different classes differ, it is but meet that their professions must also differ. These two, then, *viz.* character and kind of work, determine the caste of a person. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in the *Gītā*, 'The four castes were created by me according to the division of aptitudes and works.'¹⁵

¹⁵ *Gītā*, iv, 13.

It will be impossible to examine each individual, determine what his aptitudes are and then fix his calling. And so heredity is made to serve as a sort of working principle. Normally the son inherits the trade of his father as he shares in some of his traits. But this principle was never intended to be applied as an iron rod, inflexible and inviolate. Manu expressly says: ‘The *Brāhmaṇa* who, not having studied the Vedas, labours elsewhere, becomes a *Śūdra* in that very life along with his descendants.’ And again: ‘A *Śūdra* becomes a *Brāhmaṇa* and a *Brāhmaṇa* a *Śūdra* (by conduct). Know the same (rule to apply) to him who is born of a *Kṣatriya* or of a *Vaiśya*.’ In the *Mahābhārata*, Yudhiṣṭhira gives the same teaching: ‘Truth, charity, fortitude, good conduct, gentleness, austerity, and compassion—he in whom these are observed is a *Brāhmaṇa*. If these marks exist in a *Śūdra*, and are not found in a twice-born, the *Śūdra* is not a *Śūdra*, nor the *Brāhmaṇa* a *Brāhmaṇa*.’ The *Bhāgavata* declares, ‘One becomes a *Brāhmaṇa* by his deeds and not by his family or birth; even a *Caṇḍāla* is a *Brāhmaṇa*, if he is of pure character.’ Thus caste is primarily a question of character. Conduct counts and not lineage. An interesting incident is recorded in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*. Satyakāma, a young boy, desired to lead the life of a student. Before he could approach a preceptor for this purpose he should know his lineage. He had only his mother to enlighten him on this matter. But she could not throw any light. She told him, ‘I do not know to what *gotra* you belong, my son. In my youth when I was moving about as a maid-servant I conceived you. So I do not know to what *gotra* you belong. I

am Jabalā by name; and you are Satyakāma. Therefore you may call yourself Satyakāma Jabalā.’ Then the boy approached a preceptor, Gautama, and announced himself in the manner in which his mother had instructed him. The preceptor was pleased with the boy’s outspokenness and decided that he must be a *Brāhmaṇa* because he had spoken the truth.¹⁶ In Satyakāma’s case, then, it was character and not birth that determined his caste.

The duties of the castes are these.¹⁷ The *Brāhmaṇa* is the custodian of the spiritual culture of the race. His first duty is to specialize in spiritual ideas and broadcast them. He is the friend, philosopher and guide of humanity. He is not to burden himself with worldly goods; and the society will keep him above want. He is the *purohita* or the leader of the community. He leads not by virtue of physical might, but by the strength of spiritual power. His counsel is sought by all from the king to the commoner. Serenity, self-control, austerity, purity, forbearance, uprightness, knowledge, insight and faith—these are his virtues, according to the *Gītā*. The *Kṣatriya* is the guardian of society, its protector and preserver. He is the soldier who fights for the freedom of the race and the prefect who keeps the peace of the land. He has to save the social polity from alien domination and internal dissensions. His duties are: heroism, vigour, firmness, resourcefulness, dauntlessness in battle, generosity and majesty. The *Vaiśya* is the expert in economics. His is the duty of arranging for the production

¹⁶ *Chāndogya*, IV, iv, 1-5.

¹⁷ *Gītā*, xviii, 41-44.

and distribution of wealth. The *Gītā* enumerates three of the important professions of the *Vaiśya*: agriculture, tending cattle and trade. The *Śūdra* is the worker, the manual labourer. His place in society is no less important than that of the other three classes, and he is to receive no less honour. By his manual labour he places the entire community under a debt of gratitude. The weal of society depends upon his welfare. No nation can rise higher than the level of its proletariat. With a fluid and functional system of caste based on the principle of bearing the burdens and not of sharing the spoils, there is no reason why a community should not live in harmony and peace.

A related problem over which opinion is sharply divided is the place of the outcaste in Hindu society.^{17a} That a large section of people should be regarded as untouchables, unapproachables and unseeables and should be kept outside the pale of civilization and decent living is the greatest blot on Hinduism. There are some pious Hindus who sincerely believe that Scripture does not sanction contact with these unfortunate folk and their admission into temples. They are prepared for their social amelioration, but not for granting them spiritual equality. The sincerity of these high-souled men is to be respected, no doubt; but we must not forget that there is an equally large section of pious Hindus well-versed

^{17a} These lines were originally written in 1940. As a result of the teaching of Mahātmā Gāndhi and other reformers, the attitude of the Caste Hindus has changed for the better. And, after India became a sovereign Republic, there has been legislation against untouchability.

in the *Śāstras* who also sincerely believe that there is no religious sanction for keeping the Harijans as out-castes. Let us ponder over the words of Mahātmā Gāndhi in this connection. “Whilst I am prepared to defend, as I have always done, the division of Hindus into four castes, I consider untouchability to be a heinous crime against humanity. It is not a sign of self-restraint, but an arrogant assumption of superiority. It is a sign of which the sooner Hinduism purges itself the better it is for itself, if it is to be recognized as an honourable and elevating religion. I know no argument in favour of its retention, and I have no hesitation in rejecting scriptural authority of a doubtful character in order to support a sinful institution.”

7

Stages in Life

We are on safer ground when we come to consider the nature of *āśrama-dharma* (duties pertaining to the stages in life). There are four *āśramas* or stages in life: *brahmacarya* or the period of studentship, *gṛhastha* or the stage of a householder, *vānaprastha* or the stage of a forest-dweller, and *sannyāsa* or the life of renunciation.

The first stage is the period of study and discipline. The student is required to stay in the house of his teacher and learn the sciences and the arts. The preceptors in ancient India usually lived in hermitages not far from towns. These forest hermitages were centres of communism on a small scale; for there under the same

roof dwelt the children of the rich and the poor. The son of the peer had to rub shoulders with the son of the peasant; and both had to serve their master and beg their food. The study of the Veda formed the centre of the curriculum; but secular knowledge was not neglected. The student had to regard the teacher as his spiritual parent and render him unstinted service. He had to eschew pleasures and refrain from active participation in the affairs of the world. At the conclusion of the period of probation the teacher gave the final instruction and sent the student home. The *Taittiriya Upaniṣad* records a convocation address delivered by the teacher to his pupils at the conclusion of their studentship. After completing the exposition of the Veda, the teacher addresses the disciples thus: ‘Speak the truth. Practise virtue. Do not neglect the Veda that has been studied. Having brought to the teacher the wealth that is pleasing to him, do not cut off the line of progeny. Let there be no neglect of truth. Let there be no neglect of virtue. Let there be no neglect of welfare. Let there be no neglect of prosperity. Let there be no neglect of the Veda that has been studied and its teaching. Do not neglect your duties to the gods and the forefathers. Regard your mother as a god. Regard your father as a god. Regard your teacher as a god. Regard your guest as a god. Whatever deeds are blameless, be devoted to them; and not to others. Whatever good customs you find amongst us, they have to be adopted by you and not others. Honour those who are great. Be charitable. If there be any doubt regarding rites or conduct, then look up to the lives of great men and follow their examples.

This is the command. This is the teaching. This is the meaning of Veda.'¹⁸

The second stage is that of the *grhastha* (householder). Normally, when the period of studentship is over, one should marry and shoulder the responsibilities of life. Marriage is to be regarded as a sacrament and the wife as a life-mate in righteous living. The relation of Rāma and Sītā or Sāvitrī and Satyavān is to serve as the ideal for the householder. The place of the *grhastha* is all-important in the body politic. According to Manu, just as air is essential to the life of all creatures, so is the householder necessary for the support of those who belong to the other three orders. He is to acquire wealth and distribute it in the proper way. He can court pleasures; but he should not overstep the limits of the moral law. Among his principal duties are the five great sacrifices: *brahma-yajña* or the sacrifice to Brahman which consists in the study and teaching of the Veda, *deva-yajña* or sacrifice to the gods consisting in their propitiation through offering of oblation, etc., *pitṛ-yajña* or sacrifice to the departed ancestors through observing the *śrāddha* ceremony, *bhūta-yajña* or the sacrifice to the domestic animals by taking care of them, and *manuṣya-yajña* or sacrifice to men which consists in feeding the guests, the homeless and the destitute.

The next stage is that of the *vānaprastha*. Manu says, 'When the householder sees wrinkles (in his skin) and greyness (in his hair) and the son of his son, let him retire to the forest.' Married life is not an end

¹⁸ *Taittirīya*, I, xi, 1-2.

in itself. It is a home of trial. When a man has passed through it, he must relinquish the responsibilities of life and retire to the forest along with his wife. Henceforth he is to devote all his time to spiritual pursuits and undergo his second period of probation which prepares him for the final stage of *sannyāsa*.

The *sannyāsin* is the ideal man. He renounces all worldly cares in order that he may attain the supreme goal (*mokṣa*). In the words of Dr S. Radhakishnan, the last part of life's road has to be walked in single file. The *sannyāsin* spends his days in contemplation, ponders over the mysteries of life and wanders far and wide as the spiritual sentinel of the race. He is the same in honour and dishonour, success and failure. He is the free man of the spirit, who has broken through the narrow circles of clan and country. He loves all and hates none. He has no private ambitions or personal desires. He has no wants and is impelled by no desire. He has nothing to accomplish in this world or in the next. When he has achieved the supreme human goal, what need has he for the trinkets of the world? He revels in the bliss of God. And so the entire choir of heaven and furniture of the earth seem naught before his divine vision.

The four *āśramas* are intended for taking man to perfection by successive stages. In extraordinary cases, however, some of the steps may be omitted. Śuka was a born *sannyāsin*. Śaṅkara renounced from the stage of *brahmacarya*. When Buddha took to *sannyāsa*, he was a householder. Whether the progress be quick or slow, the goal should always be kept in

view, *viz.*, the attainment of spiritual perfection and freedom.

8

Cardinal Virtues

The cardinal virtues (*sādhāraṇa-dharmas*) are to be cultivated by all, irrespective of distinctions of *varṇa* and *āśrama*, to the best of their abilities. Goodness is not the property of any one class or community. The Hindu Scriptures give several lists of virtues. The *Gītā* enumerates these as godly virtues: fearlessness, purity of thought, steadfastness in knowledge and devotion, almsgiving, self-control and sacrifices, study of the Scriptures, austerities and uprightness, non-violence, truth, freedom from anger, renunciation, tranquillity, aversion to slander, compassion to living beings, freedom from covetousness, gentleness, modesty and steadiness, courage, patience, fortitude, purity and freedom from malice and overweening conceit.¹⁹ All these virtues, however, may be regarded as manifestations of the five cardinal virtues: (1) purity, (2) self-control, (3) detachment, (4) truth, and (5) non-violence.

Purity of body and mind is the first rung in the moral ladder. The restrictions in diet and dress and in daily habits are all designed to make the mind pure. The body is to be regarded as the temple of God and the mind its inner sanctuary. The door of heaven is barred to those who are unclean in heart. Cleanliness is part

¹⁹ *Gītā*, xvi, 1-3.

of godliness. Purity (*śauca*) implies cleanliness in thought, word and deed, and comprises such virtues as straightforwardness, frankness, innocence and absence of sinful thoughts. He who has cultivated these qualities will find the practice of the next cardinal virtue, self-control, easy and smooth.

Self-control again implies both the control of the flesh and the control of the mind. The senses must be first restrained. One should not be a slave to the wayward senses. The *Kāthopanīṣad* compares the senses to the horses and the sense-objects to the spheres of their roving, the body to the chariot, the intellect to the charioteer, the mind to the rein, and the self to the lord of the chariot.²⁰ If the reins are not held firm, then the senses, like wicked horses, will become unmanageable; and if the individual has no control over his senses and mind, he will come to ruin. Self-control, however, does not mean self-torture. It only implies moderation and self-mastery.

The third cardinal virtue is detachment—detachment from the sense-objects. The *Gītā* regards attachment to objects of sense as the root of all evil. A man first thinks of an object as worthy of attainment. He feels drawn to it. From this attachment arises desire. Desire prompts him to activity. If he is frustrated in his attempts, he gets angry. Anger breeds delusion, and delusion, the loss of recollection. Sanity takes leave of such a person; and he perishes at last.²¹ To escape this doom, the cultivation of detachment is enjoined.

²⁰ *Kātha* I, iii, 3-6.

²¹ *Gītā*, ii, 62-63.

The moral man must train himself not to be enticed by the glitter of this world. He should see the fleeting and impermanent nature of the things of the universe and cease to be their bond-slave.

When a person is no more beguiled by the evanescent objects of sense, he sees the truth. Truth is the sovereign virtue. It means not mere truth-speaking but the supreme Truth, viz. God who is the source and sustenance of all existence and the spring of all values. The surest way to realize this principle is to be truthful in thought, word and deed. Hariścandra is regarded as a great hero and a paragon of virtue because he was a devotee of Truth.

Non-violence, the last of the cardinal virtues, is the expression of Truth. The Hindu sages, from the Vedic seers and the Buddha to Mahātmā Gāndhi have laid the greatest stress on the practice of this virtue. If Truth is the all, then nothing should be injured. The Vedic command runs: 'Do not injure any being.' The Buddha was the incarnation of compassion. He taught: 'Let a man overcome anger by love; Let him overcome evil by good; Let him overcome the greedy by liberality, the liar by truth!' For says he,

'Hate for hatred if you render,
Hatred lives and mortal strife;
Render love for hatred,
Hatred dies and sweet is life.'

Mahātmā Gāndhi has extended the application of *ahimsā* from the conduct of individuals to the conduct of nations. He writes, 'Man's nature is not *himsā* but *ahimsā*, for

he can speak from experience his innermost conviction that he is not the body but *Ātman* and that he may use the body only with a view to expressing the *Ātman*, only with a view to self-realization. And from that experience he evolves the ethics of subduing desire, anger, ignorance, malice and other passions, puts forth his best effort to achieve the end and finally attains complete success. Only when his efforts reach that consummation can he be said to have fulfilled himself, to have acted according to his nature. Conquest of one's passions, therefore, is not superhuman, but human. Observance of *ahimsā* is the heroism of the highest type with no room therein for cowardice or weakness.' The salvation of the human race lies in the practice of these two virtues—truth and non-violence—which constitute the crown and glory of ethical life.

CHAPTER SIX
SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

1

The Triple Yoga

THE Hindu spiritual disciplines are called *sādhana*s. The meaning of the word 'sādhana' is means, method, path or way. In the present context it means the spiritual way or the path to perfection. The Upaniṣad says, 'As the birds fly in the air, as the fish swim in the sea, leaving no trace behind, even so is the pathway to God traversed by the seekers of Spirit.' Although this is true, attempts have been made to analyse the progress of the soul towards its goal into various stages and ways. Three main types are distinguished among the pathways to God. They are: *karma-yoga*, *bhakti-yoga*, and *jñāna-yoga*. 'Yoga', which is cognate with the English word 'yoke' means union with God, and the way thereto. *Karma-yoga* is the way of selfless work. *Bhakti-yoga* is the way of exclusive devotion to God. *Jñāna-yoga* is the way of wisdom. Philosophers disagree as to the relative excellence and efficacy of these *yogas*. Some believe that disinterested service is the only means to release. Others think that devotion to God is the only way to salvation. Still others hold that the path of knowledge is the sole channel to perfection (*kaivalya*). There are others who regard all the three ways as equally potent

to bring about spiritual experience. We need not enter into these doctrinal subtleties, and shall here be content with an attempt to understand the nature of these *yogas* and their constituents. A general observation may, however, be made. Just as will, feeling and thought are not distinct and separate, so also work, worship and wisdom are not exclusive of one another. Whatever may be the starting point, all the three *yogas* become the constituent stages in one's spiritual journey.

2

The Yoga of Disinterested Service

Karma-yoga is the path of disinterested service. *Karma* means work; and *karma-yoga* means work as a pathway to perfection. *Karma* generally binds man to finitude. As we saw in an earlier chapter, it produces its allotted fruit and also affects character. If a man does an act of charity, he not only benefits others, for example, but himself becomes ennobled in character. Thus every action, whether good or bad, binds in two ways. It carries its own reward, positive or negative, and it moulds the mind.

There is, however, a way of performing deeds without being bound by their effects. The way is indifference to the rewards of work. Work that is done with a view to gain selfish ends binds. It is the desire or craving for the results of work that is the cause of misery and transmigration. If the desire is absent, work will not be a shackle. The *Gītā* gives the formula of *karma-yoga* thus: 'You are entitled to work alone, and not to its fruit. So never work for fruit, nor yet desist from

work.’¹ So long as there is the sense of ‘I’ and ‘mine’ it is not possible to be without work. One may hold his body immobile and sense-organs inactive, but his mind may wander afar. Such a person is a hypocrite, if he thinks that he has transcended the realm of work. And hence the *Gītā*-teaching: ‘Do not desist from work.’ But work should be done without attachment to the result. The difference between a fool’s work and a wise-man’s work is this: while the ignorant man acts *from* attachment to his work, the enlightened man acts *without* attachment. The latter, who is called a *karma-yogin* carries out his appointed duties without any axe of his own to grind. The results of his actions do not worry him. Success and failure make no difference to him. He works with an even mind, having given up all attachment. His actions are prompted by *yoga*, and not by desire. He bestows no thought on what he will get or what he will not get. He has risen above his lower self of passion and desire. He acts with complete equanimity. Such equanimity or evenness of mind is called *yoga* (*samatvam yoga ucyate*).²

The *yogin* who keeps his mind even does his work without a desire for its fruit. Even the optional rites (*kāmya-karma*) he performs as if they were obligatory duties (*nitya-karma*). Optional rites, as we saw in the chapter on ritual, lead to some specific results. Almost all our conscious activities are, like the optional rites, undertaken for the purpose of attaining some desired

¹ *Gītā*, ii, 17.

² *Gītā*, ii, 48.

ends. But these ends are only obstacles in the way of the soul's progress. What binds the soul is the craving for the fruit of action. In the case of obligatory duties, however, there is no positive result over and above the cleansing of the heart. Hence, they do not bind the soul in the sense in which selfish acts do. If all actions are performed in the same spirit in which the obligatory duties are done, then they also do not bind, for they become *niskāma-karma*. This is the unique contribution of the *Gītā* to the philosophy of work, viz. the teaching: *Act in such a way that your actions shall not bind you. Do your duty for the sake of duty.* This the *Gītā* extols as *yoga*, as 'wisdom in work' (*yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam*).³ A happy compromise is thus brought about between the two paths taught of old—*pravṛtti* or action and *nivṛtti* or renunciation. The spirit of renunciation is preserved even without abandoning activity. *Karma-yoga* therefore is renunciation *in* action and not renunciation *of* action.

It is all good to say that work should be performed without a purpose in view. Duty for duty's sake is a beautiful ideal. But is it possible? Can there be voluntary activity without some motive or other? Motive is the spring of action. Will without desire is a psychological impossibility. Therefore *karma-yoga*, as taught in the Hindu Scriptures, cannot mean performance of action without any motive whatsoever. Only instead of having different motives for different actions, the *karma-yogin* has the same motive for all actions—viz., worship

³ *Gītā*, ii, 50.

of God with a purified heart. The Lord of the *Gītā* declares: ‘Whatsoever thou doest, whatsoever thou eatest, whatsoever thou offerest, whatsoever thou givest away and whatsoever of austerities thou dost practise—do that as an offering to me.’⁴ Work is to be regarded as worship. This implies a sublimation of the baser instincts and appetites, passions and desires. The deeds that are performed must yield their results; there is no escape. But the *yogin* does not regard these results as ends, but only as consequents. He does his work without attachment to its fruit and for the purification of his soul (*ātmaśuddhaye*);⁵ and he offers his actions and their results as offerings to the Lord. Thus the goal of moral action is the attainment of communion (*yoga*) with God, who is the internal ruler of all beings.

For attaining this state of wisdom in action a rigorous moral discipline is necessary. The cardinal virtues should be cultivated. The senses and the mind should be controlled. As an aid to mind-control the *yoga* of meditation (*dhyāna-yoga*) is taught in the *Gītā*. The *yogin* should stem the tide of his thoughts, and make his mind one-pointed. He should maintain a steady posture. He should hold his trunk, head and neck erect and still, and fix his attention by concentrating his vision at a particular point, as for example, the tip of his nose without looking around. He should not swerve from his vow of celibacy and should direct his thoughts towards

⁴ *Gītā*, iv, 27.

⁵ *Gītā*, v, 11.

God. He should eat neither too much nor too little. He should not sleep too long; nor should he keep vigil all night. Thus the *yogin's* way is the Middle Path of judicious moderation. Through this path he attains peace and tranquillity, and whatever be the work he is engaged in, he is not affected thereby.

All work is evil if it be rooted in selfishness; and all work is good if it be free from selfishness. And there is no use in giving up one's own work in preference to another's. Every man has to do the work that is allotted to him by his nature. His duties are determined by his station in life, and he should not forsake them. Even after he has reached perfection, the *Gītā* requires him to continue to work. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, though He was an *avatāra*, acted as a cowherd and as the charioteer of Arjuna. Janaka, who is the classical example of the ideal *karma-yogin*, ruled his kingdom without attachment. Once while this philosopher-king was receiving a spiritual lesson from his master, it was announced that his palace was on fire. He remained unperturbed and continued to listen, while the others including the ascetic-students ran about to save their petty belongings. Such was Janaka's spirit of detachment. He was *in* the world, but not *of* it. Tiruvalluvar, the author of *Kuṛal*, was a weaver by profession. So also was Kabīr. All these perfected souls dedicated their actions to God and used even the commonest of pursuits as a means to the attainment of perfection. Before they reached the goal, *karma-yoga* made them unselfish; and after they became perfect, *karma-yoga* was for them a spontaneous expression of their spiritual nature.

3

The Yoga of Devotion

Bhakti-yoga is the way of love. Nārada, the author of the *Bhakti-sūtras*, defines *bhakti* as intense love of God. Prahlāda, the prince among lovers of God, prays: 'That constant love which the ignorant have for the objects of sense—let not that sort of intense love for Thee desert my heart, as I contemplate Thee.' Maṇavāla says: 'The pleasure which arises for the ignorant from sense-objects, the same is called *bhakti* when directed to God.' Love for things that are fleeting and perishing is the cause of misery. Love of God, who is the eternal source of all things, makes for everlasting happiness. As Yājñavalkya teaches his wife Maitreyī in the *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*, the Self or God is the seat of supreme love. The love that one bears to other objects is not really for their sake; but it is for the sake of the Self. 'The Self is dearer than the son, dearer than wealth, dearer than everything else, and is innermost.' The love for other objects is secondary, the love for the Self alone is primary. Husband, wife, progeny, wealth, cattle, castes, the worlds, gods, the Vedas, the elements and all the rest have no intrinsic value in themselves. They are dear for the sake of the Self. In short, God is love. And *bhakti-yoga* is leading one's life in the full recognition of this truth.

Bhakti is of two kinds: formal (*vaidhī*) and real (*mukhyā*). Formal *bhakti* is the lower type depending on external aids. Ritualistic worship which we described in an earlier chapter is formal *bhakti*, and should

be regarded as a step to the real love of God. *Mukhyā* or *parā-bhakti* knows no rules. It transcends all convention. It is ineffable. The soul is in direct contact with God. As the author of the *Bhakti-sūtras* says: 'It is as if a dumb man who has tasted a delicious food could not speak about it. It could be revealed only to the chosen few. For it is an experience pure and selfless, subtle, unbroken and ever expanding. A man who has once experienced love will see that alone, hear that alone and speak of that alone, for he ever thinks of that alone.' Śāṅkara, while defining this type of higher *bhakti*, compares it to the attraction of iron-filings to the load-stone, the constancy of a chaste wife to the lord of her heart, the dependence of a creeper on a tree, and the flowing of the river towards the sea. The devotee dedicates himself wholly to God; and God in turn showers his grace (*prasāda*) on the elect.

A distinction is made between *bhakti* or devotion and *prapatti* or absolute surrender to God. The path of *bhakti* implies certain qualifications such as knowledge, good works and high birth. But *prapatti* is above all these considerations. It is a free road open to all. Any one who takes refuge in God is eligible for it. It is the highest stage in God-love. *Ātma-nivedana* or the surrender of the soul is the final act of love. Śrī Kṛṣṇa counsels *prapatti* to Arjuna at the end of the *Gītā* when he says: 'Surrendering all duties, come to me alone for shelter. Do not grieve, for I will release thee from all sins.'

Devotion to God assumes many forms. There are several kinds of human relationship such as filial affection,

friendship, reverence, servitude, etc. The *bhakta* may hold himself as related to God in any of these ways. The nature of his attitude depends upon the degree of intimacy with God. The attitudes are called *bhāvas*. The *Bhakti-śāstras* speak of nineteen attitudes or *bhāvas* which the *bhakta* may adopt towards his deity. The most important of these are six: *dāsya*, *sakhya*, *vātsalya*, *śānta*, *kānta* and *madhura*. *Dāsya-bhāva* is the attitude of a servant to his master. Hanumān is the classical example of an ideal servant of God. This type of relationship marks the beginning of love. At a later stage *bhakti* gets deepened and is comparable to the love and regard that a man has for his friend. This is *sakhya-bhāva*. The relationship between Kucela and Kṛṣṇa was of this type. Arjuna too for the most part moved with Kṛṣṇa as a friend. Still higher and more intimate is *vātsalya-bhāva*, the love of the parent to the child. Kausalyā had the Lord Himself as her child in the form of Rāma. The love of Yaśodā to Kṛṣṇa was of the nature of *vātsalya*. *Śānta-bhāva* is the converse of *vātsalya*; it is the feeling of a child to its parent. Dhruva and Prahlāda are the classical examples. They were the children of God in every sense of the term. *Kānta-bhāva* is the love of the wife to the husband. The relationship between Sītā and Rāma, and between Rukmiṇī and Kṛṣṇa was of this kind. This is a closer kinship than those we have considered so far. But the closest of all is *madhura-bhāva*, the romantic love of the lover and the beloved, as in the case of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. The last two types should not be understood to mean sensuality. ‘In true love,’ as Dr S. Radhakrishnan says, ‘there

is little of sensual attraction.' The *bhakta* looks upon God as his Beloved, because it is the most intimate kind of love known to man. The mystics both in the East and the West describe God as the Bridegroom. Tukārām sings: 'As the chaste wife longs only to see her lord, such am I to Viṭṭhala.' Tāyumānavar in one of his poems makes the soul describe the visit of her divine Lover:—

'The Light which is the beginning and hath no beginning, which shineth in me as Bliss and Thought, appeared as the Silent One. He spake to me, sister, words not to be spoken.

'The words that were spoken, how shall I tell? Cunningly He seated me all alone, with nothing before me. He made me happy, beloved, he grasped me and clung to me.

'He bade me put all other clings aside and cling to Him within. What I got as I clung to him, how shall I tell? He spake of things never spoken, beloved.'⁶

This is the language of love which the mystic uses. But it has nothing carnal about it.

The devotees of God constitute one tribe. There are no distinctions of caste or colour among them. Rāmānanda, a Vaiṣṇava teacher of the fourteenth century, says, 'Let no man ask of race or creed. Whoever worships God is God's own.' To quote Nārada again, there are no distinctions among lovers of God, such as those of caste, knowledge, colour, family, wealth and actions. The Ālvārs of Vaiṣṇavism and the Nāyanmārs

⁶ Dr L. D. Barnett's translation.

of Śaivism were from different classes of society. Rāmānanda had among his twelve apostles a Brahmin, a barber, a leather-worker, a Moslem weaver, and a woman. Nanda, the beloved of Śiva, was of the lowest rank.

The story of Kaṇṇappar best illustrates the highest type of *bhakti*. In the mountainous region of Kālahastī was a rough stone image of Śiva. Every morning a pious and learned Brahmin came to it and offered worship according to rule. One day a young huntsman happened to pass that way. The sight of the image roused the feelings of religious devotion in his heart. He worshipped it in his own barbarian fashion. He brought water in his mouth and poured it on the image, decorated it with wild flowers and offered swine's flesh ill-baked in fire. Next morning when the priest turned up, he saw the dirty things and thought that a vile man had desecrated the holy place. Śiva wanted to teach the Brahmin a lesson and show to him that the hunter's unclean worship was more acceptable to Him than the *pūjā* performed according to the scriptural law. One night the Deity appeared in a vision to the priest and directed him to watch the next day from a hiding place the expression of the barbarian's love. The Brahmin did as he was told. He concealed himself near the idol and waited. The hunter came to worship. He saw to his horror blood dripping from an eye of the image. He remembered the medical formula that eye heals eye, and at once removed one of his own eyes and placed it on the idol's eye. The blood stopped. But soon the other eye of the idol began to bleed. The young chieftain placed one of

his feet a little below the affected eye in order that it may serve as a mark and prepared to sacrifice the other eye also. But before he could cut it out, Śiva manifested Himself to him and accepted him as one of His chosen devotees. The hunter was healed, and was known henceforth as *Kaṇṇappār*, 'the beloved of the eye.' Śaṅkara, in one of his poetical works, describes this saint as the best among *bhaktas*. 'The contact with the worn-out shoe gave immense pleasure to Śiva's body; the water brought in the mouth became his ceremonial bath; the swine's flesh which had been tasted before it was offered became his delicious food. What will not *bhakti* do? Lo, the barbarian became the best among the *bhaktas*!'

4

The Yoga of Knowledge

Jñāna-yoga is the path of knowledge. Śaṅkara's *Advaita* philosophy regards this as the principal means to release. Ignorance or *ajñāna* is the root of all the imperfections and ills of the world; and it can be removed only by *jñāna* or knowledge. On account of its *ajñāna* the soul (*jīva*) thinks that it is different from the Absolute (*Brahman*). But through the knowledge of the non-difference of the *jīva* from *Brahman* perfection is gained. *Mokṣa* is not a future state to be accomplished through activity. The result of activity is non-eternal, whereas *mokṣa* is the eternal nature of the self. The religious way, according to Śaṅkara, does not consist in the production of what ought to be, but in the recognition of what is. Religion is not an *ought-ness* but

an *is-ness*. The authority for such a view is the Scripture which declares: *tarati śokam ātmavit*, the knower of self crosses sorrow; *brahmavid brahmaiva bhavati*, the knower of *Brahman* becomes *Brahman*; *nānyaḥ pañthā vidyate 'yanāya*, no other path there is, etc.

Jñāna, as the path to perfection, means not intellectual knowledge, but spiritual insight. There are two kinds of knowledge, the higher (*parā*) and the lower (*aparā*). Of these, the lower consists of the knowledge of the *R̥g-veda*, the *Yajur-veda*, the *Sāma-veda*, the *Atharva-veda*, phonetics, ritual, grammar, etymology metrics and astronomy, in short, all the sciences and arts. And the higher knowledge is that by which the immutable Absolute is known. In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* Nārada confesses that, in spite of his vast and varied learning, he is not free from sorrow. He says: 'I have studied all the Vedas, the Epics, the Purāṇas, grammar, the science of ancestor-worship, mathematics, the science of portents, the science of time, logic, polity, etymology, phonetics, the science of spirits, the science of weapons, astronomy, snake-charming, and the fine arts. But I have not known the self; and so I am in sorrow.' Then Sanatkumāra imparts to him the *parā-vidyā* which alone is the means to spiritual freedom.

There are two stages in the discipline that has to be undergone before the intuition of *Brahman* can be gained. The first is the stage of moral, intellectual and emotional preparation. It consists of the discrimination between the eternal and the non-eternal, detachment from all selfish pursuits, the development of the virtues of calmness (*śama*), restraint (*dama*), renunciation

(*uparati*), resignation (*titikṣā*), concentration (*samādhi*) and faith (*śraddhā*), and finally an intense longing for liberation. He who has this four-fold qualification is to study the Vedānta-texts under the guidance of a proper *guru* who is not only learned in the sacred lore (*śrotriya*) but is also well established in Brahman (*brahma-niṣṭha*).

The next stage consists of three steps: *śravaṇa*, *manana* and *nididhyāsana*. *Śravaṇa* is the study of the Vedānta-texts. Religion, it is said, is not taught, but caught. Mere intellectual study of the Vedānta is not of much avail. The purport of the Scripture may be missed. And so the meaning of the Upaniṣads should be learned from a realized soul. *Manana* is reflection. After studying the teaching of the Upaniṣads, one should reflect upon it and try to understand why it alone is true and not any other teaching. There may arise innumerable doubts. All these should be dispelled by the process of cogitation. *Manana* does not reveal any new truth. It only serves to remove the doubts regarding the final truth that has been already received through *śravaṇa*. Intellectual conviction alone will not do for self-realization. Old habits of thought may reassert themselves and stand as obstacles in the way. To get over them, *nididhyāsana* or deep contemplation is needed. Through this graduated process what was at first a mere theoretical knowledge (*parokṣa*) of the self becomes a direct perception or intuitive experience (*aparokṣa*) of the Absolute. With the rise of this wisdom, one becomes a *jīvan-mukta*. He is released even while he is in this body.

The *Gītā* contains passages in praise of *jñāna*, and Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that the *jñānin* is supremely dear to him, nay, that he is his very self. *Jñāna* is the fire that burns up all works⁷; as the fire which is kindled reduces all fuel to ashes, so the fire of knowledge reduces all works to ashes⁸; the sword of knowledge cuts asunder the doubts in the heart, born of ignorance⁹; the raft of knowledge enables even the most sinful of sinners to cross over all transgression¹⁰; many there have been who have become pure through the austerity of knowledge¹¹; verily, there is no purifier on earth equal to knowledge¹²; in knowledge all works get lost¹³; all work without a residue culminates in knowledge¹⁴; knowledge is attained through faith and through knowledge supreme peace is gained¹⁵.

CHAPTER SEVEN
THE PHILOSOPHIES

1

Philosophy and Philosophical Schools

PHILOSOPHY is love of wisdom. It is a rational inquiry into the nature of reality. And in India it is an integral part of religion. Man is a philosophical being. He cannot but reason about ultimate things. What is the nature of the ground of existence? Is it personal or impersonal? Is it to be called the Absolute or God? Is there an ultimate ground at all for the universe? Of the three, matter, life and spirit, which is primary and which secondary? What are the constituents of the world? Is the world real as it appears? Has it any purpose? Or is it only a blind and unavailing process? Is there soul? If so, what is its essential nature? What is its source and what is its destiny? Such questions agitate the human mind. The search for a solution of these problems is philosophy.

Systems of philosophy arise when the doctrines relating to fundamental questions are sought to be formulated. As the inquiring minds differ in their ability to understand, so the philosophies vary. But inspite of the

variations, there is an underlying identity also. In fact, the philosophical systems are like drawings in perspective of the same object. Their common object is Truth. Each of them attempts to give us a vision of Truth.

The systems of Indian philosophy are classified into two groups, *āstika* (orthodox) and *nāstika* (heterodox). These two terms, however, are relative. One belonging to the so-called heterodox school may as well call those who are in the opposite camp heterodox. Various meanings are given to the word ' *āstika* ': (1) one who believes in the life after death, (2) one who believes in God, and (3) one who believes in the authority of the Veda. ' *Nāstika* ' means the opposite of these. As applied to the schools of Indian philosophy, ' *āstika* ' is to be understood in the third of the above senses. To the *āstika* group belong the six *darśanas* referred to in the chapter on the Scriptures. They are Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta. The *nāstika* systems are Cārvāka, Bauddha and Jaina. These are called heterodox because they do not believe in the authority of the Veda. The term ' Hindu philosophy ' is narrower than Indian philosophy as it denotes only the orthodox systems. We shall here study, in brief, the teachings of the orthodox schools.

2

Nyāya

The Nyāya is a system of logical realism. It believes in the existence of an external world independent

of all thinking minds, and seeks to establish this belief through logical reasoning. Although its philosophical position has not gained popularity, its logical technique has been adopted by all the systems of thought in India. The latter followers of the Nyāya system separated the technique from the philosophy and specialized in the former. It has long been the tradition in India to begin the study of philosophy with a grounding in Nyāya, otherwise known as Tarka.

The basic text of the Nyāya system is Gautama's *Nyāya-sūtra*, written probably in the fourth century B.C. Vātsyāyana (A.D. 400) has a commentary on the *sūtra*. A defence of this work against Bauddha critics is to be found in Uddyotakara's *Nyāya-vārtika* (A.D. 600). This is explained by Vācaspati Miśra (A.D. 841) in his *Tātparyā-ṭīkā*, which in its turn is elucidated by Udayana (A.D. 1000) in his *Tātparyā-ṭīkā-paraśuddhi*. Among other works which Udayana wrote is the *Nyāya-kusumāñjali* in which are set forth the arguments for the existence of God. The Neo-logical movement which seeks to separate the technique of thinking from the metaphysics was inaugurated by Gaṅgeśa (A.D. 1200). His famous work is the *Tattva-cintāmaṇi* which was followed by other works written by such great logicians as Vāsudeva Sārvabhauma and Raḡhunātha Śiromaṇi. Since these thinkers lived in Navadvīpa in Bengal, their school bears the name of that place. Among the easy manuals on Nyāya may be mentioned Viśvanāthapañcānana's *Bhāṣāpariccheda* (A.D. 1650) and Anṅambhaṭṭa's *Tarkasaṅgraha* (of about the same period).

Almost the first topic that is dealt with in every system of Indian philosophy is the problem of knowledge. There are two main aspects of this problem: (1) What are the means of valid knowledge? (2) What is valid knowledge or truth? The means of valid knowledge are called *pramāṇas*. The number of *pramāṇas* varies with the different systems. Valid knowledge or truth is known as *pramā*. The nature and test of truth are explained in different ways; for one's view of truth depends on one's view of reality, and we have already seen that there are many possible perspectives of reality.

According to the Nyāya system, there are four means of valid knowledge: perception (*pratyakṣa*), inference (*anumāna*), comparison (*ūpamāna*), and testimony (*śabda*).

Perception: Normal perception consists in the contact of a sense-organ with its object, and the resultant knowledge thereof. But in certain cases of perception there may be no sense-activity. God knows all things immediately without the aid of any sense-organ. The Yogins perceive remote objects and past and future events without sense-contact with them. So, the later Naiyāyikas define perceptual knowledge as direct apprehension, rejecting the earlier definition of it as cognition born of sense-object relation. In all normal perception of external objects, it is true, sense-contact is necessary. Even here, there are other aspects of the process: the contact of the mind with the sense-organ, and of the self with the mind. Only, these are required for all knowledge, perceptual or otherwise. A distinction

is made between two stages in perception, indeterminate (*nirvikalpaka*) and determinate (*savikalpaka*). At the earlier stage, we are aware of an object as a mere *that*; and at the subsequent stage we come to know its *what* also. It is not only substances that can become the contents of perception, but also attributes, class-natures, classes, and even non-existence.

Inference: The doctrine of inference (*anumāna*) is the most important doctrine in Nyāya. Inferential knowledge is mediate as distinguished from perceptual knowledge which is immediate. The classic example of the Indian inference is the following:

1. The hill has fire (*pratijñā*).
2. Because it has smoke (*hetu*).
3. Whatever has smoke has fire, e.g., a hearth (*udāharaṇa*).
4. This hill has smoke which is invariably concomitant with fire (*uṣanaya*).
5. Therefore, this hill has fire (*nigamana*).

Here it will be seen that the presence of fire on the hill is sought to be inferred on the strength of the perception of smoke there. That which makes this inference possible is the universal concomitance between smoke and fire. The knowledge of fire on the hill is dependent on the perception of smoke which is known to be concomitant with fire. Hence it is mediate knowledge. The connection in knowledge between the hill (minor term) and fire (major term) is brought about through smoke (middle term). So, inferential knowledge is knowledge acquired through the instrument of other knowledge. The literal meaning of *anu-māna* is 'after-knowledge.'

The example given above is that of a full-fledged syllogism intended for the sake of others (*parārthānumāna*). If a person wants to convince another of the soundness of his conclusions, he makes use of the five-membered syllogism. He first sets forth the thesis to be established (*pratijñā*); then gives the reason on which the thesis is based (*hetu*); substantiates the reason by formulating the universal concomitance and by citing an example (*udāharana*); shows the subsumptive correlation between the universal concomitance and the present instance (*upanaya*); and, finally, draws the conclusion as a settled fact (*nigamana*). The inference which is for oneself (*svārthānumāna*) is not a formal syllogism; it takes place in the mind of the individual, and is not expressed in any verbal form. But in all inference there are the three moments: (1) the subject (*pakṣa*) where a character is to be established, (2) the character that is to be established (*sādhya*), and (3) the sign or means (*sādhana*, *hetu* or *liṅga*) on the basis of which it is established. In Aristotelian logic, the corresponding terms are Minor, Major and Middle. The Indian syllogism is to be distinguished from the Aristotelian in that it is not a mere formal process, and that it is both deductive and inductive. But the logical principle of inference is the same for both, *viz.*, the attribution of a character to a subject on the ground of another character with which it is universally connected. It is of utmost importance, then, that the ground cited must be sound. All fallacious reasoning, according to Indian logic, is caused by a defective ground (*duṣṭa-hetu*).

The importance of inference as a means for acquiring knowledge cannot be over-emphasized. The reach of perception is very limited. If we analyse the content of our knowledge, we shall realize that much of it is inferential. Some may glibly say that life does not proceed according to logic; but, nevertheless, human existence would be impossible, were there no reason behind it.

Comparison: *Upamāna* is the third means of valid knowledge. Here the instrument or the means is the knowledge of similarity, and the result is the knowledge of the relation between a name and the object denoted by it. For example: a townsman who is ignorant of the meaning of the word 'gavaya' (wild cow) learns from a forester that the *gavaya* is a forest animal similar to the cow. Thereafter he goes to a forest, and sees the animal called *gavaya*. Remembering the information he had received from the forester, he now knows that the animal he sees is the denotation of the name 'gavaya'.

Testimony: The fourth and the last *pramāna* is *Śabda*, which is the testimony of a trustworthy person (*āpta*). A person is trustworthy if he knows what he is talking about and conveys it correctly. The value of *śabda* as a *pramāna* depends on the excellence of its source—the trustworthiness and competence of the speaker. But the mere perception of words is not enough for gaining knowledge about objects; one must understand the meanings of words. Every word has a capacity (*śakti*) to signify a meaning. This capacity is determined, according to the Naiyāyika, by God's will (*iśvara-saṅketah*). It is God that wills 'from this word,

this concept should be known'. Thus, when we perceive the words uttered by a trustworthy person, and when we understand the meaning conveyed by the capacity of those words, we have valid knowledge through testimony.

Testimony may be of the Veda (*vaidika*) or of secular speech (*laukika*). The passages of the Veda are all statements of God, and so their testimony is perfect and infallible. Secular words are not so. They are valid and carry authority if they come from a trustworthy person, not otherwise.

Of the two aspects of the problem of knowledge, we have now had a brief account of the Nyāya view of the first. Let us proceed to understand what, according to the Nyāya, is truth or valid knowledge. Since Nyāya is a realistic system, truth, in its view, consists in the conformity of idea to object. That knowledge is true or valid which agrees with or corresponds to the nature of its object. For instance, to cognize a piece of silver as silver is true experience. In a judgment the subject term tells us that a certain thing exists, and the predicate term characterizes it further by specifying its properties. If the properties specified agreed with the nature of the thing denoted by the subject term, the judgment is true. This is the realist view of knowledge. The knowing mind and the known object are externally related. Our knowing makes no difference to the existence of facts. The 'thing' is out there independent of the thinking mind. In the process of knowing it is the mind that should conform to the object and not the object to mind.

But, then, the question that would arise is: how are we to know that cognition corresponds to reality? We cannot get outside of ourselves; and so, there can be no direct evidence of correspondence between mind and object. The Naiyāyika realizes this difficulty and offers an indirect test of truth. The test is practice. That is, the correspondence of idea to fact is ascertained if the idea leads to fruitful activity. Workability is the test of truth, although it is not the content of truth. Truth is correspondence; it is known through utility.

The Nyāya conception of reality is greatly influenced by the system's preoccupation with logic and epistemology. In the list of categories given by this system, many are the categories of thought and of the technique of reasoning. Sixteen categories are recognized which are: (1) means of valid knowledge (*pramāṇa*), (2) objects of valid knowledge (*prameya*), (3) doubt (*samśaya*), (4) purpose (*prayojana*), (5) instances (*dṛṣṭānta*), (6) established conclusions (*siddhānta*), (7) members of syllogism (*avayava*), (8) *reductio ad absurdum* (*tarka*), (9) decisive knowledge (*nirṇaya*), (10) arguing for truth (*vāda*), (11) arguing constructively as well as destructively for victory (*jalpa*), (12) mere destructive argument (*vitandā*), (13) fallacious reasons (*hetvābhāsa*), (14) quibbling (*chala*), (15) specious and unavailing objections (*jāti*), and (16) vulnerable points (*nigrahasthāna*). In this list, except the second, all the categories refer to the ratiocinative process and the art of arguing. Even the second has its tell-tale title 'objects of valid knowledge'.

These categories are, as has been remarked, 'nothing more than the headings of chapters of a handbook of logic and dialectics'.¹

It is a characteristic of the Nyāya doctrine that it seeks to prove even the existence of God. The chief of the arguments as set forth by Udayana are as follows: (1) The world which is an effect requires an efficient cause. This cause must be equal to the task of creating the world both by knowledge as well as power. That is God. (2) There is orderliness in the created world. Natural phenomena do not constitute a chaotic mass. They reveal an intelligent design. As the author of this design, as the controller of the physical order, God must exist. (3) Just as there is a physical order, there is a moral order too, which consists in dispensing justice in accordance with desert. There must be one responsible for this as the moral governor. He is God. (4) There is also a negative proof. No anti-theist has so far proved the non-existence of God. No *pramāṇa* can be adduced to show that God does not exist.

God, in the Nyāya system, belongs to the class of souls. Only, he is *primus inter pares*. He is *paramātman* as distinguished from the *jīvātman* or the individual soul. He is the efficient cause of the universe, and not its material cause. He is the prime mover of the primary atoms which by coming together in different ways constitute the things of the physical world. Guided by the past *karma* of the souls, God creates, protects, and destroys the universe, and re-creates it. Like the souls,

¹ A. B. Keith, *Indian Logic and Atomism* (The Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1921), p. 174.

God is omnipresent and eternal. But while consciousness may not always characterize the souls, it is a constant attribute of God.

The souls are many. Each goes through the tract of transmigration as conditioned by its past *karma*, until it is released. Release is gained by the knowledge of the sixteen categories. How this is so may be easily explained. True knowledge dispels ignorance; when this happens, the defects of the soul consisting of desire, aversion, and error, are destroyed; with the destruction of the defects, action ends; and with the ending of action, birth and the sorrow consequent thereon cease.² The goal which is called *apavarga* is not a positive state of happiness but a negative experience of the total absence of pain. The reason why the goal is so conceived is that there can be no happiness without an admixture of pain.

What is important about the Nyāya is not its metaphysics but its methodology. Quite early in its history it entered into an alliance with the Vaiśeṣika system and borrowed the latter's metaphysical scheme completely. But it retained its logic and epistemology. As its very name indicates, it is pre-eminently a system of logic, and as such it is a propædeutic to every school of philosophy. Vātsyāyana, the author of the *Nyāya-bhāṣya*, says that the science of logic (*ānvikṣikī*) is 'the lamp of all the sciences, the means for performing all actions, the support of all religious duties, well proved in the declarations of science'.³

² See *Nyāya-sūtra*, I, i, 2.

³ See commentary on I, i, 1.

3

Vaiśeṣika

The Vaiśeṣika is an atomistic pluralism, believing in a plurality of reals and regarding the physical world as consisting of things each of which is reducible to a number of atoms. Though as a system of thought it began independently of the Nyāya, soon it coalesced therewith because of close metaphysical kinship. The syncretism of the Nyāya and the Vaiśeṣika is so complete that the later writers treat them as one hyphenated system, Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, combining the Nyāya theory of *pramāṇas* with the Vaiśeṣika scheme of categories (*padārthas*).

Kaṇāda's *Vaiśeṣika-sūtra*, composed probably a little earlier than the *Nyāya-sūtra* in the fourth century B.C., is the basic text of the Vaiśeṣika system. Praśastapāda's *Padārtha-dharma-saṅgraha* (fourth century A.D.), though not a literal commentary, expounds the tenets of the system. Vyomaśiva's *Vyomavati* (ninth century A.D.), Śrīdhara's *Nyāya-kandalī*, and Udayana's *Kiraṇāvalī* (tenth century A.D.) are commentaries on Praśastapāda's work. There are several manuals on the syncretic Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika system. Of these, Śivāditya's *Sapta-padārthī* is the most popular one.

There is nothing that is distinctive of the Vaiśeṣika theory of knowledge. Only, before its synthesis with the Nyāya, it admitted of two *pramāṇas* alone, *viz.*, perception and inference, and regarded comparison and testimony as species of inference.

The most important doctrine of the Vaiśeṣika is that of the categories. A category (*padārtha*) is what can be known (*jñeya*), validly cognized (*prameya*), and named or denoted (*abhidheya*). The categories are seven: substance (*dravya*), quality (*guṇa*), activity (*karma*), generality (*sāmānya*), particularity (*viśeṣa*), inherence (*samavāya*), and non-existence (*abhāva*). Originally the first six categories alone were recognized, and later on the last was added to the list.

Substance: This is the main category, as it includes all things, living and non-living. *Dravya* is defined as the substrate of qualities and activity, and as the inherent cause of a product. There are nine substances: (1) earth (*ṛthivī*), (2) water (*ap*), (3) fire (*tejas*), (4) air (*vāyu*), (5) ether (*ākāśa*), (6) time (*kāla*), (7) space (*dik*), (8) self (*ātman*), and (9) mind (*manas*). These substances constitute the stuff of the universe, physical as well as spiritual.

The first four, *viz.*, earth, water, fire, and air, are in the form of atoms (*paramāṇus*) which are partless and eternal. Composite things such as pots, tanks, etc., are made of these atoms. And into these atoms they are resolved when they are destroyed. Ether is an element like the first four; but it does not consist of atoms. It is infinite, and does not produce anything. Time and space are infinite substances like ether. They condition the derivative objects such as pots, etc. Space is not the same as ether; it is that which is filled by ether.

Self which is the eighth in the list of substances is a spiritual entity. Though it is omnipresent and eternal,

it is limited by the psycho-physical organism with which it is associated during transmigration. Its attributes are cognition, desire, aversion, volition, pleasure, pain, merit, demerit, etc. These attributes are adventitious because they are not always present in the self. In the state of release, for instance, the self has no attributes whatsoever, not even consciousness. Mind which is the last substance is atomic and eternal. But unlike the first four, it does not give rise to any product. Each self has its own mind which is only an instrument of knowing and therefore inert. It is through the mind that the self experiences and goes through transmigration.

Quality: Kaṇāda defines quality as that which has substance for its substratum, has no further qualities, and is not a cause of, nor has any concern with, conjunction or disjunction. Twenty-four qualities are listed, some of them being material and others mental. The qualities are: colour (*rūpa*), taste (*rasa*), smell (*gandha*), touch (*sparsā*), sound (*śabda*), number (*saṅkhyā*), size (*parimāṇa*), separateness (*prthaktva*), conjunction (*samyoga*), disjunction (*vibhāga*), remoteness (*paratva*), proximity (*aпаратva*), cognition (*buddhi*), pleasure (*sukha*), pain (*duḥkha*) desire (*icchā*), aversion (*dveṣa*), effort (*prayatna*), heaviness (*gurutva*), fluidity (*dravatva*), visciduity (*sneha*), faculty (*samskāra*), merit (*dharma*), and demerit (*adharmā*). There is no particular virtue in the details of this list. All that we need note here is that some of them are common qualities (*sāmānya-guṇas*), while the others are special qualities (*viśeṣa-guṇas*) of single substances.

Activity: *Karma* has a special sense in the Vaiśeṣika system. It means physical motion, which is defined as that which resides only in one substance, is devoid of qualities, and is the direct and immediate cause of conjunction and disjunction. Motion is of five kinds—upward (*utkṣepaṇa*), downward (*avakṣepaṇa*), contraction (*ākuñcana*), expansion (*prasāraṇa*), and locomotion (*gamana*).

Generality: *Sāmānya* or *jāti* is the generic feature that resides in all the members of a class. It is the common characteristic by virtue of possessing which an individual becomes a member of a class, e.g. animality, man-ness, etc. While the individual objects are many, come into being and pass away, the *sāmānya* is one (*eka*), eternal (*nitya*), and resides in the many (*anekānugata*). While men are born and they die after some time, man-ness which is common to all mankind is eternal. Like Plato's Ideas, the *sāmānya* has a reality of its own independent of the particulars. Generalities are of different grades. The highest is the *para*; it is 'Beinghood'. The lowest is the *a-para*, like 'potness', etc. The intermediate grades are called *parāpara*, e.g. earthness. *Sāmānya* resides in substances, qualities, and activities. The relation between *sāmānya* and the individual is inherence (*samavāya*).

Particularity: *viśeṣa* is an important category for the Vaiśeṣika, for upon it depends the system's pluralism. It is the feature which distinguishes one individual from another. It is the differentia of ultimate things which are otherwise alike. Thus two atoms of earth are alike in every respect. But if still they should be two, there

must be a distinctive feature in each. Similarly there should be a special trait in each of the selves which marks it off from the rest. This differentiating feature is its *viśeṣa*. The *viśeṣas* are innumerable, as the eternal substances (*nitya-dravyas*) are so. The particularities differentiate not only the ultimate substances from one another, but also themselves (*svato vyāvartaka*).

Inherence: *Samavāya* is an intimate relation between inseparables. It is to be distinguished from *samyoga* (conjunction) which is a temporary relation between two substances which can exist separately. In the Vaiśeṣika, *samyoga* is one of the qualities. *Samavāya* or inherence is a separate category. The entities which it relates are inseparable (*ayuta-siddha*), i.e. at least one of them cannot remain without its relation to the other. Inherence obtains between five kinds of inseparables: (1) substance and quality, (2) substance and activity, (3) particular and generality, (4) eternal substance and particularity, (5) whole and parts.

Non-existence: *Abhāva* is a name for all negative facts. It is defined as that which neither has *samavāya* nor is *samavāya*. It implies the negation of something somewhere. There are four kinds of non-existence: (1) *Prāg-abhāva* or prior non-existence. This is the non-existence of a product, say pot, before its production. It is without a beginning, but comes to an end when the object in question is produced. (2) *Pradhvam-sābhāva* or annihilative non-existence. This is the non-existence of a thing after it is destroyed. It has a beginning but no end. (3) *Anyonyābhāva* or reciprocal non-existence. Another name for it is difference

(*bheda*). In statements like 'A is not B', the significance of 'not' is reciprocal non-existence. It is the same as saying 'A is different from B'. This type of non-existence is eternal. (4) *Atyantābhāva* or absolute non-existence. When we say 'On this ground there is no pot', it is a case of *atyantābhāva*. Here we are predicating of the ground the non-existence of pot. This type of non-existence also is held to be eternal.

Having explained the seven categories, we shall turn to some of the philosophical doctrines of the Vaiśeṣika which are shared by the Nyāya also. The first of the doctrines we shall consider is atomism. Atomism is the theory which says that the physical world is reducible to atoms which are material entities without parts. Any composite entity admits of division. But the process of division cannot go on endlessly. It must stop when we reach the *minimum divisible*. This minutest particle of matter is called an atom. As we have seen, the Vaiśeṣika recognizes four kinds of atoms: earth, water, fire and air. The fifth element, ether, is not atomic in structure. The finite things that we have in the world are each composed of one type of atoms. The atoms give rise to the things by coming together in various ways. The variety we observe in the universe is due to the number of atoms that go into the making of each entity, and also to the qualitative differences between the kinds of atoms. The process of the origination of things is as follows: First, two atoms (say, of earth) come together and constitute a binary compound (*dvaṇuka*); then, three such binaries produce a triad (*tryaṇuka*). This is the least perceivable

particle, and is identified with the mote in the sun-beam. Out of the triads, coming together in various groups, the finite things are constituted. According to the later Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, the process of destruction follows the reverse order.

The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theory of causation is known as *ārambha-vāda* (doctrine of new creation) and *asatkārya-vāda* (doctrine of non-existent effect). It means that the effect does not exist prior to its production. The cause and the effect are quite different from each other. Every product is *new*. When, for instance, the threads in conjunction produce a piece of cloth, the latter is a product which has come into being afresh. This new product is in *samavāya* relation with the threads. Every whole that is constructed out of the parts is wholly different from the parts. Here one sees a desperate attempt on the part of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika philosopher to maintain his pluralistic view.

As regards the nature and destiny of the individual, the Vaiśeṣika view is not different from that of the Naiyāyika. Here also there is a plurality of souls, each going through *samsāra* in accordance with its past *karma*. Liberation is attained through good conduct and knowledge. The knowledge here is of the categories. In order to have this, one must acquire special merit through a virtuous life. In the state of final release, however, there is the total absence of merit and demerit which are responsible for rebirth. Release is a state of the absolute cessation of pain. There cannot be happiness there, for happiness is impossible without pain.

What is of value in the Vaiśeṣika philosophy is its technique of inquiring into the nature of categories. Its atomism may now be an exploded theory. Its doctrine of causation may be untenable. Yet, its analysis of the *padārthas* has a lasting philosophical value.

4

Sāṅkhya

The Sāṅkhya is a system of realism, dualism and pluralism. It is a realism because it recognizes the reality of a world independent of spirit; it is a dualism because it holds that there are two fundamental realities distinct from each other, *viz.*, matter and spirit; and it is a pluralism because it teaches a plurality of spirits. It is, in short, a qualitative dualism and a numerical pluralism. While in the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika there are many kinds of matter as well as many souls, in the Sāṅkhya unity is achieved in the realm of matter, though plurality is retained in the sphere of souls.

The Sāṅkhya is one of the oldest systems of Indian thought. In the Upaniṣads there are to be found certain elements which must have later given rise to the Sāṅkhya concepts. In the *Mahābhārata* there are clear references to Sāṅkhya. It is quite possible that the Sāṅkhya began as a theistic movement based on the Upaniṣads, but was subsequently systematized into an atheistic school by the classical Sāṅkhya philosophers. Of this later school, the earliest extant work is the *Sāṅkhya-kārikā* of Īśvara-kṛṣṇa (about fifth century

A.D.). The original author of the system is said to be Kapila. But the *Sāṅkhya-sūtra* that is attributed to him is a very late composition. The *Sāṅkhya-kārikā* is a compendious and lucid exposition of the Sāṅkhya doctrines. It was one of the books which the Buddhist monk, Paramārtha, took with him to China in A.D. 546, and had it translated into Chinese. There are several commentaries on the *Kārikā*; the *bhāṣya* of Gauḍapāda and the *Sāṅkhya-tattva-kaumudī* (ninth century A.D.) are the earliest and the most authentic. Vijñānabhikṣu's commentary on the *Sāṅkhya-sūtra* which has the title *Sāṅkhya-pravacana-bhāṣya* (sixteenth century A.D.) is important in that it makes the Sāṅkhya a theistic system.

The *pramāṇas*, according to the Sāṅkhya, are three: perception, inference, and testimony. These we have already explained in connection with the Nyāya. We shall here refer only to those features of the Sāṅkhya epistemology which are distinctive of the system.

The Sāṅkhya, as does the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, recognizes two stages in perception, indeterminate (*nirvikalpa*) and determinate (*savikalpa*). But the explanation of these offered by it is different from that of the other system. Indeterminate perception, here, is not the perception of detached elements which are synthesized at the level of determinate perception. Perception at first is a vague awareness which later becomes distinct and clear through analysis, synthesis and interpretation. So, the Sāṅkhya does not favour the mosaic theory of knowledge. According to it, knowledge

is to be compared to organic growth from the simple to the complex, from the implicit to the explicit.

The perceptual process is described thus: The senses perceive objects indeterminately and bring such perceptions to the mind (*manas*), which synthesizes them and takes them to egoity (*ahankāra*). Egoity refers the percepts to the self which commissions the intellect (*buddhi*) to ascertain their nature. The procedure is analogous to the system of revenue collection. The village-accountant collects the taxes from the landholders and remits them to the mayor, who in his turn sends them to the governor. It is the function of the governor to see to it that the collected taxes reach the king's treasury.

In all knowing the intellect (*buddhi*) plays a very important part. It assumes the form of the object through a process of modification which is called *vṛtti*. It is this modification which is a representation of the object that is directly perceived. Even in mediate cognition, as in inference, the intellect has to assume the form of the object. Otherwise knowledge is impossible. Although the Sāṅkhya is a realistic school, like the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika, and believes in the correspondence-theory of truth, its distinctive feature lies in the introduction of a psychic medium (*vṛtti*) as the connecting link between the knower and the known. The relation between the knowing subject and the known object is not a direct one; it is always through an idea (subject→idea→object.)

The central doctrine of the Sāṅkhya is that there are two fundamental categories constitutive of reality,

viz., *puruṣa* and *prakṛti*, spirit and matter. *Puruṣa* is pure consciousness that is changeless and multiple; *prakṛti* is the prius of creation which is inert and one. The two are diametrically opposed to each other. Equating spirit with mind (in the Western sense of the term), we may define spirit and matter as follows: What is mind? No matter. What is matter? Never mind. Though *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* are antithetical to each other, the evolution of the world takes place because of co-operation between the two. We shall first consider the nature of *prakṛti* and its evolution, and then go on to discuss the doctrine of *puruṣa*.

Prakṛti: This is the first cause of the universe consisting of physical things and psychical factors. The following proofs are offered for postulating such a cause: (1) Particular objects are limited and dependent. The universe which consists of them cannot be their product. There must be an unlimited and independent cause which is *prakṛti*. (2) Pleasure, pain and indifference are the common characteristics of things. This fact shows that there is a common source whose constituents have these characteristics. That source is *prakṛti*. (3) All effects arise from the activity of some cause. The activity which is responsible for world-evolution must belong to the primal cause which is *prakṛti*. (4) An effect cannot be its own cause. There must be one root-cause for all the effects put together. That is *prakṛti*. (5) The unity of the universe points to a single cause which is *prakṛti*.

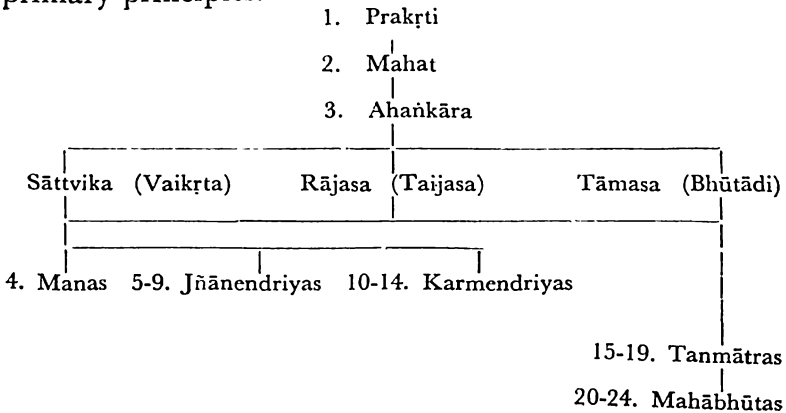
Sattva, *rajas* and *tamas*, in their state of equilibrium, constitute *prakṛti*. They are called *guṇas*, not in the

sense of qualities, but in the sense of constituents. *Sattva* is that which makes for whatever is fine and light; *tamas* is responsible for all that is coarse and heavy; and *rajas* makes for activity. As one of the proofs stated, pleasure, pain and indifference constitute the common characteristics of things. From this we infer that the first cause, *prakṛti*, must have as its components *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. When those three are of equal force, evolution (*śṛṣṭi*) does not take place. It is only when their balance is upset that the process of evolution begins. But, nevertheless, even when there is no evolution, there is transformation. Only, there, *viz.* in the state of dissolution (*pralaya*), each of the *guṇas* reproduces itself without giving rise to unlike forms. This latter phenomenon happens when there occurs imbalance among the *guṇas*.

The Sāṅkhya theory of causation is quite opposed to that of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theory. It is called *satkārya-vāda* (doctrine of existent effect) and *pariṇāmavāda* (doctrine of transformation). Production is only the manifestation of what is already in the cause in a latent form. As between cause and effect, there is no difference in content; there is only a difference of form. Causation is transformation. Applying this theory to *prakṛti*, it is maintained that the universe is but a transformation of primal matter. *Śṛṣṭi* is evolution of the world from *prakṛti*, and *pralaya* is its dissolution therein. These two alternate. But nothing is ever newly produced or utterly destroyed.

The process of evolution starts, as we said, when the equilibrium of the *guṇas* is disturbed. At first,

sattva is in a state of dominance, and the first evolute, *mahat* emerges. *Mahat* is the seed of the world. In its psychical aspect, it is called *buddhi* or intellect. From *mahat*, *ahañkāra* which is the principle of individuation or egoity evolves. It is that which makes for the 'I'-sense. After this the evolutionary course bifurcates into a purely psychical branch and a physical branch. In the former, the dominant *guṇa* is *sattva*; in the latter, *tamas*. *Rajas* provides the dynamism and force for both. The psychical evolutes are: *manas* (mind), the five *jñānendriyas*, viz., the senses of smell, taste, sight, touch and hearing, and the five *karmendriyas*, viz., the senses of speech, prehension, movement, excretion and reproduction. On the physical branch there first appear the subtle essences called *tanmātras*, the essences of smell, taste, colour, touch and sound. From these evolve the gross elements (*mahābhūtas*), earth, water, fire, air and ether. Here the primary evolution stops. The finite things of the world are produced out of the primary principles.



The twenty-four principles in the Sāṅkhya evolutionary scheme are known as *tattvas*. Of these, *prakṛti* is evolvent alone and not evolute; *mahat*, *ahañkāra* and the five *tanmātras* are both evolvents and evolutes; and the rest, *viz.*, *manas*, the cognitive and conative sense-organs, and the gross elements are evolutes only. The twenty-fifth principle which is *puruṣa* is neither evolvent nor evolute.

There is not much in common between the Sāṅkhya theory of evolution and the biological evolution as a scientific concept. In the Sāṅkhya, evolution does not stand for the growth of an indefinite incoherent homogeneity into a definite coherent heterogeneity. *Prakṛti* has no parity with the amoeba. And also, the evolution of *prakṛti* has a purpose, though unconscious. The purpose is to afford enjoyment to *puruṣa* in this world, and eventually to release it from bondage. Just as the milk that flows through the udders of the cow is for the benefit of the calf, so, it is said, is the evolution of the *tattvas* for the sake of the *puruṣa*.

Several analogies, though unsound, are given for explaining how the evolution takes place with the co-operation of the *puruṣa* and how it is for the *puruṣa's* sake. Just as in the proximity of a magnet the iron-filings begin to move, so in the presence of the *puruṣa*, *prakṛti* begins to evolve. The association of the two is also compared to that of a lame man and a blind one, which enables them to reach their destination. As a dancer retires behind the stage after having exhibited herself to the audience, so does *prakṛti* cease to charm the *puruṣa* after the purpose of evolution has been fulfilled.

Puruṣa: Spirit, we have seen, is of the nature of pure consciousness. As everything is sought to be proved in this system, so is the existence of *puruṣa*. (1) *Prakṛti* and its evolution are composite in character. Whatever is composite serves the purpose of a being other than itself. That being is spirit. (2) Since *prakṛti* and its evolutes subservc spirit, the latter cannot be a composite of the three *guṇas*. That is, it cannot be an object of experience. (3) All empirical knowledge must have a foundation. That is *puruṣa*. (4) *Prakṛti* cannot experience its evolutes. There must be an intelligent enjoyer of these. That enjoyer is spirit. (5) The desire for release implies the existence of one who can strive for and obtain release. That is *puruṣa*.

On the ground that all are not born at the same time, all do not die together, etc., the Sāṅkhya postulates a plurality of *puruṣas*. But these arguments can only show that there are many empirical souls, and not that the pure self which is consciousness is many.

In fact, there is no birth, death, etc., for *puruṣa*—no bondage and release too. All empirical usage is with regard to the reflection of the *puruṣa* in the psychical evolutes, *buddhi*, *ahankāra* and *manas*. But the *puruṣa* wrongly identifies itself with its reflection and imagines that it is the experient, agent, etc. This is bondage born of ignorance (*avidyā*) or non-discrimination (*aviveka*) between spirit and non-spirit. The way to freedom from bondage is true knowledge. When the self or spirit knows that it has nothing to do with *prakṛti*, it is liberated. It realizes its aloneness or aloofness (*kaivalya*) from *prakṛti*. It becomes completely freed

from all forms of pain. Although there is no positive pleasure in the state of release, for pleasure is the fruit of *sattva-guṇa*, there is undisturbable peace for the spirit which has regained its nature as pure consciousness. Release is attainable here in this very life. This is called *jīvan-mukti*. The body may, however, continue for sometime on account of *prārabdha*, viz., that part of the past *karma* which is responsible for the present body. When the *prārabdha* is exhausted, the self is liberated from the body too (*videha-mukti*).

The details of the discipline to be followed for attaining release are not given in the Sāṅkhya system. They are to be learnt from the Yoga with which the Sāṅkhya is closely related.

5

Yoga

The Yoga has no metaphysic of its own. It accepts the Sāṅkhya philosophy, and formulates a method whereby the goal of man, as conceived in that system, could be gained. What has to be done is to isolate the *puruṣa* from *prakṛti*; and this isolation is to be accomplished by a process of mind-control. It is in the mind that the *puruṣa* is reflected; and all the trouble that the *puruṣa* goes through is because of the fact that it identifies itself with its reflection in the mind. If the mind could be stilled and emptied, and if there is no more reflection in it, the *puruṣa* will realize its nature

and escape from the snares of *prakṛti*. The method by which this becomes possible is *yoga*.

Yoga as a method of mind-control is known in India from very ancient times. In the *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, the *yoga*-technique of controlling the mind is taught. The basic text of the classical *Yoga*, however, is the *Yoga-sūtra* of Patañjali (c. 5th century A.D.). There are commentaries on the *Sūtra* by Vyāsa (A.D. 500) and King Bhoja (A.D. 1000). The commentary of Vyāsa has glosses by Vācaspati Miśra and Vijñāna Bhikṣu.

The most important concept in the *Yoga* system is that of *citta*, loosely rendered as 'mind'. *Citta* is the same as the Sāṅkhya *mahat* or *buddhi*. It is the first product of *prakṛti*; and in it is the *puruṣa* reflected. Receiving the reflection of *puruṣa*, the *citta* becomes conscious, and functions in various ways. By itself the *citta* is all-pervading, and is called the *kāraṇa-citta* (the cause-mind). But, when it is in association with a body, it contracts or expands as the case may be, and is called *kārya-citta* (the effect-mind). The object of *yoga* is to make the *citta* assume its original, pure unmodified status, and thus release the *puruṣa* from its travail.

It is through the functionings of the *citta* that the *puruṣa* acts, enjoys and suffers. The functionings produce also latent tendencies which, in turn, give rise to other tendencies; and thus the cycle of *samsāra* revolves. Tossed by the surge of desires and passions, the individual ego is restless and knows no peace; it is subject to the five afflictions of *avidyā* (ignorance), *asmitā* (erroneous identification of the self with the mind, body,

etc.), *rāga* (attachment), *dveṣa* (aversion), and *abhiniveśa* (the instinctive clinging to life and dread of death). In order to free the self from the stranglehold of *prakṛti*, the modifications of the mind must be quelled. The modifications are *pramāṇa* (valid knowledge), *viparyaya* (false knowledge), *vikalpa* (verbal knowledge), *nidrā* (sleep and dream), and *smṛti* (memory). These must be abolished by removing the afflictions.

How are the afflictions to be removed and the mental modifications suppressed? Through continued endeavour (*abhyāsa*) and dispassion (*vairāgya*). It is only by long practice that a person acquires the habit of detachment which will impart to him the discriminative knowledge of the self and the not-self. The details of this practice are set forth in the form of eight steps which are called the limbs of *yoga* (*aṣṭāṅga-yoga*). The eight steps are: *yama* (abstentions), *niyama* (observances), *āsana* (posture), *prāṇāyāma* (control of breath), *pratyāhāra* (withdrawal of senses from their objects), *dhāraṇā* (fixed attention), *dhyāna* (meditation), and *samādhi* (concentration).

The first two, *yama* and *niyama*, constitute the ethical basis of *yoga*, and stand for certain essential negative and positive virtues, respectively. *Yama* consists of five rules: *ahimsā* (non-injury), *satya* (truth), *asteya* (non-stealing), *brahmacarya* (celibacy), and *aparigraha* (disowning of possessions). These are the great rules (*mahāvṛata*); they are not conditioned by anything such as caste, place, time or circumstance. Under *niyama* there are five regulations: *śauca* (purity), *santoṣa* (contentment), *tapas* (austerity), *svādhyāya* (study), and

īśvara-praṇidhāna (devotion to God). The aspirant for *yoga* must first cultivate *yama* and *niyama*. Ethical living is the preparing ground for *yoga*. It is interesting to note that under the scheme of *yama* and *niyama* insistence is laid on a harmonious relation between the individual and society, between the human and the rest of the living world, and between man and God. The Yoga ethics—in fact, all Hindu ethics—is universalistic ethics, and includes religion. The five *yamas* and the five *niyamas* together constitute all that is necessary for a perfect moral and religious life. They are, so to say, the ten commandments of Yoga.

The third, fourth, and fifth members of *yoga*, viz., *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, and *pratyāhāra*, govern respectively the disciplining of body, vital-force, and senses, and are accessory to mind-control. *Āsana* means posture of the body. The later writers on Yoga give the names of several *āsanas* and describe them. The author of the *Yoga-sūtra* merely defines *āsana* as that which is stable and conducive to happiness. The idea is that the body must be disciplined to assume a posture which is helpful for concentration. It is a matter of common experience that when the mind is concentrated, the body becomes fixed and relaxed. At the stage of *yoga* called *āsana* one adopts the reverse process of making the body fixed and relaxed and thus seeks to calm the mind. The same is true of the next stage which is *prāṇāyāma*. Only, here, the process of discipline is applied to the function of breathing. The breathing of a person whose mind is deeply absorbed in something is regular and slow. If the breathing is made regular and slow, and is even

stopped for sometime, it will make the controlling of mind easy. *Prāṇāyāma* is the process of regulating and restraining the function of breathing. In-breathing is called *pūraka*; out-breathing *recaka*; and stopping the breath *kumbhaka*. The practice of *prāṇāyāma* aims at making the span of *pūraka* and *recaka* longer, as also the period of *kumbhaka*. 'Suspended animation' is not an end in itself; it is useful only in so far as it aids concentration, and must be practised without the risk of asphyxiation. *Prāṇāyāma*, as also the other aspects of *yoga*, should be learnt from a competent guide. *Pratyāhāra* is calling back the senses from their respective objects. Perfect sense-detachment can come about only when the mind is under complete control. But the discipline of *pratyāhāra* reverses the process, as do the earlier two disciplines. Its purpose is to tame the mind through taming the senses.

The last three limbs of *yoga*, viz. *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna*, and *samādhi* mark the different stages of concentration. It is they that constitute *yoga* proper. Together they are called constraint (*samyama*). *Dhāraṇā* is fixing the mind to some spot. The roving mind is tied first to an object, in order that it may become steady and unmoving. *Dhyāna* is directing towards that object an even current of thought undisturbed by others. *samādhi* is the resultant state of mind. Here the concentration is so intense that the object occupies all the attention and the mind becomes abstract. The practice of *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna*, and *samādhi* in respect of an object, external or internal, generates supernormal powers (*vibhūtis*) or perfections (*siddhis*), such as telepathy,

precognition, etc. But the *Yoga-sūtra* issues the warning that one should not become a victim of these manifestations. *Samādhi* is the culmination of *yoga*, and not the supernormal powers. There are two forms of *samādhi*, a lower and a higher. The lower form is called *samprajñāta-samādhi* where the mind continues to function, though it is completely absorbed in the contemplation of a particular object. In the higher form which is known as *asamprajñāta-samādhi*, objective consciousness also disappears, and the mind ceases to function. Being concentrated on the self, the mind vanishes; and the self or spirit is left alone to enjoy its *kaivalya*, which is the ultimate goal, according to the Sāṅkhya-Yoga system.

The Yoga differs from the Sāṅkhya on only one point. While the Sāṅkhya accords no place to God, the Yoga believes in a God. We have already seen that devotion to God (*īśvara-praṇidhāna*) is one of the virtues which the student of *yoga* must cultivate. Patañjali prescribes God as one of the objects for concentration. God in his system is the supreme *puruṣa*, who is untouched by the afflictions and their brood. In him is reached the upper limit of knowledge; he is omniscient. He is the first preceptor of *yoga*, as he is not conditioned by time. The name by which he is known is the sound-symbol 'Om'.

Although in the classical age Yoga came to be associated with Sāṅkhya, the technique of mind-control is a common heritage of all systems of philosophy. The term *yoga* is derived from *yuj* to join, and is cognate with the word *yoke*. It means, 'the way to union with the ultimate reality' in several schools of thought. In

the Sāṅkhya-Yoga, however, it stands for *vi-yoga* or separation—separation of the *puruṣa* from *prakṛti*.

6

Pūrva-mīmāṃsā

The systems of philosophy we have so far discussed, though they accept the authority of the Veda and are therefore called *āstika*, do not depend for their doctrines on the teachings of the Veda. The systems that are Vedic in the strict sense of the term are what we have now to study—*viz.* *Pūrva-mīmāṃsā* and *Uttara-mīmāṃsā*. As their names signify, these two schools seek to investigate the doctrines taught in the earlier (*pūrva*) and later (*uttara*) sections of the Veda respectively. For *Pūrva-mīmāṃsā*, the most important part of the Veda is *Brāhmaṇa*; for *Uttara-mīmāṃsā*, it is *Upaniṣad*. Although these two systems follow faithfully, according to their own lights, the texts of the Veda, they have a title to be called philosophies because of the method they adopt which is rational investigation or logical inquiry (*mīmāṃsā*).

As *Uttara-mīmāṃsā* is known by its more familiar name, *Vedānta*, *Pūrva-mīmāṃsā* is called, for the sake of brevity, *Mīmāṃsā*. The main objective of *Mīmāṃsā* is to establish the authority of the Veda, and make out that the Veda teaches ritual. Hence, this system is also known as *Karma-mīmāṃsā*. As for its philosophical position, it is more or less similar to the pluralistic realism of the *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika*.

The history of Vedic interpretation is as old as the Veda itself. The *Brāhmaṇas* themselves are liturgical manuals seeking to rationalize the rituals. The chief purpose of the *Śrauta-sūtras* is to inquire into the sacrifices. The first systematic work on Mīmāṃsā, however, is that of Jaimini which is called the *Mīmāṃsā-sūtra* (c. 400 B.C.). The earliest extant commentary on the *Sūtra* is Śabarāsvāmin's *Bhāṣya* (c. A.D. 200). This commentary is explained in two ways—(1) by Prabhākara (c. A.D. 650), and (2) by Kumārila Bhaṭṭa (c. A.D. 700). The two Mīmāṃsā schools, Prābhākara and Bhāṭṭa, are named after these two interpreters. Prabhākara's work is known as *Bṛhatī*. Kumārila's explanation of Śabara's *Bhāṣya* is in three parts which are called *Śloka-vārtika*, *Tantra-vārtika*, and *Ṭup-ṭikā*. There are several glosses and texts belonging to these two schools. A not-so-well-known school is that of Murāri Miśra which is described as the 'third path'. There are several useful manuals on Mīmāṃsā. Some of these are Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa and Nārāyaṇa Paṇḍita's *Mānameyodaya*, Āpadeva's *Mīmāṃsā-nyāya-prakāśa*, and Laugākṣibhāskara's *Arthasaṅgraha*.

The Bhāṭṭa and Prābhākara schools of Mīmāṃsā differ between themselves on certain minor doctrinal details. On the fundamentals, however, they are agreed. The *pramāṇas*, according to the Bhāṭṭa school, are six: perception (*pratyakṣa*), inference (*anumāna*), comparison (*upamāna*), testimony (*śabda*), presumption (*arthāpatti*), and non-cognition (*anupalabdhi*). The first two of these *pramāṇas* should be understood in a way, almost similar to that of the Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika. The Mīmāṃsaka

explanation of comparison is different from that of the Naiyāyika. According to the latter, as we have seen already, the purpose of comparison is to reveal the denotation of a word. According to the Mīmāṃsā account, from the similarity of A to B, we come to know of the similarity of B to A. The townsman who goes to the forest and sees the *gavaya* remembers what the forester had told him, *viz.* that the *gavaya* is similar to the cow; from this he draws the conclusion that the cow is similar to the *gavaya*. As testimony (*śabda*) is the most important *pramāṇa* in the Mīmāṃsā system, we shall study it separately in some detail. Pre-sumption (*arthāpatti*) is the postulation of something which explains a fact otherwise inexplicable. If someone who is known to be alive is not at home, we presume that he has gone out. Non-cognition (*anupalabdhi*) is the *pramāṇa* for non-existence. The existence of a thing is known through perception, etc.; its non-existence is known through non-cognition. The Prābhākaras do not accept non-cognition as a *pramāṇa*. The number of *pramāṇas*, according to them, is only five. There is no need, they say, for recognizing non-cognition because what is called non-existence has no reality apart from the existence of a thing. The non-existence of a thing is the existence of another.

The supreme *pramāṇa* for the Mīmāṃsaka is *śabda* (testimony). The Veda which constitutes the highest testimony is not a human production (*apauruṣeya*), and is eternal (*nitya*). The Veda is not a human production because no man is mentioned as its author. Not only is the Veda not a human production; it is not also a

composition of God. There is no need to postulate a God as the author of the Veda, for the Veda is eternal.

The eternality of the Veda is sought to be established on the strength of a certain philological theory. The Mīmāṃsaka believes that the relation between a word and its meaning is natural and therefore eternal. The letters which constitute a word are partless (*niravayava*), omnipresent (*sarvagata*), and eternal (*nitya*). A letter (*varṇa*) is an articulate sound, and should be distinguished from the mode of utterance (*dhvani*). The sound *a*, for instance, may be uttered in several tones and in many ways, but yet it is the same sound. A word is only an aggregate of letters. The meanings that words express are universal. The words are eternal and the universals are eternal; therefore, the relation between them is also eternal.

With this much it cannot be proved that the Veda is eternal. If the eternality of the letters and words and of their relation to things were the ground for holding that the Veda is eternal, then we must say that all literary works are eternal. That, however, is not the teaching of Mīmāṃsā. The permanence of words provides only a negative argument. Just because the Veda consists of words, it need not be held that the Veda is non-eternal. The reason why the Veda alone is considered to be eternal, and not the other literary works, is that the particular order (*ānupūrvī*) in which words occur in the Veda is permanent. The words were not arranged by any agent, human or divine.

The Veda is self-revealed and self-valid. In fact, all knowledge is self-valid (*svataḥ prāmānya*). What is

meant by the self-validity of knowledge is that truth (*pramā*) is intrinsic to knowledge (*jñāna*). The causes that account for the rise of knowledge yield truth also. And, the means by which we know knowledge is adequate for knowing truth as well. Thus all knowledge is presumably valid. It is only where, in a particular case, knowledge fails to be valid that we seek for an explanation. So, invalidity or error is extrinsic.

On the theory that knowledge is self-valid, it can be readily seen that the Veda has intrinsic validity. But, what then is the distinction of the Veda? While the other types of knowledge may sometimes fail to be valid on account of some defect in their source, the Veda is never invalid. The defectiveness of source cannot be alleged in the case of the Veda, because the Veda has no source. It has already been shown that the Veda is self-existent and self-established. Nor may it be urged that there is a possibility of the Veda coming into conflict with the other *pramāṇas* like perception; for while the other *pramāṇas* have the sensible world as their sphere, the Veda relates to what is super-sensible. It may be asked: is not the Veda vitiated because of self-discrepancy? The reply is that there is no self-discrepancy whatsoever in the Veda. Only, we must understand the meaning of the Veda aright. In fact, the chief aim of Mīmāṃsā is to frame rules of interpretation which will help in unravelling the true purport of the Veda.

What is the purport of the Veda? The Mīmāṃsā view is that the Veda teaches *dharma* (religious duty). What is *dharma*? It is what is enjoined in the Veda

(*codanā-laksāṇo 'rthah*). Vedic command is in the form of both do's and don'ts. The positive command is called *vidhi*, and the negative command *niṣedha*. The commands of the Veda should not be mistaken for those of ordinary morality. It is true that ordinary morality is required for a man before he gains competence to perform the rituals enjoined in the Veda. But the rituals themselves belong to the supernatural order. *Dharma*, therefore, is religious duty. By performing it, what one acquires is uncommon merit. The aim of the Veda is to impel man to perform *dharmā*.

To be sure, there are in the Veda passages which are non-injunctive in character—passages such as those in the Upaniṣads discussing the nature of the self. Even in the ritual-sections of the Veda there are assertive statements regarding the deities and the accessories of sacrifice. But these texts have no independent purport, according to Mīmāṃsā. They are to be construed in conjunction with some injunction or other. If the Veda were to stop with talking about existent entities (*siddha*) it would be of no use at all. To describe what already exists is not the purpose of the Veda; its purpose is to prescribe what-is-to-be-accomplished (*bhāvyā*).

We have seen that there are both positive and negative commands in the Veda. The positive commands are of various kinds: (1) There are some which prescribe obligatory duties (*nitya-karma*). 'Offer twilight prayers everyday' is one such command. Another is: 'Perform the *Agnihotra* as long as you live'. Obedience to such commands does not depend upon the option of the individual. He who is eligible to perform them ought to

perform them unconditionally. (2) The second kind of command relates to occasioned rites (*naimittika-karma*). These are not daily duties, but rituals which should be observed on occasions, as, for instance, the ceremonial bath during the eclipses. These are also obligatory. (3) The third variety of Vedic injunctions consists of those which prescribe optional rites (*kāmya-karma*), e.g. 'Let him who desires heaven perform the *Jyotiṣṭoma* sacrifice'. The performance of the *Jyotiṣṭoma* is not obligatory. If a person desires heavenly enjoyment, he has to offer this sacrifice; otherwise not. The injunctions of obligatory and occasioned rites are categorical imperatives; those which are concerned with optional rites are hypothetical imperatives. The performance of the first two varieties of rites does not lead to any merit; but their non-performance will result in demerit. If the optional rites are not performed, there is no demerit; but if they are performed, there accrues merit.

An interesting question at this stage is this: a sacrifice is a set of actions; an action comes to an end as soon as it is performed; the result of a sacrifice is generally to be reaped not immediately after its performance, but at a future date; especially, what is regarded as the supreme end of all sacrifices, heaven, can be gained only after death; how, then, can a sacrifice which comes to an end here and now produce a result elsewhere and hereafter? The solution to this problem is to be found in the conception of what is called *apūrva* (unseen potency). A sacrifice, as soon as it is performed, generates an unseen potency in the soul of the sacrificer, which endures till the appropriate reward is reaped. It

is the *apūrva*, then, that bridges the time-gulf between a sacrifice and its fruit.

The two schools of Mīmāṃsā differ on the question as to what prompts a man to obey the commands of the Veda. The Bhāṭṭa view is that the motive for carrying out Vedic commands is provided by the desire that is in man for acquiring pleasure and avoiding pain. The natural desire for pleasure is taken advantage of by the Veda, and it tells man: 'Do this, and you will achieve your end'. So, the knowledge that the performance of an action is the means to attain what he desires (*iṣṭa-sādhanatā-jñāna*) is what makes a man perform that action. This is true in the case of Vedic sacrifices also. The Prābhākara does not agree with this view. He argues that the Veda is not so impotent as to depend on human will or desire for its fulfilment. The mandate of the Veda is imperious. It is only reverence for the mandate that should serve as the motive for obeying it. The knowledge that 'this duty is to be done by me' (*kāryatā-jñāna*) is the sole motive for obedience to Vedic commands. As regards the necessity for obeying the Veda, however, there is no difference of opinion between the two schools.

It is quite possible that the ultimate aim of man, according to Mīmāṃsā in the early stages of its development, was *svarga* (heaven). But later on, the Mīmāṃsakas gave up this view and fell in line with the other systems in holding *mokṣa* (release) to be the final human goal. Even after this transformation, they maintained that the performance of Vedic ritual was the only way to attain release. This is what they teach: *mokṣa* is the

pure state of the self. In that state there is neither merit nor demerit for the soul. How can this be achieved? By performing *nitya-karmas* and by refraining from *niṣiddha-karmas* (prohibited deeds), one avoids demerit; and by not performing *kāmya-karmas*, one does not acquire merit. So, even for obtaining release one should engage one-self in *nitya-karmas*. It is only those commands that are hypothetical in nature that do not apply to the seeker after release. He cannot escape his obligations. It is by fulfilling them that he becomes pure and perfect and gets liberated from *samsāra*.

In his anxiety to preserve the independence and integrity of the Veda, the Mīmāṃsaka assigns no place to God in his system. It is rather strange that the most orthodox of systems should turn out to be atheistic. There is no need to postulate a God, as we have noted already, as the author of the Veda. There is no need either to assume a creator of the universe; for, according to Mīmāṃsā, there is neither creation nor dissolution of the universe as a whole. At no time was the world otherwise than what it is now (*na kadācit anīdṛṣam jagat*). Not only is the idea of God unnecessary in the Mīmāṃsā system; even the deities for whom sacrifices are offered sink into insignificance. The important thing is the performance of sacrifice; whether there are deities or not is a matter of little consequence. When a sacrificer offers the sacrificial material saying ‘This is for Indra, *svāhā*’ (*indrāya svāhā*), he need not worry himself over the question whether there is such a being called Indra or not. The gods are only grammatical datives, mere adjuncts of sacrifice.

The element of value in the Mīmāṃsā system is that it has formulated rules of Vedic interpretation. Just as grammar is necessary for understanding language and literature, so is semantics. In so far as Mīmāṃsā inquires into the meaning of meaning, it has philosophical value. The technique of inquiry devised by Mīmāṃsā is applied by Vedānta in its task of interpreting the Vedic teaching. Only, the conclusion at which the Vedānta arrives is very different.

7

Vedānta

‘Vedānta’ means the end of Veda (*Veda+anta*). The word *anta*, as the English word *end*, means both termination and aim. The Upaniṣads are called Vedānta because they are mostly the concluding portions of the Veda, and because the purport of the Veda is to be found in them. The systems of philosophy which regard the Upaniṣads as their fundamental texts are also known as Vedānta.

While both Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta owe allegiance to the Veda and consider the Veda to be the supreme *pramāṇa*, the difference between them is with regard to the question: which portion of the Veda is primary? While Mīmāṃsā looks for the purport of the Veda in the ritual-sections, Vedānta finds it in the knowledge-sections. As *Brahman* is the ultimate reality taught in the Upaniṣads which constitute the knowledge-sections of the Veda, Vedānta is called *Brahma-mīmāṃsā*. As

Vedānta also deals with the nature of the embodied soul, it is styled *Śārīraka-mīmāṃsā*.

The Upaniṣads are not systematic treatises. The task of systematizing their teachings was undertaken by Bādarāyaṇa in his *Vedānta-sūtra* (c. 400 B.C.). Bādarāyaṇa whom tradition identifies with Vyāsa, was by no means the first to weave a system out of the Upaniṣadic texts. He himself mentions the names of several teachers who preceded him. But his is the earliest work on Vedānta that has come down to us. The *Bhagavad-gītā* refers to the *Brahma-sūtra* which is the same as the *Vedānta-sūtra*. Pāṇini, the grammarian, calls it by the name *Bhikṣu-sūtra*.

The *Vedānta-sūtra* is divided into four chapters. In the first, it is shown that *Brahman* is the ultimate reality, and that all the Vedic texts have *Brahman* for purport. In the second, objections raised by critics are met and the untenability of non-Vedāntic theories is exhibited. In the third, the means for attaining *Brahman* are taught. And, in the fourth, the fruit of *Brahman*-knowledge is discussed. Thus it will be seen that there is a systematic procedure adopted by the author of the *Vedānta-sūtra* in his exposition of Vedānta. But, since the work consists of aphorisms which are very cryptic, it is difficult to understand it without the aid of a commentary. Each school of Vedānta has interpreted it in its own way; and each commentary has a series of sub-commentaries. Each school maintains that it is faithful to the text. Besides the *Vedānta-sūtra*, the Upaniṣads and the *Bhagavad-gītā* are regarded as the basic authorities by all the Vedāntic schools. These three constitute the triple

foundation (*prasthāna-traya*) of Vedānta. All the classical commentators seek to show that these three basic texts teach a consistent philosophy.

8

Advaita

The greatest and the best known system ⁴ of Vedānta is Advaita. According to Advaita, nothing is real apart from the absolute spirit which is referred to by such terms as *Brahman* and *Ātman*. The fundamental teaching of Advaita is, therefore, the non-dualism of spirit. Śaṅkara puts the entire philosophy of Advaita in half a verse where he says: *Brahman* is real: the world is an illusory appearance; the individual soul (*jīva*) is *Brahman* alone, not other. The non-duality of *Brahman*, the non-reality of the world, and the non-difference of the soul from *Brahman*—these constitute the teaching of Advaita.

Although Śaṅkara (A.D. 788-820) was the first great consolidator of Advaita, he was not the first to teach Advaita. Among the seers of the Upaniṣads there were many, such as Yājñavalkya and Uddālaka, who held firmly to the doctrine of the non-dual spirit. It may well be said that all later Advaita writings are but elabora-

⁴ The word 'system' is used here in a loose sense. Strictly speaking, Advaita is not a system in the sense of a set of 'closed' doctrines. Its primary aim is to break through all limited views of reality and lead the aspirant to the plenary experience of the Absolute which is limitless.

tions of Yājñavalkya's teaching 'this self is *Brahman*' (*ayam ātmā brahma*),⁵ and Uddālaka's 'that thou art' (*tat tvam asi*).⁶ A great preceptor of Advaita, whom Śaṅkara honours as his *parama-guru*, was Gauḍapāda. His work, the *Māṇḍūkya-kārikā*, may be regarded as the first available systematic manual on Advaita. Using the small, but important, *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* as the basic text, Gauḍapāda expounds the doctrine of the non-dual self through an analysis of the three states of experience, waking, dreaming, and deep sleep, exhibits the illusory nature of the world through several arguments, and establishes the supreme truth of non-duality which is un-originated, eternal, self-luminous bliss.⁷

The greatest and the most effective Advaita teacher was, of course, Śaṅkara. It may truly be said that he marks the beginning of the golden age of Vedānta—an age which owed so much to his life-mission and work. His commentaries on the Upaniṣads, the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and the *Vedānta-sūtra* are marvels in metaphysical writing. They are clear (*prasanna*) and yet deep (*gambhīra*), penetrating as well as broad-based. Not only are the followers of Śaṅkara indebted to him, but also those teachers of Vedānta who differed from him. He set the model for subsequent metaphysical thinking, and gave a new direction to the course of philosophical history in India. This he was able to do because of a conviction born of the highest experience, as is

⁵ *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, II, v, 19.

⁶ *Chāndogya*, VI, viii, 7.

⁷ See the present writer's *Gauḍapāda: A Study in Early Advaita* (University of Madras, Third Edn., 1960).

evidenced by the only reference—even that, indirect—he makes to his own realization towards the end of his *Sūtra-bhāṣya*. The subject he discusses here is *jīvan-mukti* (liberation while being embodied). In this context, he asks, ‘How can one contest the heart-felt cognition of another as possessing *Brahman*-knowledge, even though bearing a body?’⁸ Śaṅkara has poured forth, for the benefit of posterity, great truths from the depths of his realization, not only in his commentaries but also in other independent works, such as the *Upadeśasāhasrī* and the *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*.

Some of Śaṅkara’s immediate disciples wrote monumental works interpreting the teachings of their master. Sureśvara has given us, among other texts, *Naiṣkarmya-siddhi*, *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-vārtika*, and *Taittirīya-vārtika*. Padmapāda, another disciple, is the author of *Pañcapādikā*. It is from this work that the *Vivaraṇa* school of Advaita takes its origin. Prakāśātman (thirteenth century A.D.) wrote *Pañcapādikā-vivaraṇa*, which is a commentary on Padmapāda’s *Pañcapādikā*. Bhāratūrti-vidyāraṇya (fourteenth century A.D.) summarizes the tenets of the *Vivaraṇa* school in his *Vivaraṇa-prameya-saṅgraha*. The other most important school of Advaita takes its name after the *Bhāmatī* which is a commentary written on Śaṅkara’s *Sūtra-bhāṣya* by Vācaspati (ninth century A.D.). Vācaspati is, to a considerable extent, influenced by the teachings of Maṇḍana Miśra, the author of *Brahma-siddhi*, who was a senior contemporary of Śaṅkara. Among the dialectical works on Advaita

⁸ IV, i, 15. *katham hy ekasya sva-hṛdayapratyayam brahma-vedanam deha-dhāraṇam ca apareṇa pratikṣeptum śakyeta?*

may be mentioned Śrīharṣa's *Khaṇḍana-khaṇḍa-khāḍya* (twelfth century), Citsukha's *Tattvapradīpikā* (thirteenth century), and Madhusūdana's *Advaita-siddhi* (fifteenth century). Appayya Dīkṣita (sixteenth century) has given a digest of the different sub-schools of Advaita in his *Siddhānta-leśa-saṅgraha*. There are several simple manuals on Advaita, some of which are the *Pañcadaśī* of Vidyāraṇya, the *Vedānta-sāra* of Sadānanda (A.D. 1550), and the *Vedānta-paribhāṣā* of Dharmarājadhvarīndra (sixteenth century).

In empirical matters, Advaita follows the way of the Bhāṭṭas. The six *pramāṇas* recognized by the Bhāṭṭa school are admitted here also. Of the *pramāṇas*, the testimony of the Veda is the most important. But while the purport of the Veda is ritual (*karma*) according to the Mīmāṃsā school, it is the Absolute (*Brahman*) according to Advaita-Vedānta. Also, Advaita does not believe in any dogmatic idolatry of Scripture. As the author of *Bhāmatī* puts it, only purportful Scripture is authoritative. And, in determining the purport, reasoning has to play its part. That which is accepted or believed in without proper inquiry, observes Śaṅkara, prevents one from gaining the final good and leads to evil consequences.⁹ The ultimate court of appeal is the plenary experience (*anubhava*). Scripture is valid because it reveals the nature of that experience. The end or goal of Scriptural inquiry, says Śaṅkara, is experience.¹⁰

No one can question the possibility of knowledge, for even to question it is to affirm it. The self, according

⁹ *Sūtra-bhāṣya*, I, i, 1.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, II, i, 4.

to Advaita, is of the very nature of knowledge. It is *svarūpa-jñāna* (self-awareness), *cin-mātra* (pure consciousness). In all empirical knowing, however, there is required, besides self-awareness, the functioning of the mind. As in the Sāṅkhya system, it is admitted in Advaita that the mind apprehends an object by reaching it through a mode (*vṛtti*) of itself and assuming the form of the object. The mind and its modes, however, are inert and unintelligent. It is as illumined by the self which is pure consciousness that the mind reveals objects.

Empirical knowledge is, strictly speaking, not knowledge. That knowledge alone is true, which is uncontradicted in all the three times. Empirical knowledge is not so; hence, its content, the world, is illusory, and it itself is, in fact, a mode of *avidyā*, nescience. *Avidyā* hides the true and projects the untrue. It ought not to be the case that there is a mix-up of the true and the untrue, the self and the not-self. Between what are opposed to each other, like light and darkness (*tamaḥ-prakāśavat viruddha-svabhāvayoḥ*), there should be no confusion. Yet, somehow—we cannot account for it, and that is exactly what the doctrine of *māyā* says—coupling the true with the untrue (*satyāṅṛte mithunī-kṛtya*), we indulge in such empirical usage as ‘I am this’, ‘This is mine’, etc.¹¹ This is what is called *adhyāsa*, superimposition. Just as the features of a snake are seen in a rope, in delusion, and the rope-substance is mistaken for a snake, the characteristics of the not-self are superimposed on the self and the self comes to be missed in the not-self. The object of metaphysical inquiry is to remove

¹¹ See Śaṅkara's *Adhyāsa-bhāṣya*. (Introduction to *Sūtra-bhāṣya*.)

this tangle, and to see the truth. And, that is *ātma-jñāna* or *brahma-vidyā*, which is true knowledge, also called the higher wisdom (*parā-vidyā*).

The central teaching of Advaita-Vedānta is that the self is *Brahman* (*ātmā ca brahma*).¹² Reality cannot be two; and it must be of the nature of consciousness. If it is not non-dual, then it will be limited and conditioned and thus cease to be real. Every limitation is a negation. If it is non-conscious, it cannot be even known; and even to say that reality is non-conscious there is required a fundamental consciousness. It is to indicate the nature of this basic consciousness that such terms as *Ātman* and *Brahman* are employed. The ultimate reality is called *Ātman* in order to indicate that it cannot be denied; for it is the self of even the one who denies.¹³ We know *that* the self is; but we do not know *what* it is. Our ordinary notions of the self, that it is limited, etc., are wrong. So, Scripture tells us that the self is *Brahman*, the unlimited and unconditioned reality.

As no finite category is capable of characterizing *Brahman*, *Brahman* is to be known as 'not this, not this' (*neti neti*). But on this account, it is not to be imagined that *Brahman* is a blank. Every significant negation affirms by denying. It is true that *Brahman* is *nirguṇa* (without characteristics), and *nirviśeṣa* (without distinctions); but that does not mean that *Brahman* is *niḥsvarūpa* (characterless). The Upaniṣads seek to convey to us

¹² *Sūtra-bhāṣya*, I, i, 1.

¹³ See *Sūtra-bhāṣya*, I, i, 4: *ātmanas' ca pratyākhyātum asakyatvāt, ya eva nirākartā tasyaiva ātmatvāt.*

II, iii, 7: *ya eva hi nirākartā tad eva tasya svarūpam. . . .*

the nature of *Brahman* through such expressions as *sat* (existence), *cit* (consciousness), and *ānanda* (bliss), and also through such texts as *tat tvam asi* (that thou art). That Absolute is eternal existence, pure consciousness, and unexcellable bliss; it is the reality of the self.

Alongside the teaching in the Upaniṣads about *nirguṇa Brahman*, there is also the teaching about *saguṇa Brahman*. *Saguṇa Brahman* means *Brahman* endowed with attributes. According to this latter teaching, *Brahman* is the cause or ground of the universe. It is that from which all beings spring into existence, in which they live, and into which they return at the end. As thus related to the world, *Brahman* is also called *Īśvara* (God). The world of conscient beings and inconscient matter is God's attribute. God is both the material and the efficient cause of the world. In other words, he is the sole and the whole cause.

The problem for all the Vedāntic teachers is: how to reconcile the two views of *Brahman*? For solving this problem, Śāṅkara postulates two standpoints: the absolute (*pāramārthika*) and the relative (*vyāvahārika*). The supreme truth is that *Brahman* is non-dual and relationless. It alone is; there is nothing real besides it. But from our standpoint, which is the empirical, relative standpoint, *Brahman* appears as God, the cause of the world. There is no real causation; the world is but an illusory appearance in *Brahman*, even as the snake is in the rope. This doctrine is known as *vivarta-vāda* (the theory of phenomenal appearance) which is to be distinguished from its rival, *pariṇāma-vāda* (the theory of transformation).

The principle that makes for the phenomenal appearance of the world is called *māyā*. *Māyā* has significance only from the relative standpoint, and not from the absolute. The supreme truth is that *māyā* is that which (*yā*) is not (*mā*). But from our point of view, *māyā* appears as an inscrutable power of God that veils the true and projects the untrue. The power of veiling is termed *āvaraṇa*, and that of projecting *vikṣepa*. If one were to ask: is *māyā* real or not?, the only answer is: it is neither real nor unreal. Because the world of plurality appears, *māyā* is not unreal; because *māyā* is sublated by the knowledge of the non-dual self, it is not real. It cannot be both real and unreal. Therefore, it is indeterminable (*anirvacanīya*). Any inquiry into *māyā* is not to make the concept intelligible, but to enable one to go beyond it. When one has gone beyond, there remains no problem to be solved.

Who is it that seeks to go beyond *māyā*? It is the *jīva*, the living soul. The soul is, in essence, the same as *Brahman*. On account of *avidyā* (nescience) which is the individual counterpart of *māyā*, it identifies itself with a psycho-physical organism and is caught up in the tract of *samsāra*. The sheaths of body, life, and mind, that cover the soul are products of *māyā*. These, in consequence, come to be mistaken for the self; their characteristics are wrongly imposed on the imperishable spirit. The soul, which has neither birth nor death, is supposed to be born and to die with the body. Action and enjoyment are believed to belong to it. All these notions are due to ignorance. The only cure for this malady is true wisdom.

The reason why *jñāna* or wisdom is taught in Advaita as the direct means to release is that release is not something which is to be newly achieved. Release (*mokṣa*) is the eternal nature of the self. Only, this supreme fact remains unrealized because of nescience. All that has to be accomplished is the removal of nescience. And, that which can accomplish this is knowledge. The path of knowledge (*jñāna-yoga*) has already been explained.¹⁴ The point to be specially noted is that by knowledge or wisdom what is meant here is not mere intellectual understanding but intuitive and direct experience. When all the obstacles to knowledge have been removed through *karma-yoga* and *bhakti-yoga*, and when the path of self-inquiry has been successfully pursued, the knowledge of the non-dual spirit dawns, even as the sun rises at the termination of night. Release through knowledge is attained the moment ignorance is dispelled. As release is the eternal nature of the self, one need not wait for realizing it till death overtakes the physical body. Even while tenanted a body one is released at the onset of knowledge. Such a one is called a *jīvan-mukta*. From his standpoint, there is no body at all. He seems to live in a body only for the unreleased. After a time when the body dies, we say 'He becomes liberated from the body' (*videha-mukta*). But, the truth is that there is no difference in *mukti* (release). When release is attained, there is no more travail for the soul. It realizes its non-difference from the Absolute, which is called *advaita-anubhava* (experience of non-duality). 'When all the desires that the

¹⁴ See Chapter on 'Spiritual Disciplines'.

heart harbours are gone', says the Upaniṣad, 'then the mortal becomes immortal, and attains *Brahman* even here.'¹⁵

9

Viśiṣṭādvaita

The main issue that was debated by the Vedāntins who came after Śaṅkara was whether *Brahman* is *nirguṇa* or *saguṇa*. The foremost among those who maintained that *Brahman* is *saguṇa* was Rāmānuja (A.D. 1017-1137), whose system is known as *Viśiṣṭādvaita*. Reality, for Rāmānuja, is, no doubt, the non-dual spirit, but it is not a distinctionless, homogeneous identity; it should rather be conceived on the analogy of an organism involving internal differentiation. *Brahman* is a substance bearing attributes, some of which are themselves substances. As thus endowed with attributes, it is *viśiṣṭa* (that which is qualified) and not *nirviśeṣa-caitanya* (undifferentiated consciousness). It is difficult to find an English equivalent to the term *Viśiṣṭādvaita*; we may, however, render it as 'organismal non-dualism'.

Rāmānuja followed a long line of Vaiṣṇava thinkers. A number of poet-saints poured out their devotion in the form of songs in Tamil. These were collected later into what is called the *Nālāyira-Prabandham*. Since these songs constitute the basis of *Viśiṣṭādvaita*, equally with the Upaniṣads, Rāmānuja's system is known as *Ubhaya-Vedānta*. The *Bhāgavata* tradition was also a source of inspiration for *Viśiṣṭādvaita*. Rāmānuja

¹⁵ *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, IV, iv, 7; *Kaṭha*, vi, 14.

himself claims that his interpretation of the *Vedānta-sūtra* follows the earlier *Vṛtti* of Bodhāyana. Of the immediate predecessors of Rāmānuja, mention may be made of Nāthamuni (tenth century) and his grandson Yāmunācārya, otherwise called Ālavandār. The latter is the author of several manuals on Viśiṣṭādvaita; some of them are *Āgama-prāmānya*, *Gītārtha-saṅgraha* and *Siddhi-traya*. Rāmānuja's commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra* is known as the *Śrī-bhāṣya*. His commentary on the *Bhagavad-gītā* and other works, such as *Vedārtha-saṅgraha* and *Gadya-traya* are also important for a study of Viśiṣṭādvaita. Among the best known successors of Rāmānuja are Pillailokācārya and Vedānta Deśika.

According to Viśiṣṭādvaita, there are three ultimate realities (*tattva-traya*): God (*Īśvara*), soul (*cit*), and matter (*acit*). Of these, God alone is independent reality; the other two are dependent on him. The relation between God on the one hand and the world of souls and matter on the other is analogous to that between soul (*śarīrī*) and body (*śarīra*). God is the soul of souls, and of nature. These latter are distinct from God, but not separable from him. It is not an external relation that governs them, but the internal relation of inseparability (*apṛthak-siddhi*). The relation of *apṛthak-siddhi* is the pivot on which the Viśiṣṭādvaita philosophy turns. When it is said 'The cow is white' or 'Devadatta is a man', a mode (*prakāra*) or quality (*viśeṣaṇa*) is predicated in each case of a substance (*prakārin*, *viśeṣya*). The relation of substance-mode, or qualified-qualification is an inseparable relation. God as qualified (*viśiṣṭa*) by the world of souls and matter is non-dual (*advaita*).

God, whom Viśiṣṭādvaita identifies with Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa, is the same as the Upaniṣadic *Brahman* endowed with the eternal attributes of truth, goodness, beauty, and bliss. He is the support (*ādhāra*) of all beings, their controller (*niyantr*), the goal (*śeṣin*). Rāmānuja takes the following *Bṛhadāranyaka* passage as his basic text: 'He who dwells in the world, and is within it, whom the world does not know, whose body is the world, and who controls the world from within, is the self, the inner ruler, immortal.'¹⁶ Although God is the whole and sole cause of the world, he is not affected by the changes of the latter. God in himself does not change; the entities that are comprehended in him, and of which he is the inspiring principle—it is they that change. God is immanent in the world as well as transcendent of it. He is the supreme moral governor and world-redeemer. He incarnates himself from time to time in order to recover the lost souls. He appears also in the form of idols (*arcā*) worshipped in sacred places.

The inconscient world, which is called *acit*, is the dwelling place of soul, and, through them, of God also. *Prakṛti* or matter has three qualities, *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*, which appear at the time of world-creation. When there is dissolution, matter is not lost, but it exists in a subtle form. Nothing can come out of nothing. In the cause the effect is latent (*sat-kārya*). Causation means transformation (*pariṇāma*); it consists in making patent what is latent. Hence creation and dissolution are the appearance and disappearance, respectively, of matter, and not the absolute origination and destruction

¹⁶ *Bṛhadāranyaka*, III, vii.

thereof. *Kāla* or time which is also *acit* is the form of all existence. As a co-ordinate of *prakṛti*, it is comprised in *Brahman*. The temporal world equips the soul for its empirical career; it also serves as the means for making the soul progress towards its goal which is godliness.

The soul (*jīva*) is of the essence of spirit. It *is* and *has* knowledge. The soul as knowledge does not change; but as having knowledge it changes. Knowledge as an attribute is called *dharmabhūta-jñāna*; it characterizes both souls and God. As an attribute, it is inseparable from them. It is also a substance (*dravya*) in the sense that it is capable of contraction and expansion, and is the substrate of change. The soul's attributive knowledge expands to its fullest extent in the state of release; there is nothing then that the soul cannot know. In the state of bondage, however, the soul's attributive knowledge is more or less contracted. The soul, in this condition, acquires the body that befits its past *karma*, and has to transmigrate from one life to another till it attains release. The souls are infinite in number, and are of three classes: (1) the eternal (*nitya*) *jīvas* which have never been in bondage, (2) the freed (*mukta*) souls which have already achieved their salvation, and (3) the bound (*baddha*) souls which are caught up in the vortex of *samsāra*. The third type of souls wander from life to life till they are released.

The way to *mokṣa* lies through *karma*, *jñāna*, and *bhakti*. The performance of duty without any selfish motive purifies the mind. This makes meditation of the *jīva* on itself possible. Through such meditation

the *jīva* acquires knowledge of itself as dependent on God. Then it begins to love God, and contemplate him. *Bhakti* involves meditation just as *jñāna* does. Only, in *bhakti* the meditation is characterized by the soul's feeling of love for and dependence on God. When *bhakti* matures and becomes complete, the soul has a vision of God. But it is finally released only when its physical body perishes. So, there is no *jīvanmukti*, according to Viśiṣṭādvaita. Even after acquiring *jñāna* and *bhakti*, one has to perform *karma* till the very end—not only the rites enjoined in the Veda, but also prayer and worship. *Karma*, however, is not the direct means to release; it is to be regarded as an auxiliary.

To follow the path of *bhakti*, qualifications based on birth, etc., are necessary. As an alternative path, Viśiṣṭādvaita teaches *prapatti*. *Prapatti* means utter self-surrender to God, resorting to him as the sole refuge. According to the *Bhāgavata* tradition, this is the most effective means to release. It is open to all, without any distinction. What one has to do is to resolve 'to follow the will of God, not to cross his purposes, to believe that he will save, to seek help from him and him alone and to yield up one's spirit to him in all meekness'.¹⁷ *Prapatti* is so important that even the path of *jñāna-bhakti* is said to lead to it. Those who surrender themselves to God are saved by him. When their bodies fall, they go to the 'Highlands of the blest'—Vaikuṅṭha—and there enjoy constantly the presence of God.

¹⁷ *ānukūlyasya saṅkalpaḥ, prātikūlyasya varjanam, rakṣisyatīti viśvāṣaḥ goṭṭva-varaṇam talhā, ātma-nikṣepa-kārpaṇye śaḍvidhā śaraṇāgatiḥ.*

10

Dvaita

Madhva (A.D. 1199-1278),¹⁸ like Rāmānuja, identifies God with Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa; but unlike the latter's, his system is a frank pluralism. Madhva's Vedānta is called *Dvaita* (dualism), because the concept of difference (*bheda*) is, according to it, central to philosophy. Dvaita-Vedānta is also a realism, because it believes in the reality of the external world. It is a theism, since it accepts a personal God who is the only independent (*svatantra*) reality, the other reals being entirely dependent on him.

The main texts of Dvaita-Vedānta are Madhva's own works. These were collected later on under the title *Sarvamūla*. Madhva wrote commentaries on the *Vedānta-sūtra*, the initial *mantras* of the *Ṛg-veda*, the principal Upaniṣads, and the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Among his other works are expositions of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Bhāgavata*. Jayatīrtha and Vyāsātīrtha are the most important of Madhva's successors.

That there is a plurality of reals is the basic doctrine of Dvaita. 'Diverse are all the things of the world, and they possess diverse attributes'.¹⁹ Difference is the very nature of things. While distinguishing them, it distinguishes itself also. There is difference between (1) God and soul, (2) soul and soul, (3) God and matter, (4) soul and matter, and (5) one material thing and another.

¹⁸ Also known as Ānandatīrtha, Pūrṇabodha, and Pūrṇaprajña.

¹⁹ *bhinnās ca bhinna-dharmās ca padārthā nikhilā amī*.

Thus Madhva's position is a philosophy of distinctions. The main principles of his system are summarized in the following statement contained in a verse: 'In Śrī Madhva's system, Hari is the supreme being, the world is real, difference is true, the host of *jīvas* are dependent on Hari, there are grades of superiority and inferiority among them, *mokṣa* consists in the soul's enjoyment of its innate bliss, faultless *bhakti* is the means thereto, perception, inference and verbal testimony are the three ways of knowing (*pramāṇas*), and Hari is knowable only through the Veda.'²⁰

God, souls, and the world are all equally eternal. But, as has already been mentioned, God alone is independent. He is the supreme reality (*sarvottama*), endowed with the plenitude of all properties (*guṇa-pūrṇa*) 'He is the one supreme being that is to be known; he alone is the independent agent'.²¹ He is the efficient cause alone of the world, and not its material cause. Nevertheless, he is the creator, controller, and destroyer of the universe. All beings—substance, *karma*, time, nature, soul—exist only by his grace, and would at once come to nothing, if that grace were withdrawn. God manifests himself in various forms (*vyūhas*), incarnates himself (*avatāras*) from time to time, and is present in the sacred images. He is Hari, Nārāyaṇa, Viṣṇu, who can be known through Scripture. The *Harivamśa* declares: 'In the Veda, *Rāmāyaṇa*, *Purāṇa*, and *Bhārata*, at the commencement,

²⁰ This is attributed by tradition to Vyāsātīrtha, but is not found in any of his works.

²¹ *ekaḥ sarvottamo jñeyaḥ, eka eva karoti yat.*

in the middle and at the conclusion, and in fact everywhere, Viṣṇu is praised'.²² In the *Viṣṇu-tattva-nirṇaya*, Madhva says: 'Ever do I bow to Nārāyaṇa, who is knowable only through the true Scriptures, who transcends the perishable and the imperishable, who is free from defects, and who is endowed with all auspicious qualities'.²³ Lakṣmī is the personification of the Lord's creative energy. She is eternally free from *samsāra*, and is untainted by sorrow. Though God is greater than Lakṣmī, there is no other greater than she. While God alone is independent, Lakṣmī is the foremost of the dependents.

The world of nature is not an illusion or a magical show. Nor is it a transformation of *Brahman* or God, as curd is of milk. *Prakṛti* whose first products are *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*, is the material cause of the world. The effect is both existent and non-existent (*sadasat-kārya-vāda*) in its material cause. Before the world was produced it was in *prakṛti* as cause, and not as effect. From *prakṛti*, the world is evolved by God who energizes it through Lakṣmī. The evolutes of *prakṛti* furnish the souls with the means and material for their working towards their final destiny.

The souls are different from God and the world of matter. The entire world is filled with souls or *jīvas*. In his *Tattva-nirṇaya* Madhva observes: 'Infinite are the souls dwelling in an atom of space'.²⁴ The souls are atomic in size, but pervade their bodies by virtue of the

²² *Bhaviṣya Parva*, 132, 95.

²³ *Maṅgalācaraṇa Śloka*.

²⁴ First *Pariccheda*.

quality of intelligence. They are active agents, dependent on God's will. They are eternal and by nature blissful. But the connection with matter brought about by past *karma* makes them suffer pain and undergo transmigration. The process of changing forms comes to an end only when the impurities are removed. This is called release. The native bliss of the soul then becomes manifest.

There is a plurality of souls. And, no two souls are alike. Three grades of souls are distinguished: (1) those that are eternally free (*nitya*), like Lakṣmī, (2) those who have attained freedom from *samsāra* (*mukta*), the gods and men, the sages and fathers, and (3) the bound (*baddha*). The third group consists of two classes: (i) those who are eligible for release (*mukti-yogyā*), and (ii) those who are not so eligible. Of those who are not eligible for release, there are two types: (a) those who are tied down to the cycle of *samsāra* for ever (*nitya-samsārins*), and (b) those who are destined to go to hell, the region of blinding darkness (*tamoyogyā*). While some souls are pre-ordained to be saved, the others are eternally damned, they have either to revolve in *samsāra* without end, or go to the nether world of darkness. The *sāttvika* souls go to heaven; the *rājasa* souls keep to *samsāra*; the *tāmasa* souls fall into hell.

The soul is saved by the knowledge that it is dependent on, and is under the control of God. Correct knowledge results in the love of God. And, love or *bhakti* is the means to *mokṣa*. Madhva declares: That love is called *bhakti*, which is the result of a knowledge of the greatness of God, which is firm, and which excels

all other kinds of attachment'. And, he adds, 'Release is attained through such love, and not otherwise'. Vāyu is the mediator between God and souls. God's grace is needed for the soul's release.²⁵ Even in heaven the essential difference among the *jīvas* is preserved. The released are not all equal; but there is no discord among them. Madhva quotes in this connection the *Tura-śruti*: 'The classes of souls in the world of bliss are various and of different grades. But they are not at variance (with one another); for they all know *Brahman*, and are free from faults'.

11

Other Vaiṣṇava Schools

Besides Viśiṣṭādvaita and Dvaita, there are other systems of Vedānta which identify the highest reality with Viṣṇu-Nārayaṇa. Of these, we shall take note of three.

(i) *Dvaitādvaita*. Nimbārka (eleventh century A.D.), wrote a commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra*. Its title is *Vedānta-pārijāta-saurabha*. In it he makes out that the world of souls and matter is both different and non-different from *Brahman*. The same doctrine is expounded by him in his other works, such as *Daśaślokī*. The *Vedānta-kaustubha*, which is a commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra* by Śrīnivāsa, an immediate disciple of Nimbārka, presents Dvaitādvaita in a lucid manner.

²⁵ *Viṣṇu-tattva-nirṇaya: mokṣaś ca viṣṇu-prasādena vinā na labhyate.*

Keśavakāśmīrin defends Nimbārka's philosophical position in his *Tattvapraśāṅgīkā* which is a gloss on the *Bhagavadgītā*.

Nimbārka agrees with the other Vedāntins in teaching that *Brahman* is the only independent reality. It is *saguṇa*, and not *nirguṇa*. What is meant by saying that it is *nirguṇa* is that evil qualities do not find a lodging in it. *Brahman* is eternal, omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient. It is both the material and the efficient cause of the world. To Nimbārka, *Brahman* is Gopālākṛṣṇa, accompanied by Rādhā.

The world of nature is composed of three principal categories. These are: (1) *apṛākṛta* which is not a product of *prakṛti*, and which constitutes the stuff of celestial bodies, etc., (2) *pṛākṛta*, what is derived from *prakṛti*, and (3) *kāla*, time, which, along with *prakṛti*, is the basic principle of cosmic existence.

The individual soul (*īva*) is essentially a sentient being. It not only is consciousness, but also has consciousness. It is a knower, doer, and experiencer as well. It is atomic in size; its attribute of knowledge expands or contracts according to the size of its body. There is an infinite number of souls. The kinds of souls are chiefly two: those that are in bondage, and those that have attained release.

The three realities, *Brahman*, *cit*, and *acit* are equally eternal. *Brahman* is the controller (*niyantṛ*), *cit* is the experiencer (*bhokṛ*), and *acit* is the object experienced (*bhogyā*). The latter two are dependent realities, while *Brahman* alone is independent being. The relation between *Brahman* on the one hand, and

souls and matter on the other, is a relation of natural difference *cum* non-difference (*svābhāvika-bhedābheda*). Souls and matter are different from *Brahman* in the sense that they have dependent and distinct existence (*paratantrasattābhāva*). They are non-different in the sense that they have no independent existence (*svatantrasattā 'bhāva*). The relation of identity-in-difference is to be understood after the manner of cause-effect relation and whole-part relation. Just as pot is both different and non-different from clay, so are souls and matter from *Brahman*.

The soul does not lose its individuality even in the state of release. It only realizes its essential similarity to God. Through *karma* (work), *jñāna* (knowledge), *upāsana* (meditation), *prapatti* (self-surrender), and *gurū-pasatti* (devotion to preceptor), the soul gains the ultimate goal. The love of God is the means to liberation. It should be based not simply on a recognition of God's greatness (*aiśvarya-pradhāna-bhakti*), but on his intrinsic and infinite sweetness (*mādhurya-pradhāna-bhakti*). The soul can attain release only at the end of its life, and not while it is yet in the body.

(ii) *Śuddhādvaita*. Vallabha (A.D. 1473-1531), like Nimbārka, founded a Kṛṣṇa cult. Kṛṣṇa-Gopāla is the supreme *Brahman*, in his system also. But the relation between *Brahman* and the world is not a relation of difference *cum* non-difference, but one of pure non-difference (*śuddhādvaita*). Vallabha calls it pure (*śuddha*), in order to distinguish his view from that of Śāṅkara which is Kevalādvaita. In his opinion Śāṅkara's Advaita is impure in so far as it has to depend on *māyā*, the principle of illusion, to explain the world.

Vallabha's *Aṅubhāṣya*, which is a commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra* and which was completed by his son Viṅṭhalanātha, is the basic text of Śuddhādvaita. There are also parts of Vallabha's commentaries available on the *Jaimini-sūtra* and the *Bhāgavata*. Another important work of his is *Tattvārtha-dīpa-nibandha* with his own gloss *Prakāśa*.

To the three *prasthānas* of Vedānta, Vallabha, like the other Vaiṣṇava teachers, adds the *Bhāgavata*. The four canonical texts are arranged in the following order: (1) the Veda (including the Upaniṣads), (2) the *Gītā*, (3) the *Vedānta-sūtra*, and (4) the *Bhāgavata*. Vallabha's view is that these texts are complementary to one another, that where doubts arise, each preceding text should be interpreted in the light of the next. The *Bhāgavata* which comes last, therefore, occupies a unique position in Vallabha's system. An interesting feature about Vallabha's attitude to the Scriptural texts is that he accepts all of them in their literal sense, and regards even apparently contradictory statements as true.

The highest reality, in Vallabha's Vedānta, is Kṛṣṇa known as *Brahman* in the Upaniṣads, and as *Paramātman* in the *Bhāgavata*. He is *Puruṣottama*, the supreme Person. He is *sat* (existence), *cit* (consciousness), *ānanda* (bliss), and *rasa* (sentiment). He possesses all qualities—even contradictory qualities. Though eternal and unchanging, he becomes all things through his *māyā-śakti*. He is not different from the world which he creates. He is not different from the souls which emanate from him.

Vallabha teaches that the supreme *Brahman* appears as (1) the *Antaryāmin*, and as (2) the *Akṣara Brahman*. *Brahman* dwells in the souls as *Antaryāmin*, limiting its bliss. *Akṣara-Brahman* also is a form where the bliss-nature is limited. It is this *Akṣara* that the *jñānīs* meditate upon, and have as their goal. The negative texts of Scripture apply only to *Akṣara*. The *bhaktas* look upon the *Akṣara* as the foot and abode of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. *Akṣara* is the *carāṇa*, *parama-dhāman*, or *vyoman* of the Supreme. It appears as *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*, and becomes the cause of everything. It is also called *mukhya-jīva*, and is superior to the souls.

In the beginning, God was alone, and he desired to become many. As a consequence, he created the world out of mere pleasure, as a sport (*līlā*). The world is thus a transformation of the very essence (*svarūpa-pariṇāma*) of God. In this process, God is not affected in the least. He does not suffer any change within himself (*avikṛta-pariṇāma*). In the world that is a transformation of *Brahman*, the element of *sat* is manifest, while the other elements of *cit* and *ānanda* are latent. The world (*jagat*) is not unreal or illusory; it is, in fact, non-different from *Brahman*. What is unreal is *samsāra*, consisting of the *jīva*'s notions of 'I' and 'mine'. It is this that has to be destroyed by knowledge, not the world.

The soul is a part (*aṁśa*) of *Brahman*, and is eternal. At the beginning of world-creation, the souls issue out of the *Akṣara*, as sparks from fire. They are cognizers, agents and experiencers. They are atomic, but pervade their bodies through their attribute of intelligence.

In them the *sat* and *cit* aspects are manifest, while the *ānanda* aspect remains latent. There are three classes of souls: (1) those that wallow in the stream (*pravāha*) of *samsāra*, (2) those that follow the Vedic path (*maryādā*), and (3) those that worship God out of pure love, having received his grace (*puṣṭi*).

The distinction between the path of *maryādā* and *puṣṭi* is very important. Release that is obtained through the former is gradual; one has to advance step by step, and go through the path of the gods (*devayāna*) to the world of Brahmā, and there attain release. The *puṣṭi-mārga* which depends entirely on the grace of God yields immediate release. The best example of those who elected this path is that of the *gopīs* of Bṛndāvana. The highest stage in liberation is to join the Lord in his sport and enjoy his bliss for all time. The divine husband of all souls is Kṛṣṇa. The *rāsa-līlā* in Gokula to which he beckons the soul is an eternal dance. More than *sāyujya* is the privilege of enjoying the company of the Lord through love.

(iii) *Acintya-bhedābheda*. The leader of Bengal Vaiṣṇavism is Caitanya (fifteenth century). Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa is the supreme reality, according to him. His teachings are to be found in a poem of ten verses, *Daśamūla-śloka*, ascribed to him. Jīva Gosvāmī and Baladeva, among others, have expounded Caitanya's philosophy in a systematic way. The most important work of Jīva Gosvāmī is *Satsandarbhā* with a commentary by himself called *Sarvasamvādinī*. Baladeva's *Govindabhāṣya* on the *Vedānta-sūtra* is quite a useful guide.

The Upaniṣadic definition of *Brahman* as *sat-cit-ānanda* is accepted by the Caitanya school. But, *sat-cit-ānanda Brahman* is not a bare distinctionless identity. He has an infinite number of *Śaktis* (powers), which are supernormal (*parā*) and inseparable (*svābhāvīkī*) from him. Of these, three are the main powers, *viz.* *svarūpa-śakti māyā-śakti*, and *jīva-śakti*.

The Lord's *svarūpa-śakti* (self-power), which is also called *cit-śakti*, exists in him eternally, and is responsible for all his *līlās* (sports); hence, it is his internal power (*antaraṅga-śakti*). Corresponding to the three elements in God's nature, *sat*, *cit*, and *ānanda* there are three aspects of his *śakti*, *viz.*, *sandhinī*, *samvit* and *hlādinī*. By these he supports, knows, and enjoys his own as well as other beings' existence, consciousness, and bliss. What is known as *śuddha-sattva* (pure being) is composed of these three *śaktis*; it is called *śuddha*, because it is unmixed with *māyā*. *Māyā-śakti* is the Lord's inconscient power which is responsible for the material universe. As it is inert (*jaḍa*), it is opposed to *cit-śakti*, and yet cannot function without its aid. It is God's external power (*bahiraṅga-śakti*), and has two aspects, cosmic (*guṇa-māyā*) and individual (*jīva-māyā*). By the former, it creates the universe out of *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*; by the latter, it makes the *jīva* forget its self-nature and taste the sweets and bitters of life. God's *jīva-śakti* forms the essence of the finite souls, and stands between the other two *śaktis*.

Besides being *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda*, God is *rasa* (aesthetic sentiment) as well as *rasika* (enjoyer of sentiment). It is for this reason that he is called Kṛṣṇa. In him

felicity is perfect and complete. His *śakti* is Rādhā with whom he is united in love. Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa are two-in-one, inseparably bound together. The *Antaryāmin* is the immanent aspect of Kṛṣṇa, and is pervasive of the universe. Lower than that is the *nirviśeṣa Brahman*, the distinctionless being, which is only an adjectival aspect of the supreme. In between Kṛṣṇa and the *Antaryāmin* there are innumerable grades of *svarūpa-śakti*; at each level the divine Lord sports himself with his playmates, who are all parts of him.

The universe has God as its material as well as efficient cause. *Brahman* is of the nature of the universe, but is not exhausted by it. As we have already seen, the world is created by God through his *māyā-śakti*. He is however, untouched by *māyā*, and so is undefiled by the defects of the world. The world of nature provides the soul with a location, instruments and objects of enjoyment, etc. The *jīvas* are related to God as sparks to fire, or as parts to a whole. They are knowers as well as doers, although their power is derived from God. They are entitatively separate from God, and are eternal. Even after release they maintain their separateness. Their true joy consists in serving the Lord (*sevānanda*).

Better than *jñāna* or *yoga* is the path of *bhakti*. The culmination of *bhakti* is a complete self-giving, an unconditional self-surrender to God. *Kevala* or *śuddha bhakti* is not merely a means; it is the final human end as well, the fifth *puruṣārtha*. It goes beyond even *mokṣa*. One who realizes it desires nothing but exclusive service of Kṛṣṇa.

The relation between the souls and the world on the one hand, and God on the other is *acintya-bhedā'bheda* (incomprehensible difference and non-difference). This is the relation that obtains between cause and effect, whole and part, possessor of power (*śaktimat*) and power (*śakti*). The relation is one of simultaneous difference and non-difference. This is, of course, inexplicable or incomprehensible. But that is a fact and cannot be denied. The example of fire and heat may be, in this connection, given. Heat is neither identical with fire, nor different from it. So is the relation of the world of souls and matter to God. It is impossible to think of this relation as falling under either of the categories, absolute difference and absolute non-difference (*bhinnā-bhinnatvādi-vikalpaiś cintayitum aśakyah*).

12

Śaiva Schools

Just as there is a variety of philosophical views among the Vaiṣṇavas ranging from pluralism to monism, so is there a variety among the Śaivas. The main difference between the Vaiṣṇavas and the Śaivas is that while the former call God by such names as Hari, Viṣṇu, Nārāyaṇa and Kṛṣṇa, the latter give him names like Rudra, Śiva, Śaṅkara, and Mahādeva. The most important of the Śaiva schools are Śaiva-siddhānta, Vīra-śaivism, and Kāśmīra-śaivism.

(i) *Śaiva siddhānta*. Śaiva-siddhānta is the philosophy of Southern Śaivism. The chief sources

of the Śaiva-siddhānta are the twenty-eight *Śaiva Āgamas*, the hymns of the Śaiva saints and the philosophical works of the later thinkers. Nambi Āṇḍār Nambi (11th century A.D), compiled the canonical literature of Śaiva-siddhānta; and the compilation is called *Tirumurai*. It includes the *Tirumandiram* of Tirumūlar, the *Tevāram* of Appar, Sundarar and Sambandhar, and the *Tiruvācakam* of Māṇikkavācakar. The first attempt at a systematic treatment of Śaiva-siddhānta was made by Meykaṇḍār (13th century) in his *Śiva-jñāna-bodham* whose main thesis is 'Śivam is one; jñānam is the knowledge of its true nature; bodham is the realization of such knowledge.' The inter-relation of the different Scriptures in Śaivism and the place of Meykaṇḍār's work in the system are set forth in a verse which says, 'The Veda is the cow; its milk is the true *Āgama*; and Tamil sung by the Four is the ghee extracted from it; and the virtue of the Tamil work, full of wisdom (*bodham*), of Meykaṇḍār of the celebrated (city of) Veṅṅai is the fine taste of the ghec.'²⁶ After the *Śiva-jñāna-bodham*, the other important works on Śaivism are Arulnandi's *Śiva-jñāna-siddhiyār* and Umāpati's *Śiva-prakāśam* and *Tiru-varuṭ-payan*. Śaiva-siddhānta rests on the two-fold ground of the Vedas and the *Āgamas*. As Tirumūlar says, the two *antas* (*i.e.*, the Vedānta and the Āgamānta) are not different in the eyes of the wise. In the fourteenth century A.D., Nilakaṇṭha undertook to reconcile the two bases and wrote a commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtra* in the light of Śaiva philosophy.

²⁶ See K. A. Nilakanta Sastri's article on Śaivism in *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. 2, p. 32.

The central doctrine of Śaiva-siddhānta is that Śiva is the supreme reality and that the *jīva* is of the same essence as Śiva but not identical therewith. The three *padārthas* or categories, *viz.* God (*pati*), soul (*paśu*) and the bonds (*pāśa*), and the thirty-six *tattvas* or principles constituting the world are all real.

Śiva, the ultimate reality, is uncaused, omnipotent, omniscient, gracious, pure and eternally free from bonds. Through his *Śakti* or power, he is the material cause of the universe; and in his own nature he is the instrumental cause. His functions are creation, preservation, destruction, concealment and the bestowal of grace. He provides bodies and objects of enjoyment for the souls so that the latter may be rid of ignorance and realize their nature. His functions are all designed for weaning the soul from its way of sin.

Māyā is the material cause of the universe. In its unmanifest form it is imperceptible, partless, indestructible and eternal. From it arise thirty-six *tattvas* or principles, some of them pure and the others impure. *Śuddha-māyā* is *māyā* in its primal state. It gives rise to five pure principles called *śiva-tattva*, *śakti-tattva*, *sadāśiva-tattva*, *īśvara-tattva* and *śuddhavidyā-tattva*. It is through these pure principles that Śiva functions, and produces the bodies, organs, worlds and objects of enjoyment for the *adhikāra-muktas* who are pure souls. As contrasted with *śuddha-māyā*, there is *aśuddha-māyā* which is the cause of the material world. From it evolve the bodies, organs, worlds and objects of enjoyment for the impure *jīvas*. From *aśuddha-māyā* also comes *prakṛti-māyā* which in turn gives rise to twenty-four *tattvas*

including the gross elements, ether, air, fire, water and earth, and their qualities of sound, touch, colour, taste and odour; *manas*, *buddhi*, *citta* and *ahaṅkāra* constituting the internal organs, the five organs of action and the five organs of knowledge. This whole process of creation is for the sake of the liberation of souls.

Souls are by nature infinite, all-pervading and all-knowing. Yet they think that they are finite, limited and little-knowing. This discrepancy is due to their bonds (*pāśa*)—*āṇava*, *karma* and *māyā*. These are called the three *malas* or impurities. *Āṇava* is the original impurity which makes the pervasive *jīva* think itself to be atomic (*aṇu*). Because of this limitation, the soul acts in certain ways which are regarded as good or bad. These acts bring in their consequences which constitute the second bond called *karma*. To experience the consequences and acquire knowledge thereby, there are needed worlds, objects of enjoyment and instruments of cognition and enjoyment. These are provided by *māyā*, the third *mala*. Through *māyā* the soul gets knowledge, though this knowledge is very limited.

The souls are of three kinds: (1) those which have all the three bonds (*sakalas*), (2) those which are free from *māyā* alone in the stage of *pralaya* (*pralayākalas*) and (3) those for whom both *māyā* and *karma* have been resolved, *āṇava* alone being left (*viññānākalas*).

The soul learns by long experience that nothing good can come out of *samsāra*. Both good *karma* and bad *karma* bind the soul. When the *jīva* becomes indifferent to both, it is fit to receive the grace of God. With the

onset of divine grace the Lord reveals himself and enlightens the soul. He purifies (*dikṣā*) the soul which is thus restored to its original nature. The (*jīva*) no longer looks upon itself as of the nature of matter (*pāśa*) or of the atomic soul (*paśu*). It realizes its nature as Śiva. Māṅikkavācakar sings: 'I was with the wicked who know not the way to freedom; yet to me he revealed the path of love in order that the fruit of my past deeds might be ended. Removing the impurities of my mind, he made me Śiva. Ah! who could gain that which the Father has bestowed on me?' The attainment of *śivatva* or Śiva-nature does not mean complete mergence of being in Śiva. Śaiva-siddhānta believes that the individuality of the soul is preserved. The soul claims that God's nature is its own, but not that it is itself God.²⁷ In bondage the soul experienced through matter (*pāśa*); in release it experiences through God (*pati*).

The path to release consists of four stages: *caryā*, *kriyā*, *yoga*, and *jñāna*. The first stands for external acts of worship like cleaning the temples, gathering flowers for the Deity, etc. This is called *dāsa-mārga*, the path of the servant; its proximate goal is *sālokya*, residence in the realm of God. The next stage which is *kriyā* is marked by acts of intimate service to God. This path is known as *sat-putra-mārga*, the path of the good son. The objective of this discipline is *sāmīpya*, attaining the nearness of God. The third discipline is *yoga* which means union, and here signifies contemplation and internal worship. Through this method, the devotee becomes more

²⁷ See S. S. Suryanarayana Sastri's article on Śaivism in *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. 2, p. 45.

intimate with God, as a friend with a friend. The path, therefore, is called *sakhā-mārga*, the path of friendship. It leads to *sārūpya*, gaining the form of God. The three disciplines so far explained constitute the preparatory stages in the journey to perfection. The direct means to perfection is *jñāna* (knowledge). This path is termed *san-mārga* because it takes the soul straight to *sat* which is God. Its fruit is the ultimate human goal which is *sāyujya*, union with God. This union is called *advaita* in the Śaiva-siddhānta. But it does not mean non-difference; it means only non-separateness from God. Even in the state of release, the soul is entitatively different from God. But it then shares in the nature of Śiva. It becomes similar to God in that it regains its infinitude, pervasiveness and omniscience.

(ii) *Vīra-Śaivism*. Vīra-śaivism which traces its origin to hoary antiquity was made popular in the Kannaḍa area by Basava in the twelfth century A.D. Thence it spread to Āndhra and Tamil-nāḍu. ‘Vīra-śaivism’ means the Śaivism of the stalwarts or heroic Śaivism. It is also called *Līṅgāyata* on account of the fact that its followers wear a *Līṅga* on their person. Besides the Vedas, Āgamas, and Purāṇas, the Vīra-śaivas accept the authority of the Tamil Śaiva saints, whom they refer to as ancients (*purātana*) and the sayings (*vacana*) of the Kannaḍa mystics.

The Vīra-śaiva philosophy is known as *Śakti-viśiṣṭ-ādvaita*, a term which means that the non-duality of God is as qualified by his power (*śakti*). According to this system, therefore, God and soul are in an inseparable union through the inalienable power called *śakti*.

The individual soul is a part, of which God is the whole; it is the body, of which God is the soul.

God, who is Para Śiva, is the ultimate cause of the world. He does not, however, suffer any change or diminution in the process of world-creation. This is because creation takes place through *śakti* which is his inseparable attribute. *Śakti*, *mūla-prakṛti* or *māyā* it is that evolves itself into the phenomenal universe. *Māyā* here means 'that which naturally pertains to and eternally resides in the supreme *Brahman*.'

The individual soul is a part (*aṃśa*) of Śiva in the sense that it proceeds from Śiva, partakes of his essence, and finds final rest in him. But on account of ignorance (*avidyā*) it imagines itself to be different from him. When ignorance is destroyed through knowledge, it realizes its dependence on Śiva. While it is not different from Śiva, it is not identical either with him. The relation between the two is one of *bhedābheda* (difference *cum* non-difference). The soul's ultimate goal is to realize this relation which is real union (*aikya*). In that union, the soul enjoys unexcellable bliss. This final state of experience is called *liṅgāṅga-sāmarasya*, identity in essence between *Liṅga* (*Śiva*) and *aṅga* (part, *i.e.*, soul).

Para Śiva *Brahman* which is the supreme reality in Vira-Śaivism is technically called *sthala*, which means place, position, or abode. Para Śiva is the abode of all beings. In him the universe exists (*stha*), and to him it returns (*la*) at the end. He, out of his own will, becomes divided into *Liṅga* and *aṅga*. His *śakti* also gets split into *kalā* (part) and *bhakti* (devotion); the former resorts to Śiva, and the latter to the individual soul.

Kalā is responsible for the projection of the world from Śiva. *Bhakti* leads the soul back to Śiva.

Liṅga-sthala manifests itself in six forms, which are collectively called *ṣaṭ-sthala*. There is a similar sixfold manifestation of *aṅga-sthala*. The graded manifestation, in each case, proceeds from the subtle to the gross. The fact that for each *Liṅga* manifestation there is a corresponding *aṅga* manifestation shows that at each level there is non-separateness between the two. The teaching relating to this truth also indicates that the final goal is the union of *aṅga* with *Liṅga*.

The three terms frequently used in Vīra-śaiva writings are *Guru*, *Jaṅgama*, and *Liṅga*. The *Guru* is the spiritual preceptor; the *Jaṅgama* is the realized or perfected soul; and the *Liṅga* is Śiva. The aspirant for release should surrender his all to these three, worship them to obtain divine grace, and identify himself with them. In order to attain this consummation, he has to observe eight rules (*aṣṭāvaraṇa*), which are: (1) obedience to a *Guru*, (2) worship of *Liṅga*, (3) reverence for the *Jaṅgama*, (4) smearing of the sacred ash (*vi-bhūti*), (5) wearing of a rosary of *rudrākṣa* beads, (6) *pādodaka*, sipping the water in which the feet of a *Guru* or *Jaṅgama* have been washed, (7) *prasāda*, offering food to a *Guru*, *Jaṅgama* or *Liṅga*, and partaking sacramentally of what is left over, and (8) *pañcākṣara*, uttering the five-syllabled formula *namaḥ śivāya*. Through these aids the soul matures in spirituality and finally gains union with the Lord.

(iii) *Kāśmīra-śaivism*. Kāśmīra-śaivism is a type of monism or non-dualism. It is known by other names

such as *Trika*, *Spanda*, and *Pratyabhijñā*. It is called *Trika* because it believes in the principle of three-in-one, viz., *pati-paśu-pāśa* or *Śiva-śakti-aṇu*. The term *Spanda* refers to the principle of apparent movement or change from the state of absolute unity to the plurality of the world. And, the expression *Pratyabhijñā* means 'recognition' which is the way by which the soul realizes its identity with Śiva.

Kāśmīra-śaivism traces its origin to the *Śiva-sūtra* which is ascribed to Śiva himself. The *Sūtra* is said to have been revealed to Vasugupta (eighth-ninth century A.D.). Among the works of Vasugupta's followers are: Kallaṭa's *Spanda-sarvasva*, Somānanda's *Śiva-drṣṭi*, and Abhinavagupta's *Paramārtha-sāra*.

The ultimate reality, according to Kāśmīra-śaivism, is Śiva or Śambhu. Śiva is the self of all beings, moving and non-moving. He is immanent (*viśvamaya*) as well as transcendent (*viśvottīrṇa*). He is called *anuttara*, the reality beyond which there is nothing. He is pure consciousness (*caitanya*), absolute experience (*parā samvit*), and supreme lord (*parameśvara*). From him the world arises even as an appearance or reflection. 'As syrup, molasses, jaggery, sugar-balls, candy, etc., are all alike juice of the sugar-cane, so the diverse conditions are all of Śambhu, the Supreme Self.'²⁸ 'As in the orb of a mirror pictures such as those of a town or village shine which are inseparable from it, and yet are distinct from one another and from it, so from the perfectly pure vision of the supreme Bhairava, this universe, though void of distinction appears distinct part from part and

²⁸ Abhinavagupta, *Paramārthasāra*, *JRAS*, 1910, p. 728.

distinct from that vision.’²⁹ The universe thus is Śiva’s self-manifestation through his *Śakti* which is five-fold: (1) *cit-śakti*, the power of intelligence or self-luminosity, (2) *ānanda-śakti*, the power of independence which is bliss, (3) *icchā-śakti*, the power of will or desire, (4) *jñāna-śakti*, the power of knowledge, and (5) *kriyā-śakti*, the power of action. By these powers, Śiva manifests himself by his own free will (*svicchayā*) and in himself as the substrate (*svabhittau*).

The individual soul, though identical with the supreme Śiva, suffers in *samsāra*, because it has forgotten its essential nature. The aim of *Pratyabhijñā* is to restore the soul to its essence. The way to this restoration lies in the soul’s recognition of its identity with the ultimate reality. This is how the process of recognition is illustrated and explained: ‘A certain damsel, hearing of the many good qualities of a particular gallant, fell in love with him before she had seen him, and agitated by her passion and unable to suffer the pain of not seeing him, wrote to him a love-letter descriptive of her condition. He at once came to her, but when she saw him she did not recognize in him the qualities she had heard about; he appeared much the same as any other man, and she found no gratification in his society. So soon, however, as she recognized those qualities in him as her companions now pointed them out, she was fully gratified. In like manner, though the personal self be manifested as identical with the universal soul, its manifestation effects no complete satisfaction so long as there is no recognition of those attributes; but as soon as it is

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 723. .

taught by a spiritual director to recognize in itself the perfections of Maheśvara, his omniscience, omnipotence, and other attributes, it attains the whole pleroma of being.' ³⁰

Mokṣa, according to Kāśmīra-śaivism, is a return to the original state of perfection and purity of consciousness. Abhinavagupta describes it thus: 'When thus the imagination of quality has vanished, and he (the released soul) has surmounted the illusion of *māyā*, he is merged in *Brahman*, as water in water, as milk in milk. When thus through contemplation the group of elements has been resolved into the substance of Śiva, what grief, what delusion can befall him who surveys the universe as *Brahman*?' ³¹

Philosophical Richness and Variety

There is no end to the philosophical landscape of India. It is rich and varied, and sometimes bewildering to those who are not acquainted with its nature. In the present account we have left out the so-called heterodox systems because our concern in this book is with Hinduism. In Hinduism itself the entire range of philosophical attitudes is covered more than once. Pluralism and Monism, Realism, and Idealism, Theism and Absolutism

³⁰ See the *Sarva-darśana-saṅgraha* of Mādhavācārya, translated by E. B. Cowell and A. E. Gough, p. 136.

³¹ *JRAS*, 1910, p. 734.

—various shades of these in different combinations are to be found in Vedāntic as well as non-Vedāntic schools, and in the traditions of cults such as Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE CULTS

1

What are the Tantras?

EVERY system of Hindu philosophy, except Advaita-Vedānta, has a cult-aspect. Even Advaita recognizes the value of cult for the spiritual evolution of the human soul. The important thing about a cult is its mode of religious worship. The purpose of worship is to lift man from the level of sensibility to that of divinity by making proper use of his very senses. The technique by which this is done has come to be called *Tantra* in India. The *Tantras* are the books which initiate the devotee into this technique of worship. They are also known as the *Āgamas*. And, the cults which are based on these Scriptures are usually referred to as Tāntrika cults.

The term '*Tantra*' means 'that by which knowledge is spread'. The *Kāmikā Āgama* says that the *Tantra* is so called because it elucidates the meanings of *tattva* and *mantra*, and liberates man from bondage:

*tanoti vipulān arthān tattva-mantra samanvitān,
trāṇam ca kurute yasmāt tantram ity abhidhīyate.*

The *Tantras*, thus, have the same end in view that the Vedas have. According to the orthodox Hindu tradition,

the *Tantras* or *Āgamas* are founded on the Vedas, and there is no divergence of doctrine as between Veda and *Āgama*. In the *Kulārṇava-tantra*, Siva tells Pārvaṭi that there is no difference between the religious philosophy of *Tantra* and the truth of the Veda:

*tasmāt vedātmakam śāstram
viddhi kaulātmakam priye.*

(Therefore, O dear, know the Scripture which is of the nature of Veda to be of the nature of *Tantra*).

In the opinion of the Tāntrika teachers, the four main classes of Scripture, viz., Veda, *Smṛti*, *Purāṇa*, and *Āgama*, are designed respectively for the four ages or *yugas*, i.e., *Satya*, *Tretā*, *Dvāpara*, and *Kali*. The special type of Scripture that is applicable to the present age of *Kali* would, thus, seem to be *Āgama* or *Tantra*.

Popular Hinduism is very much influenced by the *Tantras*. Household and temple ritual, and the observance of fasts and feasts, which we described in an earlier chapter, follow mainly the directions given in the *Tantras*. While there are restrictions of caste, etc., regarding the Vedic rites, the *Tantras* make no such reservations. They are open to all castes and both sexes. The *Gautamīya-tantra* declares:

*sarva-varṇādhikāraś ca
nārīṇām yogya eva ca.*

(All castes are eligible; and women too are competent.)

The *Tantras* have spread to areas even beyond India. Bhāratavarṣa, which is much wider than our present

India, is divided into three parts called *Krāntas*, viz., *Viṣṇu-krānta*, *Ratha-krānta*, and *Aśva-krānta*, each having sixty-four *Tantras* allocated to it. According to one account, the land east of the Vindhya Hills, extending upto Java, is *Viṣṇu-krānta*. The country north of the Vindhya, including Mahā-cīna, is *Ratha-krānta*. And, the rest of the country westward is *Aśva-krānta*. Buddhism, which is the religion of many peoples in Asia, has its own *Tantras*. In Hinduism, the names of five Tāntrika cults are generally mentioned: Gāṇapatya, Saura, Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, and Śākta. At present, there are not many followers of the first two. Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism are the major cults. Śaktism it was that specialized most in the Tāntrika modes of worship. Due to the malpractices that crept into the cult, it fell from favour for a time. Recently, however, there has been a revival of interest in Śaktism. And, Śaktism has close affinity to Śaivism, since the Goddess of the Śakti cult, according to Hindu mythology, is the consort of Śiva.

2

Gāṇapatya Cult

One of the most popular of the Hindu Gods is the elephant-faced Gaṇapati. His idols are to be found in the temples and households, as also at cross-roads and river-crossings, on tank-bunds and beneath holy trees, and, in fact in all sorts of odd corners and difficult places. People invoke his name and worship him at the commencement of every undertaking. They inscribe his

symbol before beginning to write anything—accounts or literary pieces, letters or even casual lists of purchases. In front of his image, they make gestures expressing penitence for wrongs done, and break cocoanuts as thanksgiving for successes achieved. The Gaṇapati-festival commemorating his birth falls in August-September, and is celebrated all over India, and especially in Mahārāṣṭra on a grand scale.

There are diverse opinions held by scholars with regard to the origin of the Gaṇapati-conception. Some believe that Gaṇapati or Gaṇeśa was originally a non-Āryan harvest-god, and that he later joined the Hindu pantheon. Others maintain that the origins of this god may be discerned in *Ṛg-veda* itself, in the descriptions given there of such deities as the Maruts, Rudra, Bṛhaspati, and Indra. The *Purāṇas* make Gaṇeśa a son of Śiva and Pārvatī, and elder brother of Skanda-Kārtikeya.¹ They contain various legends relating to the birth of Gaṇeśa—some of them assigning him to a single parent, either Śiva or Pārvatī, and some others making him

¹ There is a cult devoted to Skanda-Kārtikeya. It is called *Kaumāra*, from Kumāra meaning the 'son' of Śiva and Pārvatī. Some of the other names by which this God is known are: Subrahmanya, Ṣaṅmukha, and Muruga (in Tamiḷnāḍu). Muruga-worship is especially popular in the South. Temples for Muruga are usually built on hills. The legends about the birth of Kumāra make out that, at the request of the Gods, Śiva made Kumāra to appear in order to lead the celestial forces in battle against the powers of darkness with Śūrapadma as their head. Hence Skanda-Kumāra is referred to as the generalissimo of the Gods. In the *Bhagavadgītā*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa declares. 'Of the generals, I am Skanda' (x, 24). The story of Skanda is to be found in elaborate detail in *Skanda-purāṇa*. Kālidāsa has made the birth of Skanda the theme of a great poem of his, viz., the *Kumāra-sambhava*.

an offspring of both. According to the *Varāha-purāṇa*, Gaṇeśa sprang out of Śiva's forehead. The *Skanda* and *Matsya-purāṇas* declare that he was made by Pārvatī out of the oil and ointments used in her bath. The account given in the *Suprabhedāgama* is that he was born of Śiva and Pārvatī who had assumed the form of an elephant pair. According to some legends, Gaṇeśa was created with an elephant-head, whereas, according to others, this feature was the result of an accident. All these divergent accounts are sought to be reconciled by the *Śiva-purāṇa* which says that the origin of Gaṇeśa is different in different aeons of creation.

As every God has several names, so Gaṇeśa has many. And, the names are all significant in that they are descriptive of his form and function. The term *Gaṇeśa* and its equivalent *Gaṇapati* mean 'lord and leader of Śiva's attendants.' The God has the face of an elephant, *Gajānana*; he has a twisted trunk, *Vakra-tuṇḍa*, one tusk, *Eka-danta*, and a full belly, *Lambodara*. He rides a rat, *Ākhuratha*. He puts obstacles in the paths pursued by men, and removes them also; hence he is *Vighneśvara*, *Vighnarāja*, *Vināyaka*. He bestows success on those who seek his grace, *Siddhi-dātā*, and protects them, *Heramba*. It is the function of removing obstacles and bestowing success that is prominent in the Gaṇeśa-conception. Devotees propitiate Vighneśvara in order that they may be helped to negotiate difficult corners and reach the goals they desire. In one of the *Purāṇas* Śiva addresses his elephant-faced son as follows: 'Thy name shall be Gaṇeśa, Vināyaka, Vighnarāja, the son of Śiva. Success

and disappointment shall proceed from thee. Thou shalt be worshipped and invoked before the other gods on all occasions, for otherwise the object and prayer of him who omits to do so shall fail.'

In the old Hindu mythology, Gaṇapati is a bachelor-god, *brahmacārin*. But, in the later traditions he comes to have two consorts, Buddhi and Siddhi, which only means that he is the Lord of Wisdom and Success. In the oldest representations he is seen without a female companion. In the later images, made especially after the coming into existence of the Gāṇapatya sect (c. the sixth century A.D.), he is assigned a goddess (*devī*) who is seen seated beside him. According to this sect, Gaṇapati is the supreme God, superior even to the Hindu Trinity, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva. The *Gaṇapati Upaniṣad* commences with the following prayer:

‘Om! Obeisance to Gaṇapati! Thou alone art the visible Truth. Thou art the Creator, Preserver, Destroyer. Thou art all this, *Brahman*. Thou art, verily, the eternal Self. All this universe is born from thee, All this universe gains resolution in thee . . . Thou art Brahmā, thou art Viṣṇu, thou art Rudra.’

The followers of the Gaṇapati-cult combine Śakti with Gaṇapati, as we have already seen. Śakti-Gaṇapati is said to have five esoteric forms, which are: Ucchiṣṭa-Gaṇapati, Mahā-Gaṇapati, Ūrdhva-Gaṇapati, Piṅgala-Gaṇapati, and Lakṣmī-Gaṇapati. In this connection, it will be interesting to note that Ānandagiri refers, in his *Śaṅkaradigvijaya*, to six varieties of the Gāṇapatya sect. It is true that all of them regard Gaṇapati as the highest deity. But each assigns to him a different name,

worships him in a somewhat variant form, making use of different *mantras*. The first group of Gāṇapatyas mentioned by Ānandagiri consists of those who worship Mahā-Gaṇapati. Under this form, the Deity should be meditated upon as being red in colour, with ten arms, and with his Śakti beside him; he should be adored as the creator of all the gods, as the supreme Self. The second group is devoted to Hāridrā-Gaṇapati, yellow of colour, with four arms, and possessed of a third eye. Here, the God becomes the leader of all the gods. And, his devotees brand both their arms with the elephant-face of the God having only one tusk. The deity of the third group is Ucchiṣṭa-Gaṇapati, whose form is endowed with four arms, and is figured as in the company of his Śakti. The members of this group wear a red mark on their forehead. They adopt what are known as left-handed practices (*oāmācāra*), and worship their lord with the *pañcatattvas*. There are no restrictions of caste, etc., in this group. The followers of the other three Gaṇapatīs, Navanīta, Svarṇa, and Santāna, claim that they are adherents of the *Vedamārga*. But they too are Gāṇapatyas, since their chief deity is Gaṇapati, the other gods being but parts of him.

The conception of Gaṇapati is not confined to Hinduism. Buddhism, in the course of its evolution, absorbed this conception. It is claimed by some Buddhists that a mystic *mantra* in praise of Gaṇeśa, called the *Gaṇapatihṛdaya*, was revealed by the Buddha himself to his favourite disciple Ānanda at Rājagṛha. When Buddhism spread to other countries, it took along with it some aspects of Hinduism including the conception of

Gaṇapati. In China, for instance, the Tāntric texts and practices were introduced by the Bauddha monks who went there. The doctrine of the *maṇḍalas* of the two parts known as the *Vajra-dhātu* and the *Garbha-dhātu*, which was absorbed by the Mahāyāna from the *Tantras* became very popular in China. These *maṇḍalas* are mystic diagrams wherein Vināyaka has his allotted place. In China, as well as in Japan, Gaṇeśa is represented in two ways. The first is the representation of Vināyaka in single form, and the second is in double form. As regards the former, no comment is necessary. The second is evidently the result of Tāntric influence. Here the figure is of two elephant-faced deities standing opposite each other, interlaced. The sectaries who worshipped this form adopted modes of secret ritual, and were evidently Tāntrikas.

Although the Gaṇeśa-cult began as a sect worshipping a particular god, it soon raised Gaṇeśa to the place of supreme reality. All other gods were either subordinated to him or identified with him. Gaṇeśa now became the sole reality, the highest principle of divinity. This can be gathered from the following two verses taken from the *Śāradā-tilaka*, where the inner significance and purpose of Gaṇeśa-worship is declared:—

*padam stutīnām aṣadam śrutīnām līlāvātāram param
aṣṭamūrteḥ,
nāgātmako vā puruṣātmako vetyabhedyam ādyam
bhaja vighnarājām.*

‘ Pray to Vighnarāja who is the object of all praise, but whom not even the Vedas can attain, who is the

playful incarnation of Śiva with eight forms (*viz.*, earth, water, fire, air, ether, sun, moon and egoity), and about whose shape it is not possible to say whether it is elephantine or human, and who is primeval.’

*vedānta-gītam puruṣam bhaje ’ham
ātmanam ānandaghanam hṛdīstham,
gajānanam yam-mahasā janānām
mahāndhakāro vilayam prayāti.*

‘To the elephant-faced God do I pray, the Puruṣa who is praised in the Vedāntas, the Self which is a mass of bliss, seated in the heart, and by whose greatness the great darkness of ignorance enveloping people rolls away.’

3

Saura-Cult

The Sun is the object of worship in the Saura or Saurya cult. The name of the cult is derived from ‘Sūrya’, which means the sun. The phenomena associated with the sun inspired the Vedic poets to conceive of several solar deities, to whom the name ‘Ādityas’ is given. Originally ‘Ādityas’ meaning ‘sons of Aditi’ (the unbounded), was the group-name of all the gods. But subsequently, the term got restricted in its denotation and came to mean only the solar deities. Of these divinities, the most important are Sūrya and Savitr̥. Sūrya is a very concrete solar deity, as he is the

personification of the orb of the sun. In the Vedic hymns, Sūrya is described as the eye of the gods. He is far-seeing, all-seeing, the spy of the entire world. He beholds all beings, and stands as the witness of the good and bad deeds of mortals. He arouses men from their slumber and impels them to activity. He is the soul of all that moves or is stationary. He is the preeminent god of light. Savitr̥ is the god who stimulates and stirs all beings. He is not only the sun that rises but also the sun that sets. His striking feature is his golden colour. He is golden-eyed, golden-handed, golden-tongued. The well-known *Gāyatrī-mantra* is addressed to him. The scer of this *mantra* meditates on the most resplendent and adorable light of Savitr̥, and appeals to him for the guidance of thoughts and actions along the right paths.²

The sun which is the brightest and the most powerful luminary became the symbol of divine effulgence and energy. The cult that grew out of sun-worship made this luminary the highest God. From Ānandagiri we learn that there were six groups of sun-worshippers. One of them worshipped the rising sun, a second the setting sun, a third the noon-day sun. Yet another group worshipped all the three in the form of a trinity (*tri-mūrti*). The fifth sub-sect conceived of the sun in an anthropomorphic form. The members of the last of these groups bore burnt marks of the sun's orb on their bodies. What characterized all the followers of the sun-cult was a distinctive mark of red sandal on the forehead, as also a garland of red flowers round the neck. All of them

² *Sukla-yajurveda*, xxxvi, 3.

repeated the same *mantra* of eight syllables. According to them, Sūrya was *Brahman*, the source of all beings.

At one time the worship of Sūrya was very popular, and there were many temples dedicated to him. The images of the sun-god to be found in the North bear the influence of the Iranian sun-cult. Varāhamihira describes the features of the image of the sun in his *Byhat-samhitā*; and these features are to be found in the sun-images of the North. The god in these images has his feet and legs covered up to the knees, and there is a girdle round his waist with one end hanging downwards. According to a legend in the *Bhaviṣya-purāṇa*, the sun-cult came to India from Śāka-dvīpa. Hiuen Tsiang, the Chinese pilgrim, gives a picturesque account of a sun-temple at Multan. Probably, this was the first of its kind built in India about the time of Kaniṣka, the Kuṣāṇa king.

The Sun-god is worshipped not only by the sectaries of this cult but also by Hindus in general. He is the god of the agriculturist, and of all those who desire life and energy. One of the festivals, Saṅkrānti (known in the South as *Pongal*), celebrates the glory of the sun, and his bounty in the form of a good harvest. The sun is prayed to not only for earthly prosperity but also for the destruction of sin, and for the attainment of ultimate release. As in all *Tantra*, in the sun-cult also, the final aim is the realization of identity with the supreme Spirit. A text of the *Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad* is in the form of a prayer addressed to the Sun:

*pūṣann-ekarṣe yama sūrya prājāpatya vyūha raśmin
samūha, tejo yat te rūpam kalyāṇatamam tat te paśyāmi yo
'sāvasau puruṣaḥ so 'ham asmī.*

‘O Nourisher (*pūṣan*), the sole Seer (*ekarṣi*)
 O Controller (*yama*), O Sun (*sūrya*), Offspring of
 Prajāpati, spread forth thy rays! Gather thy brilliance
 (*tejas*)! What is thy fairest form—that of thee I see.
 He who is yonder, yonder person (*puruṣa*)—I myself
 am he!’

4

Vaiṣṇava-Cult

We have already seen in the previous chapter that there are many schools of Vaiṣṇava philosophy. What is common to them is their identification of the highest reality with Viṣṇu. In every part of India there are large sections of Hindus who are worshippers of Viṣṇu. In myriad forms he is adored in the temples that are dedicated to him. He appears, for instance, as Nara-Nārāyaṇa at Badrināth, as Kṛṣṇa at Mathurā, Vṛndāvana, Gokula, and Dvārakā, as Jagannātha at Purī, as Viṭhobā at Paṇḍharpūr, as Śrīnivāsa at Tirupati, as Varadarājā at Kāñcī, and as Raṅganātha at Śrīraṅgam. In the legends of the Purāṇas we hear of such sages as Nārada, Śāṇḍilya, and Śuka; and in historical times there appeared several mystic devotees who spread the Vaiṣṇava faith among the masses of the people. The Ālvārs of Tamilnāḍu, the saints of Mahārāṣṭra, Kabīr and Tulsīdās in the Indo-Gangetic valley, and Caitanya in Bengal—to mention only the names of a representative few—were at the spearhead of Bhakti movements in their respective times and areas. There came also the

Ācāryas, such as Rāmānuja, Madhva, Nimbārka, and Vallabha, who built systems of philosophy on the foundations of Vaiṣṇavism. Like several other religio-philosophical traditions of India, the Viṣṇu cult went abroad to the colonies where the Hindus had settled. And, some of the foreigners who came to India embraced the Viṣṇu faith being convinced of its excellence. In an inscription at Besnagar, a *Yavana* (Greek) ambassador, Heliodorus by name, styles himself as a *Bhāgavata*, and refers to his having erected a Garuḍa-dhvaja in honour of Vāsudeva, the God of gods.

Vaiṣṇavism is known by several other names, such as *Bhāgavata*, *Pāñcarātra*, *Sāttvata*, and *Ekāntika*. *Bhāgavata* simply means the cult of Bhagavat, the Lord. Those who follow the *Bhāgavata* tradition draw inspiration for their beliefs from the *Bhāgavata-purāna*, the *Bhagavad-gītā*, and the ‘*Nārāyaṇīya*’ section of the *Mahābhārata*. The *Pāñcarātra-samhitās* are texts of ritual-worship. The most important of these are *Pauṣkara*, *Sāttvata* and *Ĵaya*. The topics that these texts deal with are: (1) the knowledge of Hari (*jñāna*), (2) the method of mental concentration (*yoga*), (3) the construction of temples and the installation of images therein (*kriyā*), and (4) the observance of daily rites and the celebration of festivals (*caryā*). In what are known as *Vaikhānasa-āgamas*, detailed instructions are given for construction of temples and moulding of images. The name ‘*Sāttvata*’ given to the cult of Viṣṇu is probably derived from the name of the clan to which Śrī Kṛṣṇa is said to have belonged. ‘*Ekāntika*’ means ‘having one and only end’. Vaiṣṇavism takes the name

‘*Ekāntika*’ because it regards Nārāyaṇa alone as the one supreme end for man. According to scholars in this field, many streams of early Indian thought have gone into the making of Vaiṣṇavism. Some of the sources of these streams are: (1) the concept of Viṣṇu, the God with three strides, as found in the Veda, (2) the concept of Nārāyaṇa, the cosmic and philosophic God, (3) the concept of Vāsudeva, the historical God, and (4) the concept of Kṛṣṇa, the pastoral God. We need not go into the merits or demerits of the theories concerning each of these concepts. All that we need to remember is that for the Hindu mind these concepts stand for the highest Reality—Hari, the supreme Lord.

The Vaiṣṇava *Tantras* speak of five forms of God: (1) the transcendent (*para*), (2) the grouped (*vyūha*); (3) the incarnated (*vibhava*), (4) the immanent (*antaryāmin*), and (5) the idol (*arcā*). God as the transcendent possesses six attributes, which are knowledge, lordship, potency, strength, virility, and splendour (*jñāna*, *aiśvarya*, *śakti*, *bala*, *vīrya*, and *tejas*). The grouped forms (*vyūha*) of God are four: they are called Vāsudeva, Samkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha. The *Vyūha* Vāsudeva is the same as the transcendent form of the Lord. The other three are named after the elder brother, the son, and the grandson, respectively, of Kṛṣṇa. There is a distinctive function assigned to each of these *Vyūhas* in cosmic creation as well as in the act of redeeming souls. With Samkarṣaṇa, creation assumes an embryonic form; through Pradyumna the duality of Puruṣa and Prakṛti makes its first appearance; and finally, Aniruddha enables the body and soul to

grow. As regards the process of redemption, Samkarṣaṇa promulgates the *Ekāntika-mārga*, Pradyumna helps its translation into practice (*tat-kriyā*), and Aniruddha brings about the fruit of this practice (*kriyā-phala*), which is release. Besides the *Vyūhas*, there are twelve sub-*Vyūhas* derived therefrom. The names of these are recited by pious Hindus everyday. They are: Keśava, Nārāyaṇa, Mādhava, Govinda, Viṣṇu, Madhusūdana, Trivikrama, Vāmana, Śrīdhara, Hṛṣikeśa, Padmanābha, and Dāmodara. The images of Viṣṇu are distinguished to represent these twelve forms, by varying the order and arrangement of the four appurtenances, conch (*śaṅkha*), discus (*cakra*), club (*gada*), and lotus (*padma*), held in the four hands of each image. The incarnated (*vibhava*) forms of Viṣṇu are the *Avatāras*. There are several of them mentioned in the *Āgamas*; but the chief of them are ten: Matsya (Fish), Kūrma (Tortoise), Varāha (Boar), Nārasimha (Man-Lion), Vāmana (Dwarf), Paraśurāma, Rāma, Bala-rāma, Kṛṣṇa, and Kalki. The principle of incarnation is set forth in the *Bhagavad-gītā* where Śrī Kṛṣṇa declares: 'Whenever *dharma* declines and *adharmā* is on the ascendant, I incarnate myself in every age, in order to protect the good and punish the wicked'. The immanent (*antaryāmin*) form of the Lord is the theme of a section of the *Bṛhadāranyaka* where *Brahman* is described as the inner ruler, immortal. This is the form which is favoured by those who are given to the practice of meditation. The idol is the most concrete of God's forms. It is called *arcāvātāra*; and the belief is that God descends into the idol and makes it divinely alive, so that he

may be easily accessible to his devotees. The idols such as those installed in the shrines mentioned at the beginning of this section are regarded as permanent incarnations, and reservoirs of the redemptive mercy of God. Śrī Pillailokācārya, a Vaiṣṇava teacher of South India, makes the following comparisons: the attempt to comprehend the transcendent form is like getting water from the other world for quenching thirst; the *Vyūha* form is like the legendary ocean of milk which also is not easy of access; the immanent form is like subterranean water which is not readily available to a thirsty man although it is right underneath his feet; the incarnated forms are like the floods that inundate the country for a while but do not last along; and the *arcā* is like the stagnant pool from which anyone anytime could slake his thirst.

The ultimate goal, according to all forms of Vaiṣṇavism, is enjoying the presence of Nārāyaṇa. Opinion among Vaiṣṇavas is divided upon the question whether effort on the part of the devotee is required or not for reaching the goal. But all are agreed on the fact that without God's grace (*anugraha*) the goal cannot be reached. The divine grace is natural (*svābhāvika*) and unconditional (*nirhetuka*). God only waits for some pretext to save the soul. Even an act remotely connected with the Holy, such as the unwitting utterance of God's name, is sufficient to set the redemptive power of grace to operate. In this act of the operation of grace, the office performed by Śrī, the chief consort of Nārāyaṇa, is unique and significant. She is all tenderness towards the souls, her children, and intercedes with her

Lord on their behalf. By virtue of her motherhood in relation to the souls and wifeness in relation to the Lord, she is eminently fitted to play the role of mediator between the two.

According to Vaiṣṇavism, Nārāyaṇa is not only the end (*upeya*) but also the means (*upāya*). Because he is the giver of fruit and bestower of grace, he is the ever-attained means (*siddhopāya*). As auxiliary to this means, the three *yogas* are to be resorted to—*karma*, *jñāna*, and *bhakti* which constitute the to-be-attained means (*sādhyopāya*). By *karma-yoga* the soul acquires self-purification and self-control. By *jñāna-yoga* it comes to realize its own nature. By either method it gains self-intuition (*ātmāvalokana*) which makes it eligible to pursue *bhakti-yoga*. *Bhakti* is the royal road to God-realization. By unwavering devotion to God, the soul attains communion with him, and gets absorbed in him. Describing the state of the devotee who has gained his end, Nārada says in his *Bhakti-sūtra*: 'It is as if a dumb man who has tasted delicious food could not speak about it. It could be revealed only to the chosen few. For, it is an experience pure and selfless, subtle, unbroken, and ever expanding. A man who has once experienced love will see that alone, hear that alone, and speak of that alone, for he ever thinks of that alone.'

The highest stage in God-love is called *prapatti*, which is absolute self-surrender. This is open to everyone without any regard to social status, intellectual attainments, etc. The ingredients of *prapatti* are said to be (1) wishing for what is agreeable to the Lord, (2)

desisting from what is disagreeable to him, (3) firm faith that he will save, (4) soliciting his protection, (5) placing oneself at his service, and (6) a feeling of littleness.

In what are called the three secrets (*rahasya-traya*), the Lord himself has expounded the technique of self-surrender. The three secrets are known as *mūla-mantra*, *dvaya*, and *carama-śloka*. The *mūla-mantra* is the eight-lettered formula whose meaning is 'Om! Salutation to Nārāyaṇa!' The *dvaya-mantra* brings out the implication of the *mūla-mantra* as follows: 'I take refuge at the feet of Śrīman-Nārāyaṇa. Salutation to Śrīman-Nārāyaṇa!' The meaning of this formula is that redemption is the result of Śrī's mediation, and that the soul should realize its utter destitution and seek no other refuge than the Lord. The *carama-śloka* is the last instruction of Śrī Kṛṣṇa to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad-gītā*. Here the Lord teaches how the surrender is to be made (xviii, 66):

*sarva-dharmān parityajya
mām ekam śaraṇam vraja,
aham tvā sarva-pāpēbhyo
mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ.*

‘Renouncing all *dharmas*, take refuge in me alone. I shall release thee from all sins. Grieve not’.

Here, *prapatti* is explicitly enjoined as the sole means for the release of the soul. All the *sādhanas*, such as external worship, deeds of piety, study of Scriptures,

Yogic meditation, etc., are only auxiliaries that may lead to the final act of surrender.

As in the other *Tantras*, in Vaiṣṇavism also, worship involves the use of mystic sound-formulae (*mantra*) and diagrams (*yantra*). As an example of the use of the letters of the alphabet in *mantras*, we may cite the following from the *Ahirbudhnya-saṃhitā*. There it is stated that each letter of the alphabet has (1) three Vaiṣṇava forms, namely 'gross', 'subtle', and 'highest', expressed by certain names of Viṣṇu, (2) one Raudra form named after one of the Rudras, and (3) one Śākta form being the name of one of the limbs, organs, or ornaments of the Śakti of Viṣṇu. For instance, the *K* sound is expressed in the Vaiṣṇava alphabet by the name Kamala (lotus), Karāla (lofty), and Parā Prakṛti (supreme nature); the Raudra alphabet by the name Krodhīśa (lord of the angry); and in the Śākta alphabet by the thumb of the right hand of the Goddess. It is said that in the *mantras* connected with Viṣṇu, Śiva, and Śakti, the respective alphabets should be employed. The purpose of this technique is to preserve the secrecy of the *mantras*, and to provide the key to their interpretation. As an example of the mystic diagrams, we may refer the reader to the *Sudarśana-yantra*, the details of whose construction and method of worship are explained in the *Ahirbudhnya*.

Viṣṇu of the Vaiṣṇava *Tantra*, even as Śiva of the Śaiva and Śakti of the Śākta, is not a sectarian god. In all these *Tantras*, it is only the name that varies, their content remaining the same. It is generally recognized that the Reality which is referred to by the divine names

is identical and that it can be reached through different approaches. A great devotee of Viṣṇu says in a verse:

*yam śaivāḥ samupāsate śiva iti brahmeti vedāntinaḥ,
buddhā buddha iti pramāṇapaṭavaḥ karteti naiyāyikāḥ,
arhann-ity-atha jainasāsanaratāḥ karmeti mīmāṃsakāḥ,
so 'yam vo vidadhātu vāñcitaphalam trailokya-nātho hariḥ.*

‘He whom the Śaivas worship as Śiva; the Vedāntins as *Brahman*; the Buddhists as the Buddha; the Naiyāyikas, who are experts in epistemology, as the Creator; those who delight in the teachings of Jina as the Arhat; and the Mīmāṃsakas as sacrifice—may that Hari, the lord of the three worlds, give you the desired fruit.’

5

Śaiva Cult

In the chapter on the Philosophies, we had occasion to discuss the tenets of some of the schools of Śaivism. Śaivism is also a *Tantra*, like Vaiṣṇavism. It is devoted to the worship of Śiva. The followers of Śaivism are to be found in every part of India. The temples dedicated to Śiva abound everywhere—from Amarnāth and Kedārnāth on the Western Himalayas and Paśupatināth in Nepāl, through Kāśī, Avantikā, Ujjayinī, Somanāth, Śrī-śailam, Kāñcī and Cidambaram, besides many others, to Rāmeśvaram situated at the gateway to Laṅkā. The towering spires of some of these magnificent temples bear testimony to the pervasive and beneficent

influence of Śaivism on large sections of our people. This cult, like some of the others having their origin in India, has, in the past, spread to other lands such as Java and Bali, Campā and Cambodia.

Śaivism is rich in philosophical variety. As in Vedānta, so in Śaivism, variations of philosophical doctrine are to be found. There is here the entire range from pluralistic realism to absolute monism. Some of the early sub-sects of Śaivism are the Pāśupata, the Kālāmukha, and the Kāpālika. The extreme followers of some of these observed what is called the great vow (*mahāvṛata*), consisting in using human skull as eating vessel, besmearing the body with the ashes of corpses, etc. Then arose the classical schools of Śaivism, such as the *Trika* or *Pratyabhijñā* in Kashmir, Vīraśaivism in the Kannaḍa country, and Śaiva-siddhānta in the South. In the Śaiva-siddhānta literature, twelve other forms of Śaivism are enumerated, beginning with Pāśupata and ending with Śivādvaita.

All the schools of Śaivism are agreed on regarding Śiva as the supreme reality. In the *Ṛg-veda* Rudra figures as the God who is implored for warding off evil and for making benefactions. Sāyaṇa, the commentator on the Vedas, gives as one of the derivations of the word 'Rudra' the meaning 'he who drives away sin and suffering'. The expression 'Śiva' also means 'he who attenuates sin'. Some scholars consider 'Śiva' to be a euphemistic epithet of the terrible Rudra. But there seems to be no need for such a tortuous explanation, for right from the beginning of the conception of Rudra his auspicious nature is evident. In the *Śata-rudriya*

of the *Yajur-veda*, which is a moving litaney addressed to Rudra, some of the well-known epithets of the God occur: Bhava, Śarva, Paśupati, Nilagrīva, Śitikaṅṭha, Śambhu, Śaṅkara, Śiva and Śivatara. In the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* it is declared: 'Rudra is the One God; there is no second to him. He rules all the worlds with his ruling powers. He creates all beings, protects them, and withdraws them together at the end of time'. Śiva for the Śaivas, as the God of every Hindu *Tantra*, is not simply one member of the Trinity, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Rudra; he is the supreme Lord (*parameśvara*), the self of all beings, immutable and ever perfect.

Detailed procedures of ritual worship and contemplation, which serve to release the soul from bondage, are set forth in the *Śaiva-Āgamas*. There is the following description of the *Pāśupata* rite in the *Atharvaśira Upaniṣad*: 'This is the *Pāśupata* rite, "Agni is ashes, Vāyu is ashes, water is ashes, dry land is ashes, the sky is ashes, all this is ashes, the mind, these eyes are ashes." Having taken the ashes while uttering these words, and rubbing himself with them, let a man touch his limbs. This is the *Pāśupata* rite for the removal of the animal bonds'. The competence to perform this and other rites is acquired through *dikṣā* (ceremonial initiation). As in other *Tāntrika* cults, so in Śaivism emphasis is laid on the need for *dikṣā*. The ceremony varies according to the grade of spirituality already attained by the devotee concerned. But in all the varieties, certain identical procedure is adopted and the same principle is observed. For instance, the performance of *dikṣā* ceremony involves the use of *kuṇḍas* (receptacles for

the sacred fires) and *maṇḍalas* (mystic diagrams). The presence of Śiva is invoked in *kumbhas* (pots filled with water), and *homas* (fire-offerings) are made to the accompaniment of the appropriate *mantras*. The belief is that Śiva himself is present in the *ācārya* to initiate the devotee in the Śaiva path. And, it is a conviction with the Śaivas that *dīkṣā* is necessary for making the soul pure and thus enabling it to gain the eligibility for release.

We have already explained the various stages that the soul reaches in its progress towards the goal. The methods it has to adopt are *caryā*, *kriyā*, *yoga*, and *jñāna*. The experiences it gains are residence in the realm of God (*sālokya*), getting to be in the vicinity of God (*sāmīpya*), gaining the form of God (*sārūpya*), and absorption in God (*sāyujya*). In a verse of the *Śivānandalaharī*, Ācārya Śaṅkara refers to these four grades of experience. Addressing Śiva, the Lord of Bhavānī, he says: 'O Lord! *sārūpya*, sameness of form with you, comes to me easily through worship of you; *sāmīpya*, nearness, through chanting your names, Śiva, Mahādeva; *sālokya*, sameness of residence, through the company of and conversation with those who are experts in *Śiva-bhakti*; and *sāyujya*, ultimate union, through the contemplation of your form which comprises all beings, moving and non-moving. Indeed, I have gained my end!'

sārūpyam tava pūjane

śiva-mahādeva 'ti sankīrtane

sāmīpyam śiva-bhakti-dhurya-janatā-

sāṅgatya-sambhāṣaṇe,

*sālokyam ca carācarātmaka-tanu-dhyāne
bhavānīpate
sāyujyam mama siddham atra bhavati svāmin
kṛtārtho'smy aham.*

The path of union with Śiva (*śiva-yoga*) is said to consist of five factors, namely knowledge of Śiva, devotion to Śiva, contemplation of Śiva, the Śaiva-vow, and the worship of Śiva. He who has not learnt to worship Śiva is to be regarded as a mere animal that goes round the cycle of *samsāra* hundreds of times.

*jñānam śiva-māyam, bhaktiḥ śaivī,
dhyānam śivātmakam,
śaiva-vratam, śivārceti,
śiva-yogo hi pañcadhā,
śivārcana-vihīno yaḥ
paśureva na saṁśayaḥ,
śata-samsāra-cakre 'sminn-
ajasram parivartate.*

The soul that has attained to union with Śiva is free from all fear. It has no bonds, having been saved from the transmigratory rapids. It experiences through Śiva, and sees Śiva everywhere. The sage of the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* gives expression, in a grand passage, to his vision of Rudra-Śiva in all beings, in man and in woman, in the young and in the old, in every birth, everywhere.

*tvam strī tvam pumān asi
tvam kumāra uta vā kumārī,
tvam jīrṇo daṇḍena vancasi
tvam jāto bhavasi viśvatomukhaḥ.*

‘Thou art woman. Thou art man. Thou art the youth and the maiden too. Thou as an old man totterest with a staff. Being born, thou becomest facing in every direction’.

6

Śākta Cult

Of all the *Tāntrika* cults, the Śākta has suffered most, on account of misunderstanding and malpractice. Many people came to see in it only ‘lust, mummery, and black magic’ replete with ‘silly and vulgar superstition’. But if one took the trouble of studying the *Śākta Tantras* with a view to understanding them, one would find much sense in the principles taught therein.

Philosophically, Śākta-darśana is a type of non-dualism. Reality, according to it, is non-dual (*advaita*); it is of the nature of existence-consciousness-bliss (*sac-cidānanda*). It is *nirguṇa* in the sense that there are no distinctions in it. Nothing is real apart from it. All things are identical with it. The non-dual reality manifests itself as the world of plurality through the power of *māyā*. So far the Advaita of Śāktism agrees with that of Śāṅkara. But, while for Śāṅkara *māyā* is the principle of illusion veiling the real *Brahman* and projecting the non-real world, for Śāktism it is a real power really manifesting itself in the form of the variegated universe. In this respect the teaching of Śāktism is identical with that of Kāśmīra Śāivism. Both of them consider the ultimate reality to be Śiva-Śakti,

Consciousness-Power. Śiva is the stasis of consciousness, while Śakti is its kinesis. The *Śākta Tantras* represent this truth by the figure of five corpse-like Śivas supporting the throne of the World-Mother, set in the wish-granting groves of the Isle of Gems (*Maṇidvīpa*) the golden sands of which are laved by the still waters of the Ocean of Immortality (*amṛta*). Both stasis and kinesis are required for the evolution, preservation, and involution of the world. While Śiva is the basic foundation of creation, Śakti is its moving principle. Two aspects of Śakti are to be distinguished: *vidyā* or *cit-śakti*, and *avidyā* or *māyā-śakti*. *Cit-śakti* is of the nature of illumination or consciousness (*prakāśa*). *Māyā-śakti* is the same consciousness that veils itself and projects the world. It is the potency of becoming, the seed of evolution (*vimarśa*). Through *māyā* the One becomes the Many, the Infinite finitizes itself, the Supreme Spirit evolves into the world of Mind, Life, and Matter. The evolution, however, does not affect, in any real sense, the nature of Śiva, who is not only of the form of the universe (*viśvamaya*) but is also beyond it (*viśvottīrṇa*).

There is a very near kinship between Śaktism and Śaivism, especially that form of Śaivism which is associated with Kashmir. For both, as we have said, Reality is Śiva-Śakti. The only difference consists in the shift in the emphasis on the one or the other of the two aspects of reality. For the Śaiva, Śiva is the predominant principle, whereas for the Śākta, Śakti is the dominant factor. The Śākta concept of the motherhood of God is a fascinating one. In a world which is so much

male-dominated and prone to be profane, the Śākta emphasis on Divine Motherhood is very desirable. In Śākta-darśana, the woman, especially as mother, is assigned the first place of honour. An essential feature of Śākta *sādhana* is the ritual worship of women and girls. The Śākta *Tantras* prohibit inflicting injury on women, and put a ban on such practices as the *sati*. Even in sacrifices, they insist, female animals should not be immolated. The *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra* prescribes a whole day's fast to the man who speaks rudely to his wife, and enjoins the education of girls before their marriage. The Muslim author of the *Dabistan* says: 'The *Āgama* favours both sexes equally. Men and women equally compose mankind. This sect hold women in great esteem and call them Śaktis and to ill-treat a Śakti—that is, a woman—is a crime.'

Not knowing the truth of the emphasis laid on the Mother-principle in Śaktism, a Western critic characterizes it as 'a doctrine of suffragette Monists: the dogma unsupported by any evidence that the female principle antedates and includes male principle, and that this female principle is the supreme Divinity'. The obvious reply to such a criticism is that Śakti is woman only figuratively and symbolically. Śakti is God as the principle of productivity; and the Śākta gives it the female form for purposes of worship. In truth, however, the ultimate reality is neither male nor female. In the words of a Tāntrika text,

neyam yoṣit na ca pumān
na ṣaṇḍo na jadaḥ smṛtaḥ.

‘This is neither woman nor man, nor what is neuter nor what is unconscious.’ A hymn addressed to Śakti in the *Mahākāla-samhitā* runs thus:

‘Thou art neither girl, nor maid, nor old. Indeed thou art neither female, nor male, nor neuter. Thou art inconceivable, immeasurable power, the Being of all which exists, void of all duality, the supreme *Brahman*, attainable in illumination alone’.

What is extremely important in *Śākta-tantra*, as in all *Tantra*, is the teaching about the ways of worship one should adopt in order to reach the human goal which is *mokṣa* (release). The Śākta conception of the goal is not different from that of Advaita-Vedānta, which is the realization of the non-duality of the supreme Spirit. But the one difference between Śaktism and Advaita is, as already pointed out, that for the former the process of the One becoming the Many is real, whereas it is not so for the latter. Hence, the *sādhana* for the Śākta consists in a life of ceaseless activity and meditation. He does not avoid the world, but embraces it in order to overcome it. He sees the workings of the Divine everywhere, even in things and functions that are ordinarily held to be despicable and low. This is the reason for the adoption by the Śākta of the so-called ‘left-handed’ practices. The true meaning of the expression ‘left’ (*vāma*) is ‘reverse’ process towards the goal. The soul is carried away from its true nature as Śiva by the ‘outgoing’ process. If it has to go back to its source, it must follow the ‘reverse’ process. The main purpose of the *sādhana* is to switch on the return current so that the soul may regain its lost identity with Śiva.

The *Śākta-tantras* classify the souls into three ascending groups: *paśu*, *vīra* and *divya*. *Paśu* is the soul in bondage. Through *sādhana* it has to rise to the other two grades in succession, viz. the heroic (*vīra*) and the divine (*divya*). The objective of this ascent is that the soul should cast off its animal dispositions and become completely divine. Expressed in the language of the three *guṇas*, the soul should overcome *tamas* by *rajas* and *rajas* by *sattva*. The discipline that the soul should adopt will naturally depend on the level in spiritual evolution that it finds itself in. The *Kulār-ṇava-tantra* speaks of seven *ācāras* in sequence: Veda, Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, Dakṣiṇa, Vāma, Siddhānta, and Kaula. Of these seven, the first three are designed for the *paśu-jīva*, the next two for the *vīra*, and the last two for the *divya*. The first three *ācāras* stand respectively for *karma*, *bhakti*, and *jñāna-mārgas*. The emphasis in the Vedic discipline is on ritual, in the Vaiṣṇava on devotion, and in the Śaiva on knowledge. The fourth *ācāra* which is called Dakṣiṇa seeks to conserve the results gained in the first three. So far, the process is one of going forth. It is at the next stage, Vāmācāra, that the return-current commences. Certain aspects of this discipline involve the use of 'wine' and 'woman'. It is these that have brought on calumny to *Śākta-sādhana*. The ritual connected with these aspects is called *pañca-tattva*, as it involves the offering of five objects to the Deity. As the Sanskrit names of these objects begin with 'm' the ritual is also known as *pañca-makāra-pūjā*. The five objects are: wine (*madya*), meat (*māmsa*), fish (*matsya*), grain (*mudrā*), and woman (*maithuna*). The

Tantras tell us that there are three ways in which this ritual may be performed, each subsequent way being superior to each earlier one. The first which is the lowest is the ritual in its gross form. Even here it is to be noted that the significance of the ritual is the sublimation of all life-functions including those of eating, drinking, and mating. The principle underlying the ritual is: 'By that one must rise by which one falls'. The second way of performing the *pañca-tattva* ritual involves substitution. Here, instead of meat, for instance, ginger is used, and instead of wine, cocoanut water. It is not the original objects indicated by the five *m's* that are offered, but their substitutes which are all non-objectionable. The highest mode of the *pañca-tattva* worship is purely an internal process. It depends on no outside material. It consists of *yoga* practices. Here, for example, *go-māmsa-bhakṣana* does not mean eating beef, but placing the tip of the tongue at the root of the throat. Thus it will be clear that the use of the *pañca-tattva* in the literal sense is made only at the lowest level of the *sādhana*. And even then the aim is to achieve for the *sādhaka* self-control. That is why it is specifically stated in the *Tantra-śāstra* that the *pañca-tattva* is for the *vīra*. The *paśu* is not fit for it; the *divya* does not require it. It is a form of *rājasika-sādhana* for which only the *vīra* is eligible. The technique that he has to follow is to consecrate what are usually regarded as impure and repulsive things and acts and learn to look upon them as expressions of the Divine. Here the *sādhaka* is not to stop. He has to go beyond the *vīrabhāva* and attain to the *divya* status. The last

two stages in the *Tāntrika* discipline, viz. Siddhānta and Kaula *ācāras*, complete the process of making the soul divine. Siddhānta means arriving at a final position as a result of reflection upon the relative merits of the path of enjoyment and that of renunciation. This, of course, implies that the *sādhaka* realizes the emptiness of the so-called pleasures, and cultivates dispassion. In the final stage which is Kaula, he pursues the path of renunciation to its conclusion, and realizes *Brahman* which is termed *kula* in the *Śākta* system. Here, as in the other *Tāntrika* traditions, the guiding hand of a *guru* is absolutely essential. It is he that must initiate the aspirant into the path, and lead him on, step by step, to the final goal. The supreme *guru* is Śiva-Śakti, the ultimate principle; of that, the human *guru* is but a terrestrial manifestation.

The technique of *Tāntrika* worship is an art by itself, and involves several phases, ranging from gross physical forms to subtle mental modes. Every item of this technique has a deep significance. The *sādhaka* is asked to start with outer worship (*bāhya pūjā*); but he is not to stop there. He has to go inward by stages through chanting of hymns (*stava*), muttering of *mantras* (*śapa*), and meditation (*dhyāna*), until he attains unity with the non-dual reality (*advaita-bhāva*). In the *Tāntrika-sādhana*, images are used as objects of worship at first. Sometimes these objects bear no definite shape, e.g. the *Śivaliṅga* and the *Śālagrāma*. Gradually the worshipper trains himself to contemplate the Deity in the form of a *yantra* or *cakra* consisting of linear designs, and in the form of a *mantra* or

sound-formula. The process of ritual-worship is a highly complicated one. The worshipper has first to purify his body composed of five elements. This is known as *bhūta-śuddhi*. Then he has to perform what is known as *nyāsa*, which means touching the various parts of the body with the tips of the fingers and palm of the right hand, to the accompaniment of the appropriate *mantra*. After this, he has to invoke the presence of the Deity in the image and thus enliven it. This is called *prāṇa-pratiṣṭhā*. Then the worshipper has to make gestures with his hands indicating thereby the different intentions and wishes he has in mind. These gestures are the *mudras*. After these preliminaries, he has to worship the Deity by bathing the image, adorning it, etc. The objective of all these ritual acts is to make the mind pure so that it may direct its attention constantly towards God.

The *Śākta-sādhana* which makes use of the *Tāntrika* technique of worship in a very detailed and elaborate manner is as fascinating as it is potent. But one must be on one's guard while practising it. If one understands the expressed instructions superficially and acts accordingly, one may go wrong egregiously. What is of utmost importance here is to get behind the mere words and grasp their spirit. For example, a verse of the *Karpūrādi-stotra*, which is a hymn to Kālī, says that the Devī is pleased to receive in sacrifice the flesh, with bones and hair, of goat, buffalo, cat, sheep, camel, and of man. The significance of this statement is that the *sādhaka* has to offer to the Goddess his lust, anger, greed, stupidity, envy, pride, and infatuation with the

things of the world. The aim of sacrifice is to surrender the ego to the Deity, and thus to realize the non-difference of the soul from the supreme Spirit. The *Gandharva Tantra* declares the goal of *sādhana* thus:

*aikyam sambhāveyed dhīmān
jīvasya brahmaṇo'pi ca.*

‘The wise one should accomplish the identity of the soul with Brahman’.

7

The Mystic Kuṇḍalinī

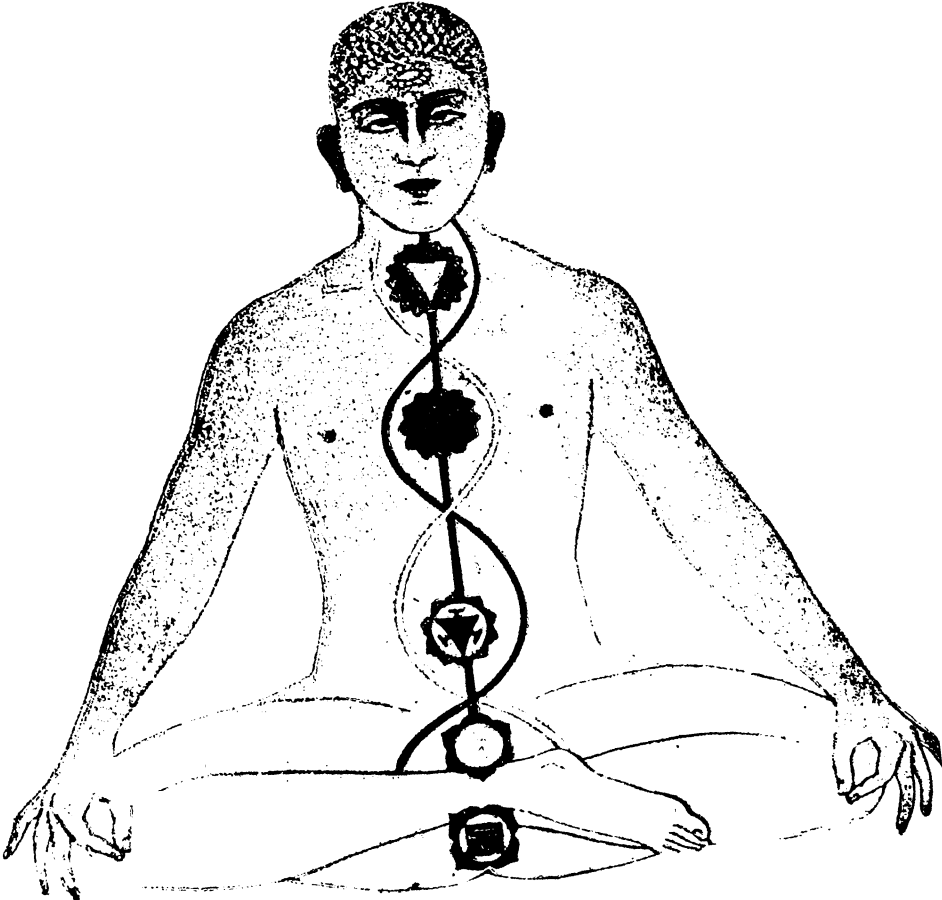
No treatment of the *Tantras* would be complete if reference were not made to *Kuṇḍalinī yoga*. *Kuṇḍalinī* is the psychic power which lies dormant in the soul, coiled up as it were. The purpose of the *yoga* is to rouse this power and make it ascend and gain union with Śiva, the supreme reality.

The concept of Power (*Śakti*) is central to all *Tantra*. It is the Power of the ultimate reality that creates, preserves, and destroys the universe. And, the Power and the Possessor thereof are non-different. The Power that is responsible for the projection of the external world is the same that sets up what is called the individual person. As without, so within. If we use terms like Universal *Prāṇa* and Cosmic Mind to indicate the basic principle of the world, we may say that the same *Prāṇa* or mind appears as the foundation of

the individual. The breathing process that is obvious in a living being is but the tangible expression of the psychic power. Since in the stage of ignorance it sleeps, as it were, in coils, it is called *Kuṇḍalinī-śakti*. What the *sādhaka* has to do is to awaken it and make it return to the root-reality, after crossing by stages the various orders of evolution.

There is correlation between the psychic body and the physical body. The physical location of the *Kuṇḍalinī* is the lower end of the vertebral column (*Meru-daṇḍa*). The centres of consciousness which the *Kuṇḍalinī* has to pierce through are located in that column in an ascending order. The centres are six in number. Their names are: *Mūlādhāra*, *Svādhiṣṭhāna*, *Maṇipūraka*, *Anāhata*, *Viśuddha*, and *Ājñā*. Beyond them is *Sahasrāra* in the region of the brain. The first five are the centres of the five elements. The sixth is the region of the mind. *Sahasrāra* is the abode of Paramaśiva, the seat of the supreme Consciousness-Bliss. The first five correspond roughly to the five regions into which the vertebral column is divided: coccygeal, sacral, lumbar, dorsal, and cervical. *Ājñā* is placed between the eyebrows. And *Sahasrāra* is at the top of the brain.

The centres are called *cakras* because each of them is assigned a diagram. They are described as *padmas* because each of them is pictured as a lotus consisting of a particular number of petals. The diagrams beginning from *Mūlādhāra* are those of a square, crescent moon, triangle, hexagon, circle, and circle. The number of petals are four, six, ten, twelve, sixteen, and two, respectively. Just as a form is assigned to each



CAKRAS

Courtesy: Ms. Ganesh & Co., Madras

centre, a set of sounds also is associated with each. The idea is that the evolution of forms and that of sounds are two aspects of the same process. The root-letter (*bījākṣara*) is placed within the diagram of each centre. This letter is the natural sound of the element or category which the centre represents. The root-letters of the first five centres beginning with *Mūlādhāra* are *lam*, *vam*, *ram*, *yam*, and *ham*, which signify respectively earth, water, fire, air, and ether. The root-letter of *Ājñā-cakra* is *Om* which is the basic *mantra*. The fifty letters of the Sanskrit alphabet are distributed over the aggregate of an equal number of petals of the six lotuses. *Sahasrāra* is a lotus of a thousand petals. On these petals are distributed, twenty times over, the fifty letters of the alphabet.

The petals stand for the *yoga-nāḍīs* that meet at the centres. The *nāḍīs*, whose physical counterparts are the nerves, are the channels of the psychic force. Thousands of them are mentioned in the *Tāntrika* texts. Of these, the most important are three: *Iḍā*, *Piṅgalā* and *Suṣumnā*. Of these again, the last is the chief. Placed on the left of the vertebral column at *Mūlādhāra* is the pale *Iḍā* technically called the Moon (*śaśī*); and on the right is the red *Piṅgalā* referred to as the Sun (*mihira*). The *Iḍā* is said to be 'feminine' and the *Piṅgalā* 'masculine'. These two go straight up, alternating from left to right and from right to left; and, having thus gone round all the lotuses, and having reached the *Ājñā-cakra*, they proceed to the nostrils. It is through these *nāḍīs* that the life-force courses its way, in and out. Between these two, and in the interior of the

cerebro-spinal axis, is situated the *Suṣumnā*. This is the outermost of three interior *nāḍīs* within the axis. It has the predominance of *tamas*, and is assigned the fiery red colour. Within it is the lustrous *Vajriṇī-nāḍī* with *rajas* as its dominating factor. And inside this is the pale nectar-dripping *citriṇī* which is *sāttvika* by nature. Analytic subtlety does not stop here. Inside the *Citriṇī* is the *Brahma-nāḍī* which extends from the nether-end of the *Citriṇī*, called *Brahma-dvāra*, to *Sahasrāra* where the supreme Śiva dwells. It is along the *Brahma-nāḍī* that the *Kuṇḍalinī* should be coaxed to mount up, piercing through the centres, to *Sahasrāra*. This path is known as the *Kula-mārga*, the royal road.

The *Kuṇḍalinī-yoga* is also called *laya-yoga*. The principle behind this process is to resolve the grosser in the subtler manifestations of the Real. And, the method consists in guiding the psychic power along with the *jīva* from one stage to another in the ascending order till the highest experience of bliss is gained. The eight limbs of *yoga* we have already discussed should here also be cultivated. Besides, the aid of *mantras*, and through them that of their presiding deities should be sought in order to attain the goal. Of especial importance is the meditation on *Om*. When through these methods *Prāṇa* is made to flow through *Suṣumnā* and the mind is brought under control, the *Kuṇḍalinī* rises, pierces through the six centres, reaches the *Sahasrāra* and realizes its identity with the supreme Spirit. The *Ṣaṭcakranirūpaṇa*, a work dealing with *Kuṇḍalinī-yoga*, describes the final stage of the process thus:

nītvā tām kula-kuṇḍalīm
laya-vaśāj-jīvena sārddham sudhīr
mokṣe dhāmani śuddhapadma-sadane
śiva pare svāmini,
dhyāyed iṣṭa-phala-pradām
bhagavatīm caitanya-rūpām parām
yogīndro guru-pāda-padmayugalāmbī
samādhav yataḥ.

‘The prince of *yogīs*, absorbed in *samādhi* and devoted to the lotus-feet of his *Guru*, should lead the *Kula-kuṇḍalī* along with the *jīva* to her lord, *Paramaśiva*, in the abode of liberation within the pure lotus *Sahasrāra*, and meditate upon her who grants all desires as the auspicious Mother, of the nature of consciousness’.

CHAPTER NINE
LIVING HINDUISM

1

Exemplars of the Perfect Life

ALTHOUGH Hinduism is the most ancient religion, it has always been renewing itself. This perpetual renewal has been the work of an unbroken line of seers and saints —exemplars of the Perfect Life. Even in our own time there have been great men of spirit. In their lives and teachings we find Hinduism living in all its splendour. And, it is through them that the masses of India's people maintain their contact with the truths and practices that constitute their Faith. In this, the concluding chapter, we shall seek to understand the lessons taught, through precept and practice, by four great men of modern India, viz., Śrī Rāmakrishna, Mahātmā Gāndhī, Śrī Aurobindo, and Śrī Ramaṇa. All of them were teachers of the highest order. Each of them, in his own way, represented in himself the loftiest virtues of Hinduism, and showed to mankind the way to achieve the final goal of life.

2

Śrī Rāmakrishna

Śrī Rāmakrishna (A.D. 1836-1886) has been aptly characterized by one of his biographers, Romain

Rolland, as 'the consummation of two thousand years of the spiritual life of three hundred million people.' The wide catholicity of Hinduism, and its rich and varied spiritual experience find expression, in an eminent way in the personality of this nineteenth century saint of Bengal. In an age when secularism was rampant and the children of the soil were becoming aliens to their tradition, Śrī Rāmakrishna was born to preserve the soul of India to posterity. In order that he might play the role for which he came, Destiny brought him from an obscure village of Bengal to the vicinity of Imperial Calcutta to live there the best part of his life.

It was here that, as a lad of twenty, Śrī Rāmakrishna, then known as Gadādhara, commenced his service of the Universal Mother. Although his priestly career at the Dakshineswar Temple started in quietness and with due ceremony, he soon found himself caught in a spiritual storm which carried him to what may appear as strange lands of supernormal experience. To him the image of Kālī was no mere statue in stone; it was a living form of the Divine, and he treated it as such. Describing his mode of worship, his biographers tell us: 'While he sat down to worship, a curtain of oblivion separated him from the outside world, and he was totally unconscious of the presence of the many bystanders who usually gather there to see the worship. Sometimes he would sit motionless for hours together and would hardly come to his own self even when called by his nephew. While uttering the various *mantras* he could distinctly see those phenomena before him which the ordinary priest has merely to imagine.' The normal priest masters the

ritual, but seldom gains the true end of worship. Śrī Rāmakrishna had not much use for ritual; what he offered to the Mother was heart-worship. In the presence of the World-Mother, in Her constant company, the inner fire of this uncommon priest grew; and he was aflame with an ardour for experiencing the Divine in a myriad of ways.

Of the spiritual paths, the *Tāntrika* disciplines are the most difficult and dangerous ones. Many succumb to the snares that lie on the way, because the drag of the senses is too much for them to resist, and their inner life is not adequately developed. The way of the *Tantras* is not the way of 'going forth'; it is, as we have seen, the return-process. It is the way by means of which even in the sordid things of life the beauty of God is to be discovered. One who is impure, if he should take to this path, sinks into sordidness and fails to see the beauty. Śrī Rāmakrishna who was spotlessly pure went through the *Tāntrika-sādhana* without anything untoward happening, and came out of it a hero, with his *vairāgya* (passionlessness) reinforced. The supernatural powers which came to him as a result of the practice of *Tantra-Yoga* he spurned at the command of the Divine Mother. He did not relish even the golden radiance that was imparted to his physical body. 'Take back thy outward beauty, Mother,' he used to cry, 'and give me instead Thy inner beauty, the purity of the spirit.' Outward glitter, even though it may wear the vesture of spirituality, is a source of great harm. Śrī Rāmakrishna demonstrated to the world of spiritual aspirants that it is perfectly possible to achieve success in

Tantrasādhana without falling a prey to outward ostentations.

A wondering world that was watching the God-intoxicated Rāmakrishna thought that he had gone mad. And when the news reached his village-home, his mother got alarmed and sent for him. On the advice of her relations and friends, she decided to get her son married. Surprisingly enough, instead of objecting, Śrī Rāmakrishna not only gave his consent but also indicated the village and family where a bride was waiting for him. He was twenty-three then, and Śrī Śāradā Devī to whom he was married was but six years old. When several years later she came to Dakshineswar to join her husband, she realized what a glorious thing it was to serve him, to become his first disciple, and share with him the divine felicity which comes only to a few.

So far as Śrī Rāmakrishna was concerned, marriage made no difference to his spiritual experiments. After his return to Dakshineswar his practices became only more absorbing and covered all the aspects of the Hindu *sādhana*. His hunger for God was so consuming that it required for its satisfaction a varied and abundant spiritual fare. All the major emotional attitudes towards the Deity Śrī Rāmakrishna adopted in turn, and his appetite only increased by what it fed on. Thus the *saguṇa Brahman* or *Īśvara*, personal God, was realized by him in a variety of ways—the ways taught in the Hindu cults.

There was one more ascent to make. The Great Mother had prepared the way for the final assault. Her child was now set for scaling the heights of the *nirguṇa Brahman*. And, there appeared a trained mountaineer-

to take him along—Totāpuri who, it is said, after years of strenuous *sādhana* had attained *nirvikalpa-samādhi*. Accepting him as his guide, Śrī Rāmakrishna tore the veil of name-and-form, and beheld his individuality dissolving in a limitless blaze of spiritual light. In the experience of the non-dual reality there is no distinction—not even the distinction of experient and object experienced. Employing the language of duality, we say that Śrī Rāmakrishna *had* this experience, that he remained therein for three days, and that he returned to the relative plane of consciousness thereafter. Words, however, cannot describe the non-dual experience, nor mind measure it. It is from our point of view that the *jīvanmukta* continues to tenant a body. It is the saving power of *māyā* that makes the *mukta-mumukṣu* relation possible.

Having gained the transcendent experience of the supreme Spirit, Śrī Rāmakrishna came down to the plane of relativity and turned to the practice of alien faiths such as Islam and Christianity. The Advaita-realization which he had had enabled him to look upon all faiths as but different roads leading to the same destination. His universalism was not the result of a process of rationalization; it was a conviction born of experience. He followed the modes of discipline as advocated in religions like Islam and Christianity, and found that all of them led to God-realization. In his experience we have an authentic evidence of the supremacy and identity of the truth taught in all the faiths. ‘I have practised all religions, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity,’ he declared, ‘and I have also followed the paths

of the different Hindu sects . . . I have found that it is the same God towards whom all are directing their steps, though along different paths. You must try all beliefs and traverse all the different ways once. Wherever I look I see men quarrelling in the name of religion—Hindus, Mohammedans, Brahmins, Vaiṣṇavas and the rest, but they never reflect that He who is called Kṛṣṇa is also called Śiva, and bears the name of Primitive Energy, Jesus and Allah as well—the same Rāma with a thousand names. The tank has several *ghāṭs*. At one Hindus draw water in pitchers, and call it *jal*; at another Mussalmans draw water in leathern bottles, and call it *pānī*; at a third Christians, and call it *water*. Can we imagine that the water is not *jal*, but only *pānī* or *water*? How ridiculous! The Substance is One under different names and everyone is seeking the same Substance; nothing but climate, temperament and name varies. Let each man follow his own path. If he sincerely and ardently wishes to know God, peace be unto him! He will surely realize Him.’ There cannot be a more illuminating commentary than this on the Vedic text: ‘Truth is One; sages call it by various names’ (*ekam sat, viprā bahudhā vadanti*).

With the realization of the non-dual Spirit, Śrī Rāmakrishna’s life had become full. The peace that was now his knew no disturbance because there was no duality in it. He had become a full blown flower, to use one of his similes, and the honey-bees came to drink the nectar. The last years of his life were spent in training a group of disciples, mostly young, who under the leadership of Swāmi Vivekānanda were to found a

Mission in his name and carry his message of universalism in spirituality to every part of the globe.

The story of Śrī Rāmakrishna's life is, in the words, of Mahātmā Gāndhi, 'a story of religion in practice.' Not only did the saint of Dakshineswar reveal to us anew the excellence of the Vedāntic truth that God alone is real, and nothing else, but also he showed the way of realizing this truth through service to humanity. We cannot take a leap to the plenary wisdom without proper equipment. Disinterested service or *karma-yoga* is the best preparation for leading the soul to its goal. He who is callous or indifferent to the sufferings and needs of his fellow-beings cannot make even the least progress towards the Spirit. The Self that is sought to be realized by the secker after Truth is not the narrow self of the individual. It is the Self that is the same (*sama*) in all—the universal Spirit in which there is no division. Hence ego-centricism is a great enemy of spirituality. How can the ego be subdued if not by selfless service? Very often helping those that suffer takes the form of an ostentatious and officious condescension. This, however, blesses neither him that gives nor him that receives. It is God that should be worshipped in the distressed and the downtrodden. Swāmi Vivekānanda proclaimed the faith which he had received from his Master thus: 'The only God in whom I believe is the sum total of all souls, and above all I believe in my God the wicked, my God the miserable, my God the poor of all races.'

Śrī Rāmakrishna's identification with Cosmic Being was so great that he used to say, 'Let me be condemned

to be born over and over again, even in the form of a dog, if so I can be of help to a single soul.' And again, 'I will give up twenty thousand bodies to help one man. It is glorious to help even one man!' Such a sentiment is in total conformity with the teachings of the Upaniṣads and the other sacred books, which are meant for all. And, their meaning should be learnt with a view to translate it into life, from such sages like Śri Rāma-krishna who, to quote the words of his apostle, 'was a living commentary on the texts of the Upaniṣads, was in fact the spirit of the Upaniṣads in human form . . . the harmony of all the diverse thought of India'.

3

Mahātmā Gāndhi

In Mahātmā Gāndhi (1869-1948) we have the instance of a saint of modern India who made the religion of service his life-mission. His greatness as the unquestioned leader of his people and their liberator from the British yoke was all derived from his unflinching faith in the essential goodness of man—a faith which he received from the spirit of religion. His struggle against the racial policy of the rulers of South Africa and his non-violent war against the British political system in India were but two phases of his experiment with Truth.

It was in South Africa that Gāndhi became conscious of a life-mission; and throughout his life thereafter he made it his sole concern to be devoted to that

mission, which was to champion the cause of the victimized and the oppressed as against the insolence and might of those who enslaved and oppressed them. It was a legal assignment that took Gāndhi, then a young barrister, to South Africa in 1893. But he saw there his countrymen, most of whom had gone to South Africa as indentured labourers, living under conditions which no self-respecting individual would willingly suffer. The immigrant Indians were made to submit to endless indignities by the White Settlers of South Africa. And the climax came in 1906 when the South African Government passed an act which placed the Indian population virtually on a level with criminals. Gāndhi organized resistance to this act. The struggle was bitter and long. But Gāndhi and his compatriots were unwavering in their determination to defeat the false doctrine of racialism. More and more of insults came from the Government of South Africa. The resolution of the Indian community became all the more firm to resist inequity and injustice. But all this resistance was, under the leadership of Gāndhi, non-violent in character. The name which Gāndhi gave to this new type of struggle was *satyāgraha*, meaning Truth-force. Success crowned his campaign in 1914, when the Boer prime minister, General Smuts, agreed to remove from the statutes the humiliating measures against the Indians. And now that his mission in South Africa was over, Mahātmā Gāndhi returned to his motherland with all the honours due to a conquering hero.

Gāndhi did not return to his country to rest; for, a long period of struggle against British imperialism

was in store for him. He knew what his mission was going to be in India. Britain had no right to rule India. If the nationals of India had to lead a miserable life abroad, in countries like South Africa, it was because at home the people had no political liberty. And so for over thirty years, Mahātmā Gāndhi endeavoured to rouse the conscience of his people and infuse into them the strength that is necessary for wresting power from the ruling race. On his advent on the Indian horizon, the Indian National Congress elected him as its leader; and under his leadership the Congress became transformed from a petition-making body into a revolutionary organization. But the revolution which Gāndhi strove to bring about was a novel one—it was a non-violent revolution. His was the glory of leading an unarmed people against the most powerful empire the world has ever seen. Success came to Gāndhi, as it did earlier in South Africa, when on August 15, 1947, India gained her independence, though not without geographical mutilation in order to accommodate a new state on her north-western and north-eastern wings. But on the very morning when freedom dawned in India, Gāndhi was slaving away in a corner of Bengal bringing succour to the victims of communal frenzy that had broken out like an epidemic in that part of India. For him there was no distinction between Hindu and non-Hindu, Indian and non-Indian. His supreme ideal was to achieve 'Under Heaven One Family'. It was to facilitate this grand consummation that he struggled in South Africa and India against racialism and imperialism. And it was in vindication of his life-ideal that

he died a martyr on January 30, 1948. On that day India lost the architect of her freedom, and the world a great prophet.

The basic philosophy which inspired Gāndhi is, of course, the *philosophia perennis* which Hinduism teaches in its loftiest form known as *Vedānta*. That there is one undivided and indivisible Spirit, above as below, without as within, beginningless and endless, is the cardinal principle of this philosophy. The theists may call the Supreme Spirit God. Gāndhi prefers to name it Truth. Truth thus conceived is the ground of all existence and the goal of all life. The universe is an expression of that Truth, and all beings are fragments thereof. We are that Truth, though imprisonment within our bodies prevents us from realizing our true nature. But we can free ourselves from our bondage. Birth as a human being is precious because it provides the soul with an opportunity to realize its goal, which is perfection.

How is perfection to be gained? 'Through non-violence,' says Gāndhi. There are several ways of justifying this answer. One of them is that since perfection consists in realizing the Spirit that is identical in all beings, and violence would involve a denial of this truth, the means to realize the goal of perfection is non-violence. Those who believe in a personal God and not in an impersonal Absolute do maintain, it is true, that there is difference between man and man, and between man and his Maker. But even according to them, Love should be the law of life, because God is the common Creator of all beings, and is himself of the nature of Love. Since, in the view of Gāndhi, man is

essentially Spirit and he has to use his body only as expressing the Spirit, any conduct that makes him brutal is evil. The Sanskrit term for non-violence is *ahimsā*, which is one of those untranslatable words. It does not mean mere non-killing or abstention from doing harm to other beings. It connotes harmlessness in thought, word, and deed, as also engulfing the entire universe in boundless love. Complete non-violence in the sense just indicated is, no doubt, an ideal seldom realized by individuals. Nevertheless it ought to serve as the final objective of every seeker after Truth. Just as Euclid's line makes the science of geometry possible, the ideal non-violence ought to be the basis for the true science of life.

Truth and non-violence, then, constitute the twin principle of Gāndhian philosophy. Hinduism was once defined by Gāndhi as 'search after Truth through non-violent means.' It may be said that this is no definition of Hinduism, since the statement would be true of every religion. But that is exactly what Hinduism claims, *viz.*, that the truth of every religion is the same. Gāndhi acknowledged without any reservation his indebtedness to other Scriptures and teachers like the Sermon on the Mount and Tolstoy. In fact, many a Christian admirer of Gāndhi has characterized him as 'Christ returned to earth'. The Mahātmā's religious outlook was universal. Yet he was convinced that for him the best mode of approach to God lay through Hinduism. Denominations do not matter. There is no meaning in a superficial change of labels in religion. To each man his religion is the best. But the love of his own faith should

not make him blind to the fact that there is truth in other religions also. Gāndhi was one of the latest, not only to preach but also to practise the universalism of the Hindu faith. In all this, however, there was nothing new that Gāndhi taught. But it is not possible to understand the significance of his life-mission without a clear grasp of the perennial philosophy which served as his unfailing guide.

What was his life-mission? It was to show to the world that truth and non-violence could be employed as weapons to achieve political and social ends, and that in such employment lay the salvation of humanity. Religious reformers before Gāndhi had taught that truth and non-violence were primarily religious virtues fit to be practised by the competent few. Private individuals and small communities have, in the past, adopted these precepts for governing their own lives. But the revolution that Gāndhi effected was with regard to men's conception of politics. He himself chose the way of politics as the means to his own spiritual perfection. There is nothing inherently bad in political life. It can be as sacred as any pathway to God. But how can this be done? By building a political system and programme on the foundations of truth and non-violence. This was what Gāndhi did in his fight against racialism in South Africa and British imperialism in India. And thus, he became the author of a revolution unique in history—a revolution of goodness and non-violence, of truth and sacrifice.

It was the good fortune of India to have had Gāndhi as her generalissimo. And Gāndhi was also convinced,

even at the start, that his experiment had the best chances of success in India, and, that, if it did succeed in India, the world was bound to follow his way sooner rather than later. He once wrote, 'I believe my message to be universal, but as yet I feel that I can best deliver it through my work in my own country. If I can show visible success in India, the delivery of the message becomes complete.' The reason why Gāndhi considered India to be a fit laboratory for trying out his new tactics of war was that in this country there has been a tradition of non-violence. The three principal religions of India, *viz.*, Hinduism, the parent faith, and its two offspring, Jainism and Buddhism, regard *ahimsā* as the pivotal virtue. And nowhere else in the world is there such great aversion to taking of life as in India.

India needed a leader like Gāndhi because she was being stifled under the British rule and was panting for the free air of independent national existence. The Indian National Congress, which was to be the Army of National Independence, accepted the creed of its leader: to achieve freedom by 'peaceful and legitimate means'. No end, however good, should be gained by bad and questionable means. Political freedom is a legitimate goal of a subject nation. But it should be the fruit, taught Gāndhi, of faultless means: and by 'faultless' he meant 'spiritual and non-violent'. India needs no weapons of steel, he said; she will fight wholly and solely by soul-force.

Satyāgraha is the name for the technique of war devised by Gāndhi. The term, as I have already explained, means Truth-force. It implies holding on to

Truth even in the most testing of times. Evil must be resisted; and it must be resisted not with evil, but with good. The man who adopts this method does not hate his enemy; he endeavours to conquer him by love. He is not a mere passive resister; he resists with the active force of truth and love. This means that he must be prepared, of his own free will and for the sake of his ideal, to undergo pain, privation, and even death. A *satyāgrahi*, i.e., one who follows the path of *satyāgraha*, says Gāndhi, 'may not resort to surreptitious practices. All that the *satyāgrahis* do can only and must be done openly. To evade no punishment, to accept all suffering joyfully, and to regard it as a possibility for further strengthening his soul-force, is the duty of every single one of my followers.'

Two aspects may be distinguished in Gāndhi's programme of *satyāgraha*. These are: non-violent non-cooperation and civil disobedience. The former of these is the method of refusal to associate oneself with wrong. In the realm of politics it means the withdrawal of co-operation from a wicked ruler so that he may be weaned from his wickedness. Any tyrannical political system functions because of the tacit submission to it by the people over whom it has power. If the people resolve not to co-operate with it, then it cannot succeed. Under the category of non-cooperation falls Gāndhi's advice to the Indian nation, in 1920, of withdrawal of children from schools and colleges owned or aided by the Government, boycott of the British courts by lawyers and litigants, etc. But non-cooperation is only a step to the other aspect of *satyāgraha*, viz., civil disobedience, an

expression which was first used by Thoreau. Civil disobedience is rebellion against the laws of the unjust state. The breaking of the salt law in 1930—a law which was most obnoxious, according to Gāndhi, because it taxed one of the primary necessities of life—and the various no-tax campaigns are instances of civil disobedience. But whatever be the method a *satyāgrahi* adopts against the government, he must remain peaceful and non-violent and suffer the consequences of his disobedience cheerfully and with no regrets. This requires, of course, discipline and self-control. If the method of violence takes plenty of training, the method of non-violence must take even more training. To train his soldiers in non-violence Gāndhi gave them a constructive programme. In this programme were included such activities as removal of illiteracy, revival of village industries, adoption of the simple life, etc. And, as the basic foundation of the training, he exhorted his followers to have a living faith in God.

India has attained her political independence by following, in the main, Gāndhi's gospel of non-violence. And, the great leader was hoping that ere long non-violence would be accepted as the means for the regulation of international relations. Not only did he believe that the freedom of India could never be a danger to the world, but also that India's success would serve as a great example to other nations of how the freedom of peoples could be effectively defended against all oppression by non-violent means. 'Non-violence has come to men and will remain,' declared Gāndhi, 'it is the announcement of peace on earth'.

Śrī Aurobindo

It was through nationalist politics that Śrī Aurobindo (1872-1950) came to the practice of religion. During the period of his detention in the Alipur jail he had a profound religious experience, and heard a voice—the voice of the Bhagavān of the *Gītā*—telling him that he was to fulfil a spiritual mission. The voice said: ‘Something has been shown to you in this year of seclusion, something about which you had your doubts and it is the truth of the Hindu religion. It is this religion that I am raising up before the world, it is this that I have perfected and developed through *ṛsis*, saints and *avatārs*, and now it is going forth to do my work among the nations. I am raising up this nation to send forth my word . . . When you go forth, speak to your nation always this word, that it is for the *Sanātana Dharma* that they arise, it is for the world and not for themselves that they arise. I am giving them freedom for the service of the world . . . It is for the *Dharma* that India exists.’

In response to this divine call, Śrī Aurobindo sought seclusion in Pondicherry where he arrived on the 4th of April, 1910. He went there as a spiritual pilgrim, determined to scale the heights of *Yoga*. In his famous Uttara para speech, he describes the way he was attracted to *Yoga* thus: ‘When I approached God at that time, I hardly had a living faith in Him. The agnostic was in me, the atheist was in me, the sceptic was in me, and I

was not absolutely sure that there was a God at all. I did not feel His presence. Yet something drew me to the truth of the Vedas, the truth of the *Gītā*, the truth of the Hindu religion. I felt there must be a mighty truth somewhere in this *Yoga*, a mighty truth in this religion based on the Vedānta'. So, from atheism and agnosticism to *Yoga* and God-realization, it was a rapid and great march. And, this grand march he made in the atmosphere of the *Āśrama* which grew where he had settled. The realization of *Yogic* experience which came to him was not for his private enjoyment; it was meant for all, as, according to him, the goal of spirituality is 'the flowering of the Divine in collective humanity'.

In *The Life Divine* and in numerous other works, Śrī Aurobindo has expounded his philosophy of *Yoga*. In exquisite language clothed in poetic beauty, he gives us not only intimations of the immortal life, but also sketches of the method by which that life is to be gained.

Śrī Aurobindo describes his philosophy as a Monism, while carefully distinguishing it from Śaṅkara's Advaita. His is a monism not exclusive of plurality, but one which affirms the reality of the pluralistic universe. It may be characterized, therefore, as realistic monism. *Brahman*, which is the Upaniṣadic term for the absolute Reality, is both *nirguṇa* and *saguṇa*, and also what is beyond. The Impersonal Divine, *nirguṇa Brahman*, and the Personal Divine, *saguṇa Brahman*, says Śrī Aurobindo, are equal and coexistent aspects of the Eternal. Adopting the well-known Vedāntic expression, he calls the Eternal Reality *Saccidānanda*. 'Saccidānanda' is the

unknown, omnipresent, indispensable term for which the human consciousness, whether in knowledge and sentiment or in sensation and action, is eternally seeking'.¹ In the very description of *Brahman* as *Saccidānanda* we posit three entities and unite them to arrive at a trinity. We say 'Existence, Consciousness, Bliss,' and then we say 'They are one'. The divine Being is not a bare identity; its nature is the triune principle of transcendent and infinite Existence, Consciousness and Bliss.

This is not all that is to be said of Reality. *Sat, Cit,* and *Ānanda*, which Śrī Aurobindo translates as the Pure Existent, Consciousness-Force, and the Delight of Existence, constitute along with the fourth principle, *viz.* Supermind, the higher hemisphere of Being. The lower hemisphere consists of Mind, Life and Matter. While in the higher hemisphere Knowledge reigns, in the lower Ignorance rules. But it should be noted that Mind, Life, and Matter are only subordinate powers of the divine quarternary. Mind is a subordinate power of the Supermind; Life is a subordinate power of the energy aspect of *Saccidānanda*; and Matter is a form of being which is to be traced to the existence aspect of *Saccidānanda*. Together these seven constitute the sevenfold chord of Being. All of them are essential to cosmic creation. 'The higher Trinity is the source and basis of all existence and play of existence, and all cosmos must be an expression and action of its essential reality.'²

It is important to note here that, according to Śrī Aurobindo, Śiva and Śakti are inseparable, and *Cit* is

¹ *The Life Divine*, I. p. 66.

² *Ibid.*, p. 405.

not mere consciousness but consciousness-force which is inherent in the All-Existent. Consciousness has two aspects illuminating and effective, state and power of self-awareness and state and power of self-force, by which Being possesses itself whether in its static condition or in its dynamic movement.³ So, creation means only making explicit what is implicit. That which makes the transition possible is the Supermind which in Śrī Aurobindo's system occupies the place given to *Īśvara* in Advaita.

Śrī Aurobindo calls the Supermind by various names: truth-consciousness, spiritual consciousness, real-idea, creative energy, gnosis, *vijñāna*, etc. The purpose of the Supermind is to serve as the intermediary between the higher trilogy of *Sat*, *Cit* and *Ānanda*, and the lower trilogy of Mind, Life and Matter. 'The Supermind', says Śrī Aurobindo, 'is the beginning and end of all creation and arrangement, the Alpha and the Omega, the starting-point of all differentiation, the instrument of all unification, originative, executive and consummative of all realized or realizable harmonies.'⁴ It is called the Supermind 'because it is a principle superior to mentality and existence, acts and proceeds in the fundamental truths and unity of things and not like the mind in their appearances and phenomenal divisions.'⁵ The logical necessity for postulating such a principle is that otherwise it will be impossible to explain how the spaceless and timeless Absolute became the world of

³ *Ibid.*, p. 400.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

space and time. The Supermind is that which develops all things. It is a Knowledge-Will or Consciousness-Force which is not mental. The mind belongs to the sphere of Ignorance; the Supermind is in the realm of Knowledge.

The world of becoming, then, according to Śrī Aurobindo, is real and is a self-manifestation of the Eternal. It is 'not a figment of conception in the universal Mind, but a conscious birth of that which is beyond Mind into forms of itself.'⁶ 'The universe is a manifestation of an infinite and eternal All-Existent; the Divine Being dwells in all that is; we ourselves are that in our self, in our own deepest being; our soul, the secret indwelling psychic entity, is a portion of the Divine Consciousness and Essence.'⁷ It is true that the universe is not the whole reality; but that is no reason to characterize the universe as unreal. Our universe is, in fact, one of the rhythms of *Brahman*. Each particular thing or soul is 'not really an illusory part of a real whole, a mere foaming wave on the surface of an immobile ocean . . . but a whole in the whole, a truth that repeats the infinite Truth, a wave that is all the sea, a relative that proves to be the Absolute itself when we look behind form and see it in its completeness.'⁸

The relation between the Absolute and the relative is not one of contradiction, but one of dependence, of identity in difference. The most appropriate illustration given by the Vedānta, says Śrī Aurobindo, is 'the

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

⁷ *Ibid.*, II, p. 114.

⁸ *Ibid.*, I, p. 236.

relation of the phenomena of Nature to the fundamental ether which is contained in them, constitutes them, contains them and yet is so different from them that entering into it they cease to be what they now are.⁹ So the Many also are *Brahman* which is not a barren identity exclusive of Multiplicity. The world is not to be annihilated or abandoned, but transformed and transmuted, integrated and unified in *Brahman*.

Then, the crucial question would be: why did *Brahman* manifest itself as the world? For what purpose did the One become the Many? The answer that Śrī Aurobindo gives is that the manifestation is a divine play. 'The immortal and infinite Spirit has veiled itself in the dense robe of material substance and works there by the supreme creative power of Supermind, permitting the divisions of Mind and reign of the lowest or material principle only as initial conditions for a certain evolutionary play of the One in the Many.'¹⁰ Ignorance, in this scheme, is not present in the Supermind, nor in the higher Trilogy. It 'comes in at a later stage, as a later movement, when mind is separated from its spiritual and supramental basis, and culminates in this earth-life where the individual consciousness in the many identifies itself by dividing mind with the form, which is the only safe basis of division.'¹¹ Ignorance which is the principle of division arises only on the plane of the Mind; it comes about as a result of 'some concentration

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 382.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, II, p. 347.

of consciousness absorbed in a part knowledge or part action of the being and excluding the rest from its awareness.¹² And Śrī Aurobindo adds that this concentration and restriction and the consequent separation and exclusion take place not in the true self, but in the force of active being, in *prakṛti*. This exclusive concentration is superficial; it occurs in the superficial man, and not in his inner self; it is of the nature of a limited practical self-oblivion, not an essential and binding self-ignorance. Yet it is the root of that which works as the ignorance, and is the action of the real self, the integral conscious being, the integral force of being, which itself is not ignorant.

There is a double movement at work in Reality, says Śrī Aurobindo, a descent and an ascent. 'The Divine descends from pure existence through the play of Consciousness-Force and Bliss and the creative medium of Supermind into cosmic being; we ascend from Matter through a developing life, soul and mind, and the illuminating medium of Supermind towards the Divine Being.'¹³ These two movements are really complementary to each other; there is no contradiction between them. The ascension enables the divine descent; the descent fulfils that for which the ascension aspires and which it makes inevitable. In the past, saints and sages have risen from the lower levels to the higher. But they did not attempt, says Śrī Aurobindo, to bring the Supermind down into the consciousness of the earth and

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 349.

¹³ *Ibid.*, I, p. 404.

make it fixed there. To so bring it down is the aim of Śrī Aurobindo's *Yoga*.

The objective of *pūrṇa-yoga* is not to cancel the universe of plurality, but to make it consciously divine. Spiritual ascent, according to Śrī Aurobindo, is not secured by the negation of that which is lower, but by its complete appropriation and integration in a higher level of experience. Spiritual consciousness, which is supramental consciousness, 'does not abolish the universe; it takes it up and transforms it by giving it its hidden significance. It does not abolish the individual existence; it transforms the individual being and nature by revealing to them their true significance, and enabling them to overcome their separateness from the Divine Reality and the Divine Nature.'

What the individual aspirant should do is to let the power of the Spirit work more and more freely within him, by shifting his centre from the ego to the Spirit. He should surrender his entire being to the Divine, and allow the power of God to transform his nature. By stages, then, will he rise to the pinnacle of supramental realization. But he will not stay there in an exclusive enjoyment of the divine bliss. The integral *Yogī* will descend again, and bring down the light and power of the supramental Truth-Consciousness to the level of physical consciousness in order to divinize it. The ideal of divine humanity will then be accomplished, and the world will be transformed into the Kingdom of God. It was towards this consummation that Śrī Aurobindo strove; through integral *Yoga* his aim was to transmute animal humanity into a race divine.

5

Śrī Ramaṇa

Śrī Ramaṇa Maharṣi (1879-1950) was an incarnation of pure Advaita, if such an expression as ‘incarnation’ is in the present context permissible. The highest experience of non-duality became his quite early in life; and he was to an amazed world the *living Upaniṣad*, the eternal impersonal principle in a personal garb. But for Masters such as he, humanity with its congenital blindness cannot hope to receive the saving light of Spirit. It is because of them that we can know that the truths of which we read in the sacred books are not mere speculations but are realizable here and now.

Śrī Ramaṇa left home when he was a boy of seventeen, and went to Aruṇācala where he spent the rest of his earthly life. It was in response to the call of the Spirit within that he snapped the ties of home and took to the life of the Alone. What made him recognize the call was a great experience which he had sometime earlier, and which proved to be so potent in its influence upon him. The experience related to the fear of death. For no reason whatsoever, he was suddenly seized one day with the fear of death. Instead of being shaken by it, he took up the challenge, wanting to solve its mystery. The technique he adopted was to dramatize death, and to work out the consequences in his own mind. As a result of this process, he discovered that the Self is untouched by death, and that he is the deathless Self. Recalling the experience long afterwards for the benefit

of spiritual aspirants, he says: 'The 'I' or my 'Self' was holding the focus of attention by a powerful fascination, from that time forwards. Fear of death has vanished at once and for ever. Absorption in the Self has continued from that moment right up to this time. Other thoughts may come and go like the various notes of a musician, but the 'I' continues like the basic or fundamental *śruti* note which accompanies and blends with all other notes.'¹⁴

To Aruṇācala went Venkataramaṇan, as Śrī Ramaṇa was then called, being attracted by its very name. He did not know what the word meant, or where the place was. But when he arrived there guided by the invisible hand of the Divine, he made the holy Aruṇācala holier, and turned it into a port of call for spiritual aspirants from all over the world. Aruṇācala (Tiruvaṇṇāmalai in Tamil) is one of the most sacred places of pilgrimage for the Hindus, as God is worshipped there in the form of Light. Once a year the holy beacon is lit on the top of the hill; and thousands of people go there to see the light and adore it. It was significant that Śrī Ramaṇa, who was all spiritual illumination beaming forth always without let or hindrance, chose Aruṇācala as his abode. Here for over half a century spiritual pilgrims came from everywhere in order to carry a spark from this eternal flame, and nurture it into a light that will lead them to the final beatitude.

The exalted state of egolessness in which Śrī Ramaṇa ever was is extolled in the Scriptures as the

¹⁴ See B. V. Narasimhaswamy's *Self-Realization* (Sri Ramanasramam, Tiruvaṇṇāmalai, 1953), Fourth Edition, p. 22.

highest experience of non-duality. It is the natural status (*sahaja-sthiti*) of the Self—the status of one who has discarded the shackles of ignorance. Such a one is referred to by such terms as *jīvan-mukta* (liberated while living), *sthita-prajña* (one with steady wisdom), *triguṇātīta* (one who has gone beyond the three *guṇas*), etc. In Śrī Ramaṇa we had a glorious contemporary example of one who, though appearing to tenant a body, was not in the least bound by it.

Apparently, Śrī Ramaṇa seemed to take interest in things that happened around him. He recognized people and sometimes talked with them. Even creatures belonging to the sub-human species claimed his attention. He used to lend a helping hand even in the kitchen by dressing vegetables or stitching leaf-plates. But all these modes of action were performed without the least attachment to them. In truth, they were no actions at all, since they were void of egoity. The core of activity had been removed; only the shell remained; and that too for us, the onlookers. Nothing seemed to affect this Rock of Ages. He stood as a witness to all phenomena. The distinction of high and low had no meaning for him. The stranger and foreigner who visited him felt absolutely disarmed and free even at the first sight. One may be foreign to another or look strange; but how can one be alien to oneself? The Mahārṣi who had crossed the boundaries of individuality naturally and effortlessly felt—if we may use such a poor word—one with all. Like the *paṇḍita* of the *Gītā* he looked upon all as the same—the high-born and the lowly of birth, the cow and the elephant, the dog and the dog-eater. These

classifications may have meaning for us who are caught in the network of difference. To him who had *seen* the non-dual Spirit which is *sama*, the same, there was no plurality, no difference.

It was a delightful and unique experience to sit in the presence of the Maharṣi and look at his beatific eyes. One might go to him with a medley of doubts and questions. But very often it happened that these upsurgings of the mind died down and were burnt to ashes as one sat before the sage. One had a foretaste of that pristine state, which the Upaniṣads describe as the experience wherein the knot of the heart (*i.e.* ignorance) is cut and all the doubts are dispelled. One stepped back and watched how the turbulent mental stream quietened down and received an undisturbed reflection of the self-luminous Spirit. What one might succeed in attaining after a prolonged course of *yogic* discipline, one got with perfect ease and facility in the proximity of the Maharṣi. True, this experience might not stay long. One might get back to the world and wallow again in the dirt of worldliness. But still, the impress of spirituality that had been gained could never be lost. Seldom was one, the depths of whose soul had been stirred by the sublime look of the sage, without the eagerness to go to him again and receive fresh intimations of the Eternal.

People sometimes went to him in the hope that by his *darsana* their earthly wants would be fulfilled. But very soon they discovered their own foolishness in asking for fleeting pleasures, when the imperishable bliss awaited them. Instead of getting dissatisfied that their cravings went unfulfilled, they would feel thankful that

they had been saved from a delusion and a snare. Naciketas of the *Kāthopaniṣad* was offered by Yama all the pleasures of all the worlds in lieu of self-knowledge for which he had asked; but the true son of spirituality that the boy was, he refused to be tempted into accepting the pleasant in the place of the good. The Maharṣi who to us was the personification of the supreme Good transmuted our lower passions and desires into *mokṣa-kāma*, an intense longing for release.

Some went to Śrī Ramaṇa with a hope to get from him a cure-all for the world's ills. They used to ask him what solution he had for the problems of poverty, illiteracy, disease, war, etc. Social reform was their religion; a re-ordering of society was what they sought after. They framed their question in different ways. What message had the Maharṣi to give to the social reformer? Was it not the duty of every enlightened citizen to strive for bettering the lot of his fellowmen? When misery and squalor were abroad, how could any one who had a feeling heart keep quiet without exerting himself to doing his bit for world-welfare? The invariable answer that the sage gave to all those who put such questions was: 'Have you reformed yourself first?' This does not mean that one should be callous to one's neighbour's sufferings, or that one had not the obligation to foster the good of all. What Śrī Ramaṇa wanted to point out was this. Very often it happens that the so-called social service turns out to be a self-gratification of the ego. In much of what passes for altruism, there is a core of egoism. It is only such service as that which contributes to the reduction of the ego that is the harbinger of good.

And the influence of the ego cannot be lessened unless one knows, however remotely, that the ego is not the Self, that it is only the pseudo-self, responsible for all the evil and misery in the world, and that the final and lasting felicity could be realized only when the root-cause of the ego, *viz.* ignorance, is removed. And so, unless one seeks to know the true Self, one cannot do real service to society. Reform must begin with oneself. He who is on the path renders service to fellow-beings so that his ego may be cleansed and become attenuated and ready to be discarded. And he who has realized the End and has become a *jīvan-mukta* performs work—or more correctly appears to us to perform work—in order that the world may be saved (*loka-saṅgraha*). So self-inquiry is the basis of true service; and self-knowledge is its culmination.

The philosophy of Śrī Ramaṇa—which is the same as that of Advaita-Vedānta—has for its aim Self-realization. Śrī Ramaṇa did not write extensively, nor did he speak profusely. While explaining a point to an inquirer or removing a felt-difficulty of an aspirant, sometimes he used to write down a verse or compose a short statement. It is these that we now have as the works of Śrī Ramaṇa. In a collection of forty verses, called *Ulladu Nārpaḍu*, we have, in *sūtra*-form, the teachings of the Master.

All these teachings centre round the inquiry into the nature of Self, the content of the notion 'I'. Ordinarily the sphere of the 'I' varies and covers a multiplicity of factors. But these factors are not really the 'I'. For instance, we speak of the physical body as 'I';

we say 'I am fat,' 'I am lean,' etc. It will not take long to discover that this is a wrong usage. The body itself cannot say 'I' for it is inert. Even the most ignorant man understands the implication of the expression 'my body'. It is not easy, however, to resolve the mistaken identity of the 'I' with egoity (*ahaṅkāra*). That is because the inquiring mind is the ego, and in order to remove the wrong identification it has to pass a sentence of death, as it were, on itself. This is by no means a simple thing. The offering of the ego in the fire of wisdom is the greatest form of sacrifice.

The discrimination of the Self from the ego, we said, is not easy. But it is not impossible. All of us can have this discrimination if we ponder over the implication of our sleep-experience. In sleep we are, though the ego has made its exit. The ego does not function there. Still there is the 'I' that witnesses the absence of the ego as well as of the objects. If the 'I' were not there, one would not recall on waking from one's sleep-experience, and say: 'I slept happily; I did not know anything.'

We have, then, two 'I's—the pseudo-'I' which is the ego and the true 'I' which is the Self. The identification of the 'I' with the ego is so strong that we seldom see the ego without its mask. Moreover, all our relative experience turns on the pivot of the ego. With the rise of the ego on waking from sleep, the entire world rises with it. The ego, therefore, looks so important and unassailable.

But this is really a fortress made of cards. Once the process of inquiry starts, it will be found to crumble

and dissolve. For undertaking this inquiry, one must possess a sharp mind—much sharper than the one required for unravelling the mysteries of Matter. It is with the one-pointed intellect that the truth is to be seen (*dṛśyate tu agryayā buddhyā*). It is true that even the intellect will have to get resolved before the final wisdom dawns. But upto that point it has to inquire—and inquire relentlessly. Wisdom, surely, is not for the indolent!

The inquiry ‘ Who am I? ’ is not to be regarded as a mental effort to understand the mind’s nature. Its main purpose is ‘ to focus the entire mind at its source.’ The source of the pseudo-‘ I ’ is the Self. What one does in Self-inquiry is to run against the mental current instead of running along with it, and finally transcend the sphere of mental modifications. When the pseudo-‘ I ’ is tracked down to its source, it vanishes. Then the Self shines in all its splendour—which shining is called realization and release.

The cessation or non-cessation of the body has nothing to do with release. The body may continue to exist and the world may continue to appear, as in the case of the Mahārṣi. That makes no difference at all to the Self that has been realized. In truth, there is neither the body nor the world for him; there is only the Self, the eternal Existence (*sat*), the Intelligence (*cit*), the unexcellable Bliss (*ānanda*). Such an experience is not entirely foreign to us. We have it in sleep, where we are conscious neither of the external world of things nor of the inner world of dreams. But that experience lies under the cover of ignorance. So it is that we come

back to the phantasies of dream and of the world of waking. Non-return to duality is possible only when nescience has been removed. To make this possible is the aim of Vedānta. To inspire even the lowliest of us with hope and help us out of the slough of despond, is the supreme significance of such illustrious exemplars as the Maharṣi.

6

Conclusion

A religion that has made it possible, even in this our present sophisticated age, for great spiritual geniuses to rise has a rightful claim to be heard, understood and followed. There is a persistent vitality in Hinduism which refuses to be cowed down or obliterated by obstacles placed in its way. To the fund of world-culture and superior life, it has already made a significant contribution. In the future re-building of world-society its role is not going to be less significant. The lessons that Hinduism has to teach humanity are the following:

(1) Several are the roads leading to God, who is the supreme Spirit.

(2) It is spiritual things that ought to be given the first place. The rest will follow.

(3) Spirituality must express itself as universal love, and in a life of selfless service.

APPENDIX ONE

TWO TALKS ON HINDUISM

1

The Hindu Doctrines

OF the major religions, Hinduism alone has no proper name, for it does not owe its inception to any single prophet or circumstance. The term 'Hindu' is not indigenous; it was coined in the distant past by foreigners who came to India through the north-western passes of the Himalayas; and it simply meant the people who inhabited the Indus-valley, and, derivatively, the faith they professed. The expressions usually employed in the sacred books of India to designate Hinduism are *vaidika-dharma* and *sanātana-dharma* which mean, respectively, the religion of the Vedas and the faith eternal. The Vedas constitute the basic authority for the Hindu doctrines, which received additions and alterations in subsequent religious literature that came to be written not only in Sanskrit but also in the popular languages of India. The truths that are enshrined in these doctrines are held to be eternal because they pertain to the order of spiritual reality.

Almost bewildering is the variety of doctrines that go under the name of Hinduism. It is customary to regard every man of religion as a believer in a personal Deity. But so far as Hinduism is concerned, this is not

an essential requirement. One may be a Hindu and yet not believe that the ultimate reality is a God endowed with the attributes of personality. Even those Hindus who consider the plenary being to be a personal God conceive of Him in different ways. There is the text of the *Rg-veda* which declares that Truth is one, though sages call it variously. So, a unique feature of Hinduism is its catholicity and comparative freedom from dogma. Since the human mind is limited and finite, it cannot comprehend the nature of the total reality; and even the revelation that is made to it is interpreted by it from its own standpoint. Hence the great sages of Hinduism have taught that there are as many religions as there are human minds. 'My Hinduism is not sectarian,' wrote Mahātmā Gāndhī in 1938, 'It includes all that I know to be the best in Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and Zoroastrianism Truth is my religion, and non-violence is the only way of its realization.' Attempting a definition of Hinduism earlier in 1924, the Mahātmā observed, 'If I were asked to define the Hindu creed I should simply say, search after Truth through non-violent means.'

Although Hinduism seems to be a federation of faiths rather than a single religion with a fixed set of dogmas, it is not as if there is nothing common among the cults that constitute Hinduism. The richness and variety of creeds that we have in Hinduism do not mean that there are no basic truths to which every Hindu would subscribe both in belief and in practice. While discussing the main schools of Hindu thought in the present talk, I shall take care to indicate the fundamentals

on which these schools agree. When we come to the area of religious practices—which will be the theme for the next talk—we shall see that the agreement is even more substantial.

Right from the known beginnings of Hindu religious thought there have been two chief currents—one which may be called the theistic and the other absolutistic. All forms of theism recognize a cosmic creator called God, whereas absolutism reduces the plurality of things to one non-dual spiritual reality. While many of the Vedic hymns are addressed to one form or the other of the Deity, there are some in which the metaphysical Absolute is celebrated. In the hymns to Indra and Varuṇa—the most prominent Vedic gods—we come nearest to monotheism. In what is known as the *Puruṣa-sūkta* we have a view of God as immanent in the world as well as transcendent. In the *Nāsadiya* hymn which is an example of pure Vedic metaphysics, the nature of the Absolute is indicated as what lies beyond the reach of all categories. The seeds of theism and absolutism that are thus to be found in the Vedas germinate and grow to huge proportions in later Hinduism, and get embellished in great detail.

What is common to the theistic Hindu cults is their conception of a God who is the creator, preserver and destroyer of the universe. From these three functions of the Deity arose the doctrine of the Hindu Trinity consisting of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. Though some of the sects may promote one of the three aspects to the supreme place, as in Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism, all the three cosmic functions I have mentioned are assigned to one:

and the same God. This is a distinctive feature of Hindu theism—that it ascribes to God not only the functions of creation and preservation but also that of destruction, which is an act not of unkindness, but of mercy. The world is destroyed only in order to be created again, and in the interval the souls get their welcome rest.

In just a few theistic schools God is considered to be only the efficient cause of the world. The more general view, however, is that God is both the efficient and the material cause. God who is the ultimate ground of the universe is not limited in his act of creation by any extraneous stuff called matter. Probably, the phenomenon of world-emergence may be better described as emanation or transformation than as creation. The emanation of the world does not in any way affect the nature of God. The world is only a part of him, and even thus he does not suffer any change or diminution. Nor does the world exhaust his being, for he stands beyond it as well. It is not necessary that God should be referred to only as 'he'. It is a matter of indifference as to how we speak of the Deity—as 'he', 'she', or 'it'. One of the main Hindu cults which is called Śaktism conceives the Deity as the great Mother, the divine primal Power. In fact, God has no gender. He is above all the distinctions that go with finitude. He is the home of all auspicious and infinite attributes such as omniscience and omnipotence. According to some schools, even contradictory qualities find reconciliation in his nature.

Hindu absolutism, which is known as Advaita Vedānta and which owes its consolidation and popularization to Śāṅkara, is not satisfied with the theistic

formulations of the nature of ultimate reality. It certainly admits the usefulness of the personalistic conceptions of Godhead. Man, so long as he is merely human, cannot help conceiving of God after his own image. But when he transcends his limitations as a finite being—which transcendence is accepted as the final goal even by Hindu theism—he will realize that the plenary reality is distinctionless. Distinctions such as substance and attribute, agent and patient, creator and created, God and world, can obtain only in relative experience. The Absolute, which is called Brahman or Ātman in Vedānta, has no attributes; it is not a creator producing the world either out of itself or out of extraneous matter. For it, there is no real becoming. The world is only an appearance of the Absolute, even as the illusory serpent is an appearance of the rope.

Having explained the nature of ultimate reality, according to Hinduism, let me proceed to discuss the nature of man and his destiny. Man is essentially 'soul' or 'spirit'. Every sentient being is a soul. But man alone has the prerogative of making spiritual progress and of marching towards the goal of perfection. All other sentient beings must be born in the human species before they also can join the march. All the Hindu schools of thought are agreed in holding the soul to be eternal. Even God does not create a soul. The pluralistic systems also maintain that the souls are co-eternal with God. Although the pure soul is eternal and free from limitation, it finds itself in the phenomenal world as endowed with a body-mind complex. It is this complex which binds the soul to empirical life. When this process of

embodiment began, we do not know. But that this process can be put an end to is the promise of philosophy and religion.

The root-cause of the soul's embodiment is its ignorance about its own true nature. Forgetting its pure nature as eternal consciousness, it identifies itself with a body-mind complex, and goes through a series of births and deaths. This transmigratory process is called *samsāra*. What happens at death is the leaving off of a physical body, and at birth the taking of a new one. The mind and its faculties, however, continue to accompany the soul until it is released from bondage. It is the mind, in fact, that serves as the carrier of the soul from one physical body into another. The soul, being oblivious of its true nature, imagines itself to be the ego which is the foremost faculty of the mind, and acts in order to enjoy and suffer in life, and enjoys and suffers in order to act.

The actions that the soul performs, or falsely thinks that it performs, bring in their consequences, and also determine the nature of its future birth. The law of action and reaction which is, in fact, the law of cause and effect in the moral order goes by the name of *karma*. *Karma* is sometimes wrongly mistaken for fate which it is not. It only means that an individual has to reap what he had earlier sown. Just as there is orderliness in physical nature, there is causal regulation in the moral realm also. An act, when performed, yields its allotted fruit and also leaves on the mind its impression. Some actions may not fructify in the present life. In order to enjoy the fruit of such actions and in accordance with the impressions formed in the mind, the soul is reborn in a particular

body and in a certain environment. This is the doctrine of *karma*. While the results of past actions have to be reaped, the mental impressions may be changed, controlled or effaced. So, the individual has a certain measure of freedom. Even the compulsive force that seems to drive him along a certain course of action is the product of his own making. There is, therefore, no alien destiny governing the career of man.

The goal of man, according to all schools of Hinduism, is *mokṣa* or liberation. Empirical life constricts the soul and makes it lose sight of its unfettered nature. It is this which constitutes evil and is the source of all sorrow. Here the expressions 'evil' and 'sorrow' do not have their usual meanings. That is evil which shrouds the true nature of the soul, and compels it to play a false role. In this sense, transmigration and its cause, ignorance, are evil. They are also the source of sorrow because they convert, as it were, what is infinite and eternal into a finite, helpless creature of time. Here the term 'sorrow' means finitude and impermanence. So, the charge of pessimism cannot be made against Hinduism. Moreover, Hinduism promises to all souls release from sorrow, freedom from all fetters.

In the entire range of Indian thought there are two views regarding the nature of the ultimate goal of life. One of them thinks that liberation means absolute freedom from sorrow and nothing more. The other maintains that *mokṣa* is not a mere negative state but the experience of positive bliss which is unexcellable. It is the latter that is the dominant view in Hinduism. Such expressions as 'supreme felicity' and 'unlimited happiness' are

employed in the Hindu sacred texts to indicate the nature of the goal. The individual who has reached it is not born again, for he has become eternal or has realized his eternal nature. He has no more desires, for there is nothing that he has to accomplish. He has gone above the opposites of relative experience such as heat and cold, praise and blame. This is the consummation which every soul devoutly wishes for, and eventually attains. The purpose of transmigration is to enable the soul to gain the transcendental experience. Life in the world is a schooling which disciplines the soul and makes it perfect. Viewed in this light, life is a blessing and not a curse.

As to what happens to the released soul in relation to the ultimate reality, the schools differ in their views. The theistic cults aver that the individual soul realizes its nature as a part or as a servant of God. It comes to live in the proximity of God, acquires a nature similar to that of God, and finally attains union with God. Some of the cults believe that God has a world of his own which is referred to as heaven, and that the soul which has gained perfection goes to live there forever. The Vedāntic absolutism, however, teaches that perfection means the realization of the soul's identity with the Absolute Spirit. It is only ignorance of the truth that makes the soul imagine that it is a separate entity, that it has an individuality, that it acts and enjoys, is born and dies. When ignorance is dispelled and wisdom dawns, there can be no plurality whatsoever. This can happen even in this life, even while the soul seems to tenant a body. What is spoken of as the soul's goal is

not a distant end to be newly gained. The soul is always perfect; it is non-different from the Supreme Spirit. Only this fact remains veiled on account of ignorance. When this veil is lifted, the ever-perfect nature of the soul stands revealed. What effects this lifting, however, is not mere theoretical knowledge but intuitive experience of the plenary truth. Here both Hindu theism and absolutism agree. They agree also to a high degree on the procedural disciplines one should adopt in order to gain that experience. These disciplines I shall explain in my next talk.

2

The Hindu Practices

In my talk on the Hindu doctrines I said that, although there are several schools of Hindu thought, there are certain fundamentals which are common to them, and that there is a great measure of agreement in the area of practice. It is a generally accepted principle in India that conduct counts, not creed, that if the right disciplines are practised the true insight will follow. Of the two major trends in Hinduism—the theistic and the absolutistic—the former lays stress on devotion to the Deity and the latter on the wisdom of the Absolute. This is only a difference in emphasis. So far as the auxiliary disciplines and the total content of practice are concerned, there is complete agreement.

The various cults and schools of Hinduism agree in practice because their aim is the same, *viz.* to liberate

the soul from its bondage to the empirical cycle of birth and death. This is the ultimate human goal which is called *mokṣa*, meaning release. The pursuit of *mokṣa*, however, does not mean an other-worldliness in disregard of the interests of his world. An inspection of the Hindu ritual practices and ways of worship will reveal that the joys of this world are not spurned by the Hindu. He is as human as any other group of the species. Beside release, three other ends are recognized by the Hindu teachers. They are economic prosperity, sense pleasure, and righteousness. Only, these are instrumental and not intrinsic ends. Prayers for length of life, worldly wealth, good progeny and the pleasures of existence are not infrequent in the ancient texts. But these should be acquired and enjoyed in such a way that one does not slide back in the scale of spiritual evolution. If righteousness becomes the basis of economics and pleasure, then one would progress towards the final goal of liberation. This is the *rationale* behind the entire range of Hindu religious practices.

The Vedic ritual consisted of sacrifices offered to the gods for different purposes. Sacrificial material, such as ghee or rice-grain, was given as oblation to the gods either by consigning it to the sacred fire or by spreading it out on a bed of sanctified grass. The mode of sacrifice was at first simple, but with the passage of time it became more and more intricate and complicated. There are several types of Vedic rites. The optional rites are to be performed for obtaining certain results such as prosperity in this world or happiness in the next. For instance, the king who desires conquest is enjoined to

perform the horse-sacrifice known as *aśva-medha*. Rites such as these are not obligatory. The Vedic texts that teach them are of the nature of hypothetical imperatives. Their form is: 'If you desire this, do this.' There are other sacrifices which are obligatory rites. Their performance does not depend on the option of an individual. Such are, for example, the twilight prayers called *sandhyā-vandana*. One has to offer these prayers without any ulterior motive. The obligatory injunctions are categorical imperatives. Their formula is: 'You ought to do this because it is your duty.' Besides the two groups of rites I have just explained, there are occasioned rites and expiatory rites. The former of these are to be performed on occasions such as the birth of a child or the death of a person, and the latter as compensation for sins committed.

In the classical period of Indian thought there arose a school of philosophy named *Mīmāṃsā* which grounded its entire teaching on the ritual-sections of the Veda. The followers of this school maintained that the duty of the individual was simply to obey the commands of the Veda. From such obedience would be generated an unseen potency which would afford the individual after his death enjoyment in heaven. Very soon, however, the *Mīmāṃsā* school realized that heavenly enjoyment could not be the ultimate goal of man. It was compelled to admit *mokṣa* as the final end. Even thus, the school insisted that the performance of ritual acts was the only means to release. According to the revised scheme, one should avoid optional rites and perform the other sacrifices with a sense of obligatoriness. If one kept to this

regimen strictly all one's life, one would attain release at death.

In later Hinduism, religious practices based on the Scriptures of the popular cults known as the *Āgamas* or *Tantras* came to replace largely the Vedic sacrifices. As religion, like many other things, begins at home, there are several domestic rites taught in these sacred texts. No important event in the household is unassociated with religious ceremony. The birth of a child, giving him a name, the first feeding with solid food, putting the child to school, graduation, marriage and funeral have all their appropriate rites. The object of these ceremonial acts is to give a spiritual significance to the journey of life. There ought to be no wedge driven between the secular and the sacred. The sanctification of the entire life of man is the aim of religion. Life itself must get transformed into a sacrifice; it must become holy.

Besides celebrating the chief events that occur in his family, the householder has to perform everyday five sacrifices—the sacrifice to the gods consisting in propitiating the sacred fire or worshipping the family deities, the sacrifice to the seers which takes the form of studying the Vedas and other sacred books, the sacrifice to the ancestors by offering them oblations of water, the sacrifice to the lower animals which means feeding them, and the sacrifice to guests by entertaining them and giving alms to such of those that are poor. The conception of the five daily sacrifices is a grand one, as it unites the different orders of being, the divine, the human and the sub-human, and the different periods of time, the past, present, and future.

The most significant event in the orthodox Hindu household is the daily ceremonial worship of the family deity. The central place in the house is the shrine-room. At least once a day the deity is worshipped in the form of an image according to rule. There may be many images in a household. Usually five are placed on the pedestal of worship referred to as the *pañcāyatana*. The image of the principal deity, say Viṣṇu or Śiva, occupies the centre, with the other four arranged on the sides. The worshipper first invokes the presence of the deity in the image, and then treats the god he has invited as he would an honoured guest. The images are bathed, dressed, and decorated, food, water and flower offerings are made, ceremonial lamps are waved in front of the images, incense and camphor are burnt, and finally the gods are requested to retire. Each act of worship is accompanied by a set formula or prayer. In certain forms of *Tāntrika* worship, mystic designs called *yantras* are used in the place of carved images, and syllables with esoteric meanings are uttered. These forms of worship are highly technical, and one may not adopt them without expert guidance.

The worship in temples follows the model of domestic worship, but on a much larger and more elaborate scale. No visitor to India will fail to be struck by the grandeur of these temples. No private residence can compare in excellence with these houses of God which Hindu piety has raised. The typical towers which serve as entrances to the temples and reach up to the skies are symbolic of the aspiration of the human soul for the Infinite. The temples themselves are constructed on

the plan of the human body. The *sanctum sanctorum* symbolizes the heart-centre where God takes his seat. Apart from the worship of the principal and auxiliary deities in a temple several times a day, there are festivals connected with each temple which are occasions for huge congregations of devotees from far and near. The pious Hindu, sometime or other in his life, visits the main temples of the land and other places of pilgrimage. He climbs the hills to have a vision of God, and bathes in the sacred rivers to have his physical and mental dirt removed. He keeps a religious calendar and fasts and feasts as occasion demands—to celebrate the victory of good over evil or the incarnation of a god.

External worship, however, is not the final discipline. As a devotee progresses spiritually, his devotion becomes less and less formal and external and more and more real and internal. What God demands is not material offering but the offering of one's heart, the surrendering of one's ego. In the traditions of Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism alike there are several cases of saints who had neither high birth nor much learning, and who were able to realize God even through uncouth and uncivilized modes of worship. The aim of devotion is to turn the mind Godward and make it one-pointed. It is the sublimation of the baser passions and desires that a devotee accomplishes through his unswerving loyalty to God.

The same objective can be achieved through a technique which is called *rāja-yoga*, taught first in its complete form by an ancient sage named Patañjali. This technique involves eight stages which are usually known

as the limbs of *yoga*. The first two constitute ethical training consisting of certain restraints and observances. The restraints are non-injury, truthfulness, non-stealing, continence, and non-possession. The observances are cleanliness, contentment, penance, study of Scripture, and devotion to God. The third and the fourth stages in *yoga* are training in steady posture of the body and control and regulation of the breathing process. Then comes the withdrawal of the senses from their respective objects. The last three stages which constitute *yoga* proper are concentration, contemplation, and absorption. These three are but different degrees of mind-control which is the aim of *yoga*.

Although Patañjali considered his *yoga* to be a sovereign and self-complete path to the goal of release, it is more generally regarded as an auxiliary to the path of devotion which I have already described and to the way of knowledge with I am going to sketch. While theism takes devotion to be the main discipline, absolutism teaches the path of inquiry as the principal means to release. Ignorance of the truth is the root-cause of bondage, according to absolutism; and ignorance can be dispelled only by knowledge. The path of knowledge is the path of study, reflection, and realization. The Vedānta texts should be studied first under a competent preceptor. Then their import should be reflected upon. But a mere intellectual understanding of the Vedāntic truth is not enough. It must be realized intuitively. Persistent inquiry should be made, says Śaṅkara, until the onset of intuitive wisdom. And when wisdom dawns, there is release.

For devotion to mature, and for acquiring competence to enter upon the path of inquiry, one must pursue the path of selfless work which is called *karma-yoga*. This is the especial teaching of the *Bhagavad-Gītā*—that one should do his duty without any selfish motive. It is selfish desire for finite enjoyments that makes the soul cling to empirical existence. If an individual performs his allotted work without desiring its fruit, his mind becomes pure, and he can concentrate either on the glory of God, or on the path of absolute knowledge. *Karma-yoga* also indicates that one has responsibilities towards society and the world. Hinduism does not exhort anyone to run away from the world. Escapism would only mean cowardice and a counsel of despair. Renunciation does not mean dead inactivity or a negative attitude towards the affairs of the world. The great advocates of absolutism and the path of knowledge, such as Yājñavalkya and Śaṅkara, were at the same time great benefactors of mankind. Hinduism, therefore, is not a religion for the egoist or the killjoy. Its first appeal to everyman is that he should discover his station in society and perform the duties that belong to it. Then the higher realms of spirituality would open of their own accord. Three things, it is said, are essential for spiritual realization—birth as a human being, aspiration for attaining release, and association with sagely persons. Human birth is precious because it provides the soul with an opportunity to regain its perfection. This regaining would become possible only if man is aware of his destiny and aspires for reaching it. In this he can do no better than follow the way of the sage and the

saint. Hinduism has a long and unbroken tradition of wise and perfect men. Its vitality has never been found wanting. Even in the most decadent age in Indian history there appeared exemplars of the spirit to keep the torch of wisdom burning, and to beckon everyone to follow its light and stop not till the goal is reached. Mahātmā Gāndhī once wrote, 'My life would be a burden to me, if Hinduism failed me.' His glorious life was a grand testimony to the fact that Hinduism did not fail him. And, it will not fail any one who, in all sincerity, attempts to understand its truths and practise its disciplines.

APPENDIX TWO

RELIGION TODAY IN INDIA

I

To report on the state of religion in a country at any given time is an extremely difficult, if not impossible, task. Religion is one of those imponderable things that cannot be assessed in quantitative terms. Also, what passes for religion may be quite the opposite of it, and *vice versa*. Merely by the external look of a person, one may not say whether he is religious or irreligious, and if either, how deeply. One who never lets slip an opportunity to publicly affirm his faith in God may be very inhuman—not to say, undivine—in his conduct towards others. Another who repeatedly protests and says that he has no belief in God may be protesting too much. If it is hard to say how much religious an individual person is, it must be many times harder to determine the religiosity of a nation or people as a whole.

There are special difficulties in a country like India. Almost no statistical data are available as to the forms in which religion expresses itself and the scale of such expressions. In countries like America or England, they enumerate the number of Church-goers, etc. No such attempt has been made in India; nor is it likely that

any will be made. Further, it is not easy to distinguish between religious and non-religious activities of the people. Especially among the Hindus every significant activity seems to be connected with the practice of religion. A thorough investigation of the state of religion in India will involve an analysis of all the major departments of corporate life such as civics, politics, economics, domestic affairs, etc.

It is also to be noted that one need not necessarily have a faith in God in order to be religious. Jainism and Buddhism, two of the great religions of India, are non-theistic faiths. Another peculiarity of Indian thought and life is the close association between religion and philosophy. One may not understand the significance of religion in India if one is not acquainted with the main philosophical movements in the country. It is not uncommon here that the heads of religious institutions expound philosophical doctrines and philosophers play the role of religious leaders.

In view of the difficulties, both general and special, what will be attempted here is a survey of the chief trends in the life of the people that may be interpreted as manifestations of religion. India is an ancient land with its well-established institutions, practices and beliefs. In spite of what is happening to her exterior, her inside seems to be not much different from what it has been down the ages. All the sophistication of a scientific-technological civilization has not made India turn away from her ways of piety and acts of faith. The verdict that an impartial judge will pronounce is that the spirit of India is still sound, and that the Indian

people, with the new opportunities that political freedom has given them, can look forward to the future with hope and cheer.

2

The 1951 Census report gives the following figures for the various denominations comprising the population of India:

	<i>No. in lakhs</i>	<i>No. per 10,000</i>
1. Hindus	3,032	8,499
2. Sikh	62	174
3. Jain	16	45
4. Buddhist	2	6
5. Zoroastrian	1	3
6. Christian	82	230
7. Muslim	354	993
8. Jew	—	—
9. Other Religion Returns (tribal)	17	47
10. Other Religion Returns (non-tribal)	1	3
Total ...	<u>3,567</u>	<u>10,000</u>

It will be seen that the three major religious communities, Hindu, Muslim, and Christian, number respectively (in millions) 303.2, 35.4, and 8.2. In every 10,000, the Hindus are 8,499, the Muslims are 993, and the Christians are 230.

In 1941, out of a total population of 390 millions in undivided India, 255 were Hindus, 92 were Muslims, and 6 were Christians. In 1931, the census figures for the three communities in India (including Burma) were: Hindu 239.2 million, Muslim 87.7 million, and Christian 6.3 million, out of a total population of 350.5 million.

In the two decades from 1931, there was an increase in the number of Hindus from 239.2 to 303.2 million. This is due to the fact that there has been a general rise in the population, and that the separation of Burma and the creation of Pakistan has not affected the strength of Hindus appreciably. The reduction in the number of Muslims from 92 million in 1941 to 35.4 in 1951 is due to the partition of India and creation of the new state of Pakistan. Even then it is a significant fact that there is still a large Muslim population in India.

The observations that we shall make in this paper will relate primarily to the Hindus. But they will hold good, *mutatis mutandis*, with regard to the other communities also, since the basic Indian humanity is the same.

3

India is a land of temples; and the temple is the centre of every village community in this country. An old Tamil poet asks his people not to live in a place where there is no temple. But there is no place in India without a temple. Temples, big and small, old and new, abound in the country. Especially in South

India there are many ancient temples well preserved and in active use. Artisans skilled in the traditional temple-architecture are still to be found. Temple-renovation is being undertaken on a large scale, everywhere. An instance in point is the re-building of the shrine of Somanāth in Saurāshtra. In the 11th century A.D. this shrine was destroyed by Mahmud of Ghazni. Its wealth and importance attracted the iconoclast to do his worst. In the subsequent centuries it was repeatedly rebuilt and destroyed. The way in which the *Jyotirlinga* was consecrated at this shrine in the presence of the President of India in May 1951 shows how the Hindus have righted a wrong done to them, without malice or hatred. A recent news item in the Press says that the villagers of Bhimpore Dumas, about ten miles south-west of Surat, have shifted an idol of Hanumān to its sixth abode in the course of twenty years. The idol was first enshrined in a temple on the seashore. The sea destroyed the temple. By taking timely action the villagers saved the idol. Four subsequent temples met with the same fate. Now they have built the sixth. And the Government of Bombay, it is reported, are constructing a strong wall between the sea and the village. Besides reconstructing and reordering old temples, the Hindus are building new ones. Wherever a city, township or even smaller settlement springs up, there a shrine is sure to arise. When, for instance, New Delhi was built, the Lakshmi-Narayan temple (popularly known as the Birla Mandir) was put up, incorporating some of the old and the new ideas relating to temple-construction.

The great events connected with the temples are the festivals. There are festivals all the year round. Even those people who are not habitual temple-goers participate in the festivals. The principal images of the gods are taken out, gaily decorated, and to the accompaniment of music, and an opportunity is given to the Hindus in the neighbourhood to offer worship to the gods at their very door. Some of the festivals connected with the shrines of all-India-importance attract devotees from far and near. One such festival is the *Ratha-yātrā* (Car-festival) at Puri. This commemorates the journey of Kṛṣṇa from Gokula to Mathurā in order to kill Kamsa, the evil king. Hindus from every part of the land go to Puri to witness the festival, and vie with one another in pulling the car.

A great number of pilgrims are on their move in India all the time. They go from one sacred place to another braving all the difficulties of travel. From Kanyā-kumārī (Cape Comorin) in the southernmost tip of India to Badrināth and Kedārnāth on the heights of the Himalayas, the whole country is dotted with numerous places of pilgrimage. The fond hope of many a Hindu even today is to go to the most important of these places at least once in his lifetime. Banaras (Kāśī), of course, is a very sacred city for the Hindus. It is crowded with pilgrims throughout the year. They go there to bathe in holy Gaṅgā and worship at the temple of Viśvanāth. Much of the rest of India may be fast changing; but the ageless Banaras goes on in the same old way reminding man of the eternal values. Formerly, pilgrimage to places like Badrināth used to be

very difficult and hazardous. But now, due to road-development, etc., the journey has been made comparatively easy and the volume of pilgrim traffic is increasing year by year.

Purificatory bathing is an important aspect of Hindu piety. The rivers are held to be sacred—especially the biggest and the most useful of them. A bath in these rivers is believed to bring in special merit. There are holy tanks too, and seas, where Hindus bathe for ceremonial purity. On prescribed auspicious occasions vast concourses of people gather at these sacred water-spots for a holy dip. Of especial significance is what is known as the Kumbha Mela. This is a bathing festival of the highest sanctity which is held, by rotation, in four places, viz. Haridvār, Prayāg (Allahabad), Ujjain, and Godāvārī. Each of these places gets its turn once in twelve years. At the last Kumbha Mela at Prayāg there was such a rush of people that a great tragedy took place involving the death of several persons—a tragedy which might have been avoided. Apart from the grim side of this particular incident, the Mela served as an index to show that the Hindus still believe in their age-old customs and practices of religion. In the far South, at Kumbakonam, there is a counterpart of this festival; there during the Mahāmakham, people bathe in the sacred tank.

Ritual worship and bathing are not the only things that take place in the temples and at the centres of pilgrimage. In former times the temples used to be the seats of religious and even general education. Attempts are now being made to revive this important feature of

temple-life. Temple-funds in many places are being utilized for starting and maintaining Sanskrit, Veda and Āgama schools, libraries, hospitals, orphanages, poor homes, etc. An old Śiva-Viṣṇu temple in Madras, for instance, runs a free hostel for college-students. Śrī Venkateśvara Devasthānam, Tirupati, started an Oriental School first; then colleges in sciences and arts for men and women were organized; and now a University has been established.

4

Vedic ritual has mostly gone out of use. Even long ago it was replaced, more or less, by temple ritual. Except for some of the minor *homas*, the *yāgas* and *yajñas* are not now usually performed. The domestic rites connected with the birth, etc., of an individual, where observed, have been extremely simplified. A generation ago a far greater number of people used to perform the *sandhyāvandana* than at present. But this does not mean that the religious instinct of the Hindus as a whole is on the decline.

Among the forms of religious communion, *bhajana* seems to be very popular at present. Devotional songs abound in every Indian language, thanks to the great composers like Tyāgarāja who were also saints. Various *bhajana* groups meet periodically, at least once a week, and spend 2 to 3 hours in singing sacred songs. Saturday night or Sunday seems to be convenient for such purposes. One of these groups in Madras bears the name 'Sunday Bhajan Brotherhood'. Most of these groups are

not sectarian. The songs that are sung by them include all the important names of the Deity, Śiva, Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Śakti, Subrahmaṇya, etc. The couplet included by Mahātmā Gāndhi in the singing part of his mass prayer meetings is a favourite with the *bhajana* groups. It praises Rāma as well as Allāh and says that they are one:

raghupati rāghava rājā rām
patita-pāvana sītā-rām,
īśvara allā tere nām
saba ko sanmati de bhagvān.

Some of the *bhajana* groups, apart from their periodical sessions, join the temple processions. In the South during the month of Mārgaśīrṣa, *bhajana* parties go round the streets singing very early in the mornings, unmindful of the chill and dew characteristic of that month. Sometimes what is known as *saptāha* is organized, when groups of devotees sing the divine name continuously for seven days, taking turns. Occasionally the period is even longer, ranging upto seven weeks.

Another mode of religious discipline is *japa*, repeating silently the name of the Lord. The traditional way of receiving a name for *japa* is from a preceptor at the *dikṣā* (initiation) ceremony. But there are certain names, such as Śiva, Rāma, and Kṛṣṇa, which may be repeated even without formal initiation. There are institutions which are engaged in getting people write the divine name a number of times. This discipline is called *likhita-japa*, repeated writing. The target aimed at, usually, is a crore of times. There are quite a few

Rāma-koṭi-samājas in the country doing the work of collecting the name of Rāma written a crore of times.

A number of religious discourses are given every day, and they are attended by varying numbers of people. The sacred texts like the *Bhagavad-gītā* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* figure prominently in these discourses. The following statistics may be of interest in this connection. They relate to the number of local engagements in the city of Madras announced in a leading daily news paper in a particular week in March-April, 1955.

	<i>No. of religious meetings</i>	<i>No. of non-religious meetings</i>
Sunday	38	29
Monday	24	10
Tuesday	20	9
Wednesday	22	12
Thursday	30	17
Friday	45	15
Saturday	36	17
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Total	215	109
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Average per day	31	16

With reference to these data, it has to be noted that not all meetings are announced in the press and that at some of the non-religious meetings the speakers do very often introduce religious topics in their speeches. At the anniversary of a language association celebrated recently, for instance, the main speaker chose as the theme

of his address 'The place of Religion in Culture.' We have given statistics only for one week in Madras. The same situation obtains all through the year. And, what is true of Madras is true of almost every town and city in India. As for the villages, in most of them some religious discourse or other is given every day. The present writer was pleasantly surprised last year to see in a village in Andhra a Muslim Bhāgavata giving a series of discourses on the *Śrīmad Bhāgavata*. The phenomenon of Hindus participating in Christian or Muslim religious meetings is not at all rare in this country.

5

The number of *Maths* and *Āśramas* in India is legion. There are very old monastic institutions as well as those established in comparatively recent times. It was Śaṅkara that was the first great organizer of Hindu monasteries. He set up ten orders of *sannyāsins*, and established *Maths* at the four cardinal points of India. Other *Ācāryas* who followed him also founded monastic establishments. Today there are *Āśramas* everywhere in the country. Some of them bear the names of the founders; others have impersonal names. All of them house *sannyāsins*, and serve as centres for the devout laity to meet. Rishikesh and Haridvār are the abodes *par excellence* of the *sādhus* and *sannyāsins*. Although some of these may put on saffron robes for extraneous considerations, there is no denying the fact that many of them are genuine seekers after the truth, who have

cut themselves away from narrow attachments in order to lead a life of contemplation.

Even till recent times there were, and now too there are, a few saints and sages of the highest order. In most of these cases *Āśramas* grow in places where they happen to live. Their exemplary life inspires *sādhakas*; their wisdom enlightens them. Mention may be made of Śrī Ramaṇa and Śrī Aurobindo who attracted a large number of aspirants even from beyond the seas. Tiruvaṅṅāmalai and Pondicherry, respectively, where they lived, became in their time great centres of corporate spiritual life. By their very presence, and sometimes by words written and spoken, they exalted the soul of the seeker to the lofty heights of Spirit.

The *Maths* and *Āśramas* fulfil a variety of tasks that are calculated to keep the people alive to their inner needs and aspirations. Some of these establishments, such as the *Ādhīnams* in the south, manage a number of temples. Almost all of them arrange for periodical, if not daily, discourses on religion. Practical instructions in *yoga* could be had in some of them. Some of the *Maths* and *Āśramas* have to their credit a number of publications of religious literature. The running of schools and colleges, hospitals, dispensaries and orphanages, organizing and rendering relief to the distressed during critical times such as famine, etc., are some of the social service activities performed by the monastic institutions.

In this connection, the example of the Rāmakrishna Maṭh and Mission may be cited. The founder of the world-wide organization, Swāmi Vivekānanda, was a

pioneer of the present Hindu renaissance. Moved by the spiritual power imparted to him by his Master Śrī Rāmakrishna, he organized, soon after the passing of the great saint in 1886, a monastic order bearing his name. The main purpose of the order was ‘to create a band of *sannyāsin* teachers of Vedānta, and in conjunction with the lay disciples to carry on missionary and philanthropic work, looking upon all irrespective of caste, creed or colour as veritable manifestations of the Divine’. In 1897, after his triumphal return from the Parliament of Religions held in Chicago, he founded the Rāmakrishna Mission Association. In 1899, the Association found its permanent home at Belur, almost facing Calcutta.

There are two wings of the Rāmakrishna Order, the Maṭh and the Mission. The members of Rāmakrishna Maṭh are monks devoted to leading a life of purity, renunciation and practical spirituality. The Rāmakrishna Mission includes, besides monastic members, lay workers also; and its main object is to serve the people, without making any distinction among them, such as those of caste, creed, nationality and colour, to serve them with a firm conviction that they are one in the supreme Spirit.

To inculcate in the minds of apparently divergent peoples a sense of unity based on their common divine nature, to serve them at all the levels of their being, physical, mental, and spiritual, to bring succour to the afflicted, not in the name of a creed or a party, but with a view to help all progress towards their common spiritual goal: these are the tasks which the Rāmakrishna Mission has taken upon itself to fulfil. Its

motto is: the release of self and the good of the world (*ātmanah mokṣārtham jagaddhitāya ca*). Ever since its inception, its work has been expanding. People who have had a taste of its ministrations want more thereof. Demand for opening new centres is increasing both at home and abroad.

The following details taken from the general report of the Mission for the years 1952 and 1953 give an indication as to the Mission's influence, and the nature and volume of work it turns out through its various centres. Along with the Headquarters at Belur, there were in December, 1953, 40 Mission centres, 14 combined Maṭh and Mission centres, and 29 Maṭh centres in India. In addition to these, there were 2 Mission centres, 6 combined Maṭh and Mission centres, and 3 Maṭh centres in East Pakistan, 2 Mission centres in Burma, 1 Mission centre each in Ceylon, Singapore, Fiji, Mauritius and France, 1 Maṭh centre each in England and Argentina, and 11 Maṭh centres in the United States of America. Thus there were altogether 69 Mission centres and 65 Maṭh centres, with 10 sub-centres attached to some of these.

In the under-developed countries including India, great stress is laid by the Mission on serving physical and mental needs of the people, whereas in the materially advanced countries of the West the main type of work concerns the teaching of Vedānta. Institutions required for the particular kind of work undertaken are run under the supervision and with the active assistance of the monastic members of the Order. In 1953, there were 12 Indoor Hospitals, which accommodated 16,530

patients, and 61 Outdoor Dispensaries, which treated 21,76,940 patients. In the same year, 2,601 boys and 233 girls were maintained in 44 students' Homes; two Colleges had on their rolls 1,558 students; a Teachers' Training College had 57 trainees; there were 31 High Schools with 9,753 boys and 3,680 girls, and 85 Lower Grade Schools with 12,728 boys and 3,480 girls. Besides these, there were four institutions for training nurses and midwives. Thus, there were altogether about 24,000 boys and 7,100 girls in the different institutions. Apart from its medical and educational activities, the Mission has been doing rural uplift work, and rendering service to the labouring and backward classes. In times of distress whether caused by nature or by man, the Mission has been in the vanguard for organizing and affording relief. Thus in 1952, the Mission did rehabilitation work for East Pakistan refugees in Malda, Cachar and Hoogly. The same year, Famine Relief was organized in the Sunderbans (24—Parganas) and on a vast scale in Rayalaseema (Andhra). In 1953, Famine Relief work was done in Ahmednagar and eight other Marathi-speaking districts of Bombay, and Flood Relief work in the East and West Godavari Districts of Andhra and in the Darbhanga District of Bihar. The root from which all these activities stem is, of course, spirituality. In the foreign centres the endeavours of the Swāmis are directed towards spreading the message of India which is Vedānta.

The one central principle underlying all the activities of the Mission, which is worthy of note, is that there is absolutely no basis for proselytizing or converting

people from one faith to another. The Vedānta for which the Mission stands does not believe in a horizontal transference of the followers of one creed to another; what it aims at is their vertical elevation from lower to higher levels of spirituality. The spirit of Vedānta should make a Hindu a better Hindu, a Christian a better Christian, a Muslim a better Muslim.

6

Besides the *Maths* and *Āśramas* there are several lay institutions which participate, in one way or the other, in the religious education of the people. There are a number of Oriental Institutes, and Institutes of Philosophy and Culture, engaged in higher research. They arrange for conferences and lectures, publish ancient texts, sometimes with translation and comments, run journals, etc.¹ There are several publishing houses in places like Banaras, Bombay, Calcutta and Madras which specialize in bringing out philosophical and religious books. Some of the Departments of the Universities, such as those of Philosophy, Sanskrit, and Indian languages, undertake similar work. There is a general revival in the country of the ancient arts which have as their basic motives the concepts of religion. The Government of India has recently constituted *Akadamies* for the promotion of literature and the fine arts, and offers inducements for work in these fields by way of offering prizes, conferring titles, etc. The writer of an article on

¹ *Humanistic Institutions and Societies in India*, Ministry of Education, Publication No. 68, 1949.

Hinduism in the American magazine *Life* (February 7, 1955) makes this pertinent remark:

‘Religion determines the Hindu social structure and it is the theme of nearly all Indian literature, art and drama, including more than half the motion pictures.’

7

There is a general indifference towards religion, it must be confessed, among students in schools and colleges. This is due more to the neglect of elders than to any other cause. In the absence of facilities in the various academic halls for learning about religion, and where proper leadership is not available, nothing else could be expected of students. But it has been found that they respond quite handsomely when attempts are made to acquaint them with the truths of religion.

It was during the British rule that educational institutions became purely secular in character. Except in some of the schools and colleges run by the Christian Missions or by private managements, Hindu or Muslim, religion was not taught even as an extra-curricular subject. In the Report of the Education Commission of 1882, the following observation is made:

‘The declared neutrality of the State forbids its connecting the institutions directly maintained by it with any one form of faith; and the other alternative of giving equal facilities in such institutions for the inculcation of all forms of faith involves practical difficulties which we believe to be insuperable.’

While it is true that the state should not align itself with any single denominational religion, it cannot altogether ignore the need for instructing the pupils in the truths of religion. India has a special responsibility in this respect. In the words of the Report of the University Education Commission of 1948-49, which had Dr S. Radhakrishnan as its Chairman,

‘India is the meeting place of the great religions of the world and will play an increasingly prominent part in the religious life of mankind and Indian students should have an idea of India’s role in the world.’²

In the opinion of the Commission, ‘If we exclude spiritual training in our institutions we would be untrue to our whole historical development.’ The concrete recommendations that the Commission makes are:

- (1) that all educational institutions start work with a few minutes for silent meditation;
- (2) that in the first year of the Degree course lives of the great religious leaders like Gautama the Buddha, Confucius, Zoroaster, Socrates, Jesus, Śāṅkara, Rāmānuja, Madhva, Mohammad, Kabīr, Nānak, Gāndhi, be taught;
- (3) that in the second year some selections of a universalist character from the scriptures of the world be studied;
- (4) that in the third year, the central problems of the philosophy of religion be considered.

² See vol. I, p. 298

It now remains to be seen how soon and how effectively these recommendations will be implemented by the Government and the Universities.

Inspired by these recommendations and by the personality and work of Dr S. Radhakrishnan, the late Dr H. N. Spalding of Oxford founded a Union for the Study of the Great Religions. The immediate objectives of the Union are: to promote the study of religions in the Universities, to foster mutual understanding among men of faith, and to combat materialism through the co-operation of religious leaders. An Area-Committee of this Union has been constituted in India. It is hoped that its activities will be gradually taken advantage of by the student population of our country.

Hinduism has found a great exponent in Dr S. Radhakrishnan. This *savant* and statesman of India has been serving, for a long time now, as her spiritual and cultural ambassador to the West. Many people in that hemisphere have come to know of Indian thought and of Hinduism through his writings and speeches. In India, too, many have gained a knowledge of the culture, philosophy and religion of their own country through him. By virtue of his deep scholarship both in Western and Indian thought he is best fitted to be the bridge-builder between the Orient and the Occident. His out-spoken championship of the highest values of life in a world which is only too prone to wed the expedient, his clear and firm grasp of the essentials of religion, and the untiring zeal with which he has been exhorting men of faith to emphasize these essentials rather than the accidents of belief, his insistence on a correct

understanding of Hinduism and of its attitude of genuine hospitality towards other religions—these have marked him out as a great force making a significant contribution to the emergence of a new India and a new world. As a defender of the religious faith of mankind and as the foremost leader of contemporary philosophic thought in India, Dr Radhakrishnan is in the front ranks of a world-renaissance, the signs of which must be evident to any discerning eye.

8

Hinduism has been renewing itself from time to time. This is one of the contributing factors, without doubt, for its survival through the long millennia of its history. It is true that ultimate reality is eternal and changeless. But there can be no ultimacy about socio-religious institutions and customs. These latter will have necessarily to change when the conditions of life and climate of thought change. The great teachers of Hinduism have always recognized this truth. Each age, we are told, has its own *Smṛti* which only means that the code which is applicable to society in one set of circumstances may not be found suitable, without change, when that set of circumstances gets altered. As Dr Radhakrishnan puts it:

‘There has been no such thing as a uniform, stationary, unalterable Hinduism whether in point of belief or practice. Hinduism is a movement, not a position; a process, not a result; a growing tradition, not a fixed revelation. Its past history

encourages us to believe that it will be found equal to any emergency that the future may throw up, whether in the field of thought or of history.'

The present age of reform in Hinduism started with Rājā Rām Mohan Roy in the last century. He it was that initiated reforms in the fields of education, social custom, and religious practice. He established an English School in Calcutta, had *Satī* abolished, and founded the Brahmo Samāj for propagating the religion of the Upaniṣads interpreted in a monotheistic manner. While the reformatory zeal initiated by Rām Mohan Roy was spreading in Bengal, there arose another movement in the Punjab. Swāmi Dayānanda organized the Ārya Samāj, emphasizing the need for going back to the Vedas. Eligibility for all Hindus to study the Vedas and tend the sacred fires, abolition of idol-worship, re-conversion of those Hindus who had been converted to other faiths, national education, and widow-marriage were some of the items on Swāmi Dayānanda's agenda of reform. Another movement which helped the revival of Hinduism was Theosophy. When foreigners—civilized, educated and well-placed people—came to adore the ancient wisdom of India, the Indian intelligentsia opened its eyes and began to wonder at its own thoughtlessness in having scorned the Upaniṣads and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*.

'Make no mistake,' said Mrs. Annie Besant, addressing Indians, 'without Hinduism India has no future. Hinduism is the soil into which India's roots are struck, and torn out of that she will inevitably wither, as a tree torn out from its place.'

The greatest Hindu reformer of our time was, of course, Mahātmā Gāndhī. The sheet-anchor of all his activities was religion. He considered politics to be a *sādhana* for perfection; and therefore he sought to spiritualize politics. He demonstrated to the world how political ends could be achieved through non-violence. The basic principle of his philosophy is that the means should be as blemishless as the ends. Through methods that were scrupulously clean, he led the Indian people to their political freedom and thus became the Father of the Nation.

It was Gāndhī that gave back to the Indian his self-respect and to the Hindu a sense of legitimate pride in his religion. The spirit of Hinduism permeated every fibre of his being, and he was never ashamed of calling himself a Hindu—even a *Sanātani Hindu*.

‘I call myself a Sanātani Hindu’, he declared, ‘because (1) I believe in the Vedas, the Upaniṣads, the Purāṇas and all that goes by the name of Hindu scriptures and therefore in *avatārs* and rebirth; (2) I believe in the *Vaṛṇāśrama Dharma* in a sense, in my opinion, strictly Vedic but not in its present popular and crude sense; (3) I believe in the protection of the cow in its much larger sense than the popular; (4) I do not disbelieve in idol-worship.’

It is not possible to exhaustively enumerate all the good things that Mahātmā Gāndhī has done for Hinduism and India. He will ever be remembered for his life-long campaign against the accretions that had gathered round Hinduism due mostly to the accidents of history. The most serious blot on Hinduism was

untouchability. Right from the beginning of his public career, Mahātmā Gāndhi was convinced that if untouchability stayed, Hinduism would go. The same was the conviction of Swāmi Vivekānanda also who rebuked the Hindus for confusing the religion of the ancient *Ṛsis* with 'touch-me-notism'.

'I speak with a due sense of my responsibility,' wrote Gāndhi in 1927, 'that this untouchability is a curse that is eating into the vitals of Hinduism, and I often feel that unless we take due precautions and remove this curse from our midst, Hinduism itself is in danger of destruction.'

The first great blow was administered to this evil of untouchability in Travancore when in 1937 the Mahārāja made his famous Temple Entry Proclamation opening the doors of the temples in his realm to all Hindus. With the coming of independence to India, almost all the temples are now accessible to the 'Harijans'—the name given by Gāndhi to the sections of Hindus who were considered to be untouchables. Untouchability itself has been declared illegal by the state. Article 17 of the Constitution of India reads:

"Untouchability" is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. The enforcement of any disability arising out of "Untouchability" shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law.'

It is true that the mere enactment of a law will not do. But the fact that the representatives of India who framed the Constitution felt the need for including Article 17 shows that the conscience of the Hindus has been roused to action and is now set on removing this

shame. Describing the outlawing of untouchability as a major turning point in human history, Hilda Werner wrote in a contribution on the subject.

‘Under the wise guidance of their present Government, with Mahātmā Gāndhi’s example within their heart, the people of India can and will implement a law that will be exalted for centuries to come.’³

When Mahātmā Gāndhi started his walking tours in Noakhali in order to wipe the tears of the victims of communal frenzy and bring solace to them, he introduced a new technique—new for this age—in educating the masses of our people in the true art of living. Following in the Master’s footsteps, Ācārya Vinoba Bhave is now engaged in a walking tour of India with a view to bringing about a peaceful socio-economic revolution. It was in Telangana where the idea of class-struggle was gaining ground that Vinoba Bhave realized the fact that land was at the bottom of all questions. The land hunger is inherent in the peasant; and it is but just that the hunger should be satisfied. But how? The answer that came to Vinoba Bhave through divine inspiration was: *Bhūdāna-yajña*. Everybody who knows how to till must be given land. And, this land distribution should be accomplished through the process of love. Vinoba Bhave insists that a fundamental requisite on the part of workers is that they must be *ātmavādins*, that they must have a spiritual outlook on things. It is only when you are convinced that the other man is a soul that you can hope to change his heart. And, it is

³ *The Hindu*, Madras, January 20, 1956.

only when a change of heart takes place that a change of thought and the consequent change of outer conditions will follow. How, then, can a change of heart be effected? Through *tapas*. Just as the performance of Vedic *yajñas* required self-purification and austerity, the task of *Bhūdāna-yajña* needs inner cleansing and exemplary life.

Quoting Śaṅkara in one of his post-prayer speeches, Vinoba explained the meaning of *dāna* as 'equal distribution' (*samvibhāga*). He and his co-workers move from village to village asking for land gifts, not as beggars would do, cringing and imploring, but 'as a brother to a brother or a son to a father', demanding of the landed people a due share in favour of the *Daridra-nārāyaṇa*. At first, Vinoba began with asking for one-sixth of the land a person possessed. Now he is exhorting every land-owner to part with as much as is just and fair. 'I am one of your family,' he would say, formulating his *Bhūdāna* demand, 'Won't you accept me as your brother? And accordingly give me my share; half if you are alone, a third if you are two brothers, a fourth if you are three, and so on.' Vinoba has conceived of other types of *dāna* as well: *sampatti-dāna* (money-gift, i.e. one-sixth of one's earning), *śrama-dāna* (labour-gift, i.e. four months a year of hard life for the sake of others, a new kind of *cāturmāsya*) and *jivana-dāna* (life-gift, i.e. resolve to lead a dedicated life).

The silent revolution started by Vinoba is gaining momentum. As regards collecting land-gifts, he fixed the target at five crores of acres in five years. By January this year, he reported that about 36 lakhs acres

had been donated by more than 3.7 lakh people, all without pressure or force, and that about 100 villages had been received as gifts to the *Bhūdāna* movement. It is not the amount of land collected—respectable though it is—that is important; what matters really is the change of heart that is being effected, and the collective power for good that is being generated among the people. Vinoba is never tired of pointing out that his campaign is essentially a religious movement. Land belongs to God; man misappropriates it and calls it his own. He is now called to atone for his mistake. Says Vinoba Bhave,

‘In *Bhūdāna*, I don’t beg but demand the right of the poor. It provides an occasion to the donors to express regrets and atone for the sin of their over-much possessions and transform their ways. It will popularize new and right religion in the country.’

This right religion he has rightly called the religion of *maryādā*, restraint exercised through the strength of the Spirit. It is heartening to note that the Indian mind is taking to Vinoba’s appeal in the right spirit, and that this movement is attracting the attention of the thoughtful world.

The Government, both at the Centre and in the States, is taking an active part in the renaissance and reformation of the nation. Various measures have already been taken in Parliament and in the State legislatures for a re-ordering of Hindu society. Legislation has been made for the removal of the disabilities of Harijans. Vigorous steps are being taken for levelling up the depressed classes. The evils of casteism and

communalism are coming in for sledge-hammer blows. Soon after the attainment of independence, the Hindu Code Bill was introduced by the Government in the Constituent Assembly. By this Bill it was sought to amend and codify certain branches of the Hindu law. The Prime Minister stated even at the outset that the Government attached great importance to it. The three main distinct matters dealt with by the Bill are marriage, inheritance and succession. And, the principle on which it is based is the equality of sexes. There has been a divergence of opinion with regard to parts of the Bill. It has now been split into parts, and each of the parts is being considered and passed separately in Parliament. The prevailing attitude both with Government and with responsible Hindu leadership seems to be one of cautious progressivism. 'Let us not force the pace too much; let us have patience; at the same time let us guide Hindu society on the lines of progress bringing it abreast of the times'—this seems to be the policy of the men who count.

9

Because our state has been declared to be secular, many people wrongly imagine that it has nothing to do with religion, that it is or ought to be indifferent to spiritual values. But the case is quite otherwise. In a speech made in New Delhi on April 15, 1955, the Prime Minister said that the threat to human existence by Atom or Hydrogen Bombs could be met only by moral or spiritual strength. He has repeatedly made it clear

in Parliament that secularism does not mean insensitivity to the deeper values of life. Everyone of importance, vested with authority, has given expression to the same sentiment. 'To be secular' as it has been well put 'is not to be religiously illiterate. It is to be deeply spiritual and not narrowly religious.'⁴ What is meant by saying that the State is secular is that it is not theocratic, that it does not discriminate between religion and religion. Article 15 (1) of our Constitution reads:

'The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth, or any of them.'

The principle behind this Article is the same as the one which King Aśoka caused to be inscribed in his edicts, long long ago:

'He who does reverence to his own sect while disparaging the sects of others, with intent to enhance the splendour of his own, in reality by such conduct inflicts the severest injury on his own.'

Right from the beginning of her history, India has stood for the rule of co-existence in religion. There is no meaning in forced conversion. Mahātmā Gāndhī reflects the spirit of India and of Hinduism in this respect, as in every other, when he says,

'I should like to see all men, not only in India but in the world, belonging to different faiths, become better people by contact with one another and, if that happens, the world will be a much better place to live in than it is today. I plead for the

⁴ The Report of the University Education Commission, 1948-49, vol. I, p. 300.

broadest toleration, and I am working to that end. I ask people to examine every religion from the point of the religionists themselves. I do not expect the India of my dream to develop one religion, i.e., to be wholly Hindu or wholly Christian or wholly Mussalman, but I want it to be wholly tolerant with its religions working side by side with one another.'

The following conversation between the late Śrī Chandraśekhara Bhāratī Swāmi of Sringeri *Piṭha* and an American tourist reported in the press, in 1953,⁵ will be found to be of great interest in that the Swāmi sets forth in it the correct Hindu attitude towards conversion:

'Why must it be', impatiently demanded an earnest American tourist, 'that you will not convert other peoples to Hinduism? You have such a beautiful religion, and yet you keep so many struggling souls out of it. If you say "yes" I will be the first to become a Hindu!'

'But why', came the counter-question, 'do you want to change your religion? What is wrong with Christianity?'

Taken aback, but not daunted, the tourist said, 'I cannot say what is wrong, but it has not given me satisfaction.'

'Indeed, it is unfortunate,' was the reply, 'but tell me honestly whether you have given it a real chance. Have you fully understood the religion of Christ and lived according to it? Have you been a true Christian and yet found the religion wanting?'

'I am afraid I cannot say that, Sir.'

⁵ See also *Dialogues with the Guru* (Chetana Ltd.), ch. I.

‘ Then we advise you to go and be a true Christian first; live truly by the word of the Lord, and if even then you feel unfulfilled, it will be time to consider what should be done.’

To put the puzzled American at his ease the sage explained:

‘ It is no freak that you were born a Christian. God ordained it that way because by the *samskāra* acquired through your actions (*karma*) in previous births your soul has taken a pattern which will find its richest fulfilment in the Christian way of life. Therefore your salvation lies there and not in some other religion. What you must change is not your faith but your life.’

‘ Then, Sir ’, exclaimed the American, beaming with exhilaration, ‘ your religion consists in making a Christian a better Christian, a Muslim a better Muslim and a Buddhist a better Buddhist. This day I have discovered yet another grand aspect of Hinduism, and I bow to you for having shown me this. Thank you indeed.’

10

India has been for ages the cradle of great religions. In spite of occasional eruptions, the followers of the different faiths continue to live in this country in peace. Thanks to the religious neutrality of the State and the example set by the leaders, the minority religious groups have perfect confidence and a sense of security. There is a revival of interest in Buddhism. Several Hindu

leaders actively help in the work of the Mahā Bodhi Society. The enthusiasm with which the relics of Sāriputta and Moggalāna were enshrined in the new Vihāra at Sanchi is a sign of the revived interest in Buddhism. The Jainas also are organizing themselves and turning more and more to the study of their scriptures. The Therāpanthi sect of the Śvetāmbara Jainas, for instance, has at its head an *Ācārya* who is urging his followers to strictly adhere to the principles of *Pañca-śīla*. Christianity had a very privileged position during the British rule, even as Islam had the pride of place earlier in the Mughal period. The leading Indian Christians have now come to realize that they should Indianize their Christianity. More and more the spirit of tolerance and the eagerness to understand the other point of view are becoming manifest. Early this year, the Roman Catholics of India invited Dr Radhakrishnan to address their National Marian Congress at Bombay, and repeatedly applauded him for a frank and sincere speech in which he exposed the futility and danger of exclusive claims. The Muslims are also not behind in appreciating the changed order of things in India. Announcing an Islamic Divine Life Conference recently, the sponsors made this significant observation:

‘ We must safeguard our spiritual values against materialism and other anti-religious forces. Man must soon realize that his soul is eternal and more valuable than his perishable body . . . Mere political talks and conferences may be of some ephemeral value, but will not help humanity to establish real and lasting peace. To change this attitude of human

mind, spiritual values must be revived and basic Truth and Universal Realities must be brought to the forefront of human thought.'

The religious state of the Indian nation, it may be said without fear of contradiction, is pretty sound at present. But there can be no complacency in this respect. There is no limit to the spiritual possibilities of a people. Every good and pious citizen of the world will wish India well and pray for her spiritual progress, so that humanity as a whole will be benefited.

GLOSSARY

- abāva*: non-existence
abhaya: fearlessness
abhidheya: what can be named or denoted
abhiniveśa: the instinctive clinging to life and dread of death
abhyāsa: continued endeavour
acintya-bhedā'bheda: incomprehensible difference and non-difference
acit: non-soul, matter
ādihāra: support
adhama: what is unjust, not right, demerit
adhikāra: eligibility
adhyāsa: superimposition
advaita: non-dual
advaita-anubhava: experience of non-duality
advaita-bhāva: non-dual being
āgāmi: coming (*karma*)
ahaṅkāra: egoity
ahimsā: non-injury
aikya: real union
aiśvarya: lordship
aiśvarya-pradhāna-bhakti: love based on recognition of God's greatness
ajñāna: nescience, ignorance
ākāśa: ether
akṣara-brahman: limited form of Brahman
ākuñcana: contraction
amṛta: immortal
amśa: part
ānanda: bliss
ananta: infinite
āṇava: original impurity, which makes the *jīva* think itself to be atomic
anekānugata: residing in the many
aṅga: part, limb
anirvacanīya: indeterminable
anta: end (i.e., termination; aim)
antaraṅga-śakti: internal power
antaryāmin: inner ruler
anu: atom
anubhava: experience
anugraha: grace
anumāna: inference
anupalabdhi: non-cognition
ānuṣṭūbi: particular order (of words)
anuttara: beyond which there is nothing
ānūṅikī: science of logic
anyonyābhāva: reciprocal non-existence
ap: water
apara: lower
aparā-vidyā: lower knowledge
aparatva: proximity
aparigraha: disowning of possessions
aparokṣa: direct, intuitive experience
apauruṣeya: impersonal, not a human production
apavarga: total absence of pain
aprākṛta: not a product of *prakṛti*
apṛthak-siddhi: inseparability
āpta: trustworthy person
apūrva: unseen potency

- ārambha-vāda*: doctrine of new creation
arcā: idol
arcavatāra: idol as the most concrete of God's forms
arghya: respectful reception
arhat: venerable one
artha: object, aim, wealth
arthāḥatti: presumption
asamprajñāta-samādhi: higher form of *samādhi*
āsana: posture
asat-kārya-vāda: doctrine that effect is non-existent in cause
asmitā: erroneous identification of the self with the mind, body, etc.
āśrama: stage of life
aṣṭāṅga-yoga: eight limbs of *yoga*
aṣṭāvāraṇa: eight rules
asteya: non-stealing
āstika: orthodox
asura: demon
ātma-jñāna: knowledge of the self
ātmāvalokana: self-intuition
atyantābhāva: absolute non-existence
āvāhana: invocation (of the Deity)
avakṣepaṇa: downward
āvāraṇa: power of veiling
avatāra, *avatarāṇa*: incarnation, descent
avayava: members of syllogism
avidyā: ignorance, nescience
avikṛta-pariṇāma: transformation without change within oneself
avivēka: non-discrimination
āvṛtta-caḥsuḥi: one with the eye turned inward
ayuta-siddha: inseparable
baddha: bound
bahiraṅga-śakti: external power
bāhya-pūjā: outer worship
bala: strength
bhakta: devotee
bhukti: devotion
bhakti-yoga: path of devotion
bhāṣya-kāra: commentator
bhāva: becoming, existence, attitude of *bhakta* towards the Deity
bhava-cakra: wheel of existence
bhāvya: what-is-to-be-accomplished
bheda: difference
bhedābheda: difference *cum* non-difference
bhogyā: object experienced
bhoktṛ: experiencer
bhūi: earth
bhūṣaṇa: ornament
bhūta-śuddhi: purification of the elements
bhūta-yajña: sacrifice to the domestic animals
bhuvah: sky
bijākṣara: root-letter
bodhan: wisdom
brahmacārin: celibate
brahmacarya: first āśrama
brahma-vidyā: knowledge of Brahman
brahma-yajña: sacrifice to Brahman consisting in the study and teaching of the Veda
buddhi: cognition, intellect
caitanya: consciousness
caṇḍāla: man of the lowest caste
candana: sandal-wood paste
cakra: discus, wheel, mystic centre in the spinal chord
carama-śloka: the last verse

caraṇa: foot, support
caryā: external acts of worship
chala: quibbling
cin-mātra: pure consciousness
cit: consciousness; soul
citta: mind

dama: restraint
darśana: system; point of view
dāsa-mārga: the path of the servant
dāsya: attitude of servant to his master
deva: god
deva-yajña: sacrifice to the gods
devayāna: path of the gods
devī: goddess
dhāraṇā: fixed attention
dharma: what is right; law; merit, religious duty
dharmabhūta-jñāna: knowledge as an attribute
dharmasāstra: law-books
dhīra: hero
dhūpa: incense
dhvani: mode of utterance
dhyāna: meditation
dhyāna-yoga: path of meditation
dik: space
dikṣā: ceremonial initiation; purification
dīpa: lamp
divya: divine
divyacakṣus: spiritual vision
dravatva: fluidity
dravya: substance
drś: to see
drśānta: instance, example
duḥkha: pain
dūṣaṇa: defect
duṣṭahetu: defective ground

duyaṇuka: binary compound
dveṣa: aversion
eka: one
ekāntika: having one and only end.
ekarṣi: sole seer

gadā: club
gamana: locomotion
gambhīra: deep
gandha: smell
gavaya: wild cow
ghat: bathing places (steps on river-side)
gotra: family; clan
guṇa: quality
guṇapūrṇa: plenitude of all properties
guru: preceptor
gurūpasatti: devotion to preceptor
gurutva: heaviness

hetvābhāsa: fallacious reason
homa: fire-offering
icchā: desire
īṣṭa-sādhanatā-jñāna: knowledge that an action leads to the fulfilment of a desire
īśvara: god
īśvara-tattva: principle of God
īśvara-praṇidhāna: devotion to God
īśvara-saṅketah: God's will

jaḍa: inert
jagat: world
jala: water
jalpa: arguing constructively as well as destructively for victory
jaṅgama: a living realized person; one moving

- japa*: muttering of *mantras*
jāti: specious and unavailing objections
jīva: (individual) soul; life principle
jīvan-mukta, *jīvan-mukti*: one who is liberated while being embodied, that state
jīvātman: individual soul
jñāna: knowledge
jñāna-kāṇḍa: knowledge section (of the Veda)
jñāna-yoga: path of knowledge
jñānendriya: cognitive sense-organ
jñānin: wise one
jñeya: object of knowledge
jyotiṣa: astronomy

kaivalya: aloneness, aloofness
kāla: time
kalā: particle
kāma: desire
kāmya: optional
kāmya-karma, *kāmya-vidhi*: optional rite, injunction thereof
kāraṇa-citta: cause mind
karma: (willed) activity, result of such activity
karma-kāṇḍa: ritual section (of the Veda)
karma-yoga: path of selfless work
karmendriya: motor sense organ
kārya-citta: effect-mind
kāryatā-jñāna: knowledge of one's own duty
kāyika: physical
kevala: alone, absolute
kriyā: action
kula: Brahman in the Śākta system
kumbha: pot (filled with water)

kumbhaka: stopping the breath
kuṇḍa: receptacle for the sacred fires
kuṇḍalīnī: psychic power coiled up at the base of *merudaṇḍa*.
kūrma: tortoise

loka-saṅgraha: welfare of the world
laukika: secular, mundane
līlā: sport
liṅga: symbol of Śiva; (in Nyāya) reason, sign

madhura: romantic love
mādhurya-pradhāna-bhakti: love based on recognition of God's intrinsic and infinite sweetness
madya: wine
mahā-bhūta: gross element
mahat: the seed of the world
mahāvraata: great vow
maithuna: copulation
mala: impurity
māṁsa: meat
manana: reflection
manas: mind
mānasa-pūjā: mental obeisance
mānasika: mental
maṇḍala: mystic diagram
manuṣya-yajña: sacrifice to men
maryādā: the Vedic path
matsya: fish
māyā: principle of illusion
māyā-śakti: power of *māyā*
merudaṇḍa: vertebral column
mihira: sun (Piṅgalā)
mokṣa: release
mokṣa-kāma: longing for release
mudrā: gesture, grain
mukhyā-bhakti: higher devotion
mukti-yogya: eligible for release

- mūla-mantra*: root-mantra
mūla-prakṛti: root-matter

nāḍī: channel of psychic force, nerve
naimittika-karma: rituals for special occasions
naivedya: food-offering
nārasimha: man-lion
nāstika: heterodox
nididhyāsana: deep contemplation
nidrā: sleep and dream
nigamana: conclusion (in Nyāya)
nigrahassthāna: vulnerable points in debate
niḥsvarūpa: characterless
nirāñjana: camphor
niravayava: partless
nirguṇa: without characteristics
nirhetuka: unconditional
nirṇaya: decisive knowledge
nirvikalpaka: indeterminate
nirviśeṣa: without distinctions
nirviśeṣa-caitanya: undifferentiated consciousness
niśedha: prohibition, negative command
niṣiddha-karma: prohibited deed
niṣkāma-karma: action without selfish desire
nitya: eternal, obligatory
nitya-saṁsārin: who is tied to *saṁsāra* for ever
nivṛtti: withdrawal
niyama: observances
niyantr: controller

padārtha: category
padma: lotus
pādya: washing of the feet

pakṣa: subject (in inference)
pañcākṣara: the 5-syllabled formula *namaḥ śivāya*
pañca-makāra-pūjā: ritual of the five m's
pañca-tattva: Śākta ritual in which five objects are offered
pañḍita: scholar
pāni: water
para: supreme
parā-bhakti: higher *bhakti*
parama-dhāman: supreme abode
parama-guru: supreme preceptor, preceptor's preceptor
paramāṇu: primal atom
pāramārthika: absolute (standpoint)
paramātman: highest soul, self
parameśvara: supreme Lord
parārthānumāna: inference for the sake of others
paratva: remoteness
parā-vidyā: higher knowledge
parimāṇa: size
pariṇāma-vāda: theory of transformation
parokṣa: mediate knowledge
pāśa: bond; matter
paśu: soul (in bondage)
pati: God, master
phala: fruit, result
pitṛ-yajña: sacrifice to the departed ancestors
pradhvaṁsābhāva: annihilative non-existence
prāg-abhāva: prior non-existence
prakāra: mode
prakārin: substance
prakāśa: illumination; consciousness
prakṛta: derived from *prakṛti*

- prakṛti*: nature; the prius of crea-
tion
pralaya: dissolution
pramā: truth, valid knowledge
pramāṇa: means of valid knowledge
prameya: object of valid knowledge
prāṇa: breath
prāṇa-pratiṣṭhā: enlivening the idol
prāṇāyāma: control of breath
prapatti: self-surrender
prārabdha: portion of past *karma*
responsible for the present body
prasāda: grace
prasanna: clear
prasāraṇa: expansion
prasthāna-traya: triple foundation
(of Vedānta, i.e., Upaniṣads,
Bhagavad-gītā and Vedānta-
sūtra)
pratijñā: thesis to be established
(in Nyāya)
pratyāhāra: withdrawal of senses
from their objects
pratyakṣa: perception
pravāha: stream (of *samsāra*)
pravṛtti: action, going forth
prayatna: effort
prayojana: purpose
preyas: the pleasing
ṅrthaktva: separateness
ṅrthivi: earth
pūjā: mode of worship
pūraka: in-breathing
purātana: ancient
pūrṇa-yoga: integral yoga
purohita: leader of the community
puruṣa: person, soul
puruṣārtha: human end
puruṣottama: supreme person, God
pūrva: earlier
pūṣan: nourisher, the Sun
puṣpa: flower
puṣṭi: grace
rāga: attachment
rājā: king
rajas: virility (the second *guṇa* of
Sāṅkhya)
rasa: taste
rāsa-līlā: ring-dance, dance of
Kṛṣṇa and the Gopīs
recaka: out-breathing
ṛṣi: seer
ṛta: order of nature, moral order
rudrākṣa: kind of berry (used for
rosaries)
rūpa: colour, form
śabda: testimony, sound
saccidānanda: existence-conscious-
ness-bliss
sadasat-kārya-vāda: the doctrine that
the effect is both existent and
non-existent (in its material
cause)
sādhaka: spiritual aspirant
sādhana: sign, means, spiritual dis-
cipline
sādhāraṇa dharma: cardinal virtues,
common duties
sādhyā: what has to be establi-
shed
sādhyopāya: to-be-attained means
saguṇa: with characteristics
sahaja sthiti: natural status
sakhā: friend
sakhya: love from a man to his
friend
śakti: power
śaktimat: possessor of power

- sāloka, sālōkya*: being in the realm of God
sama: same
śama: calmness
samādhi: concentration
sāmānya: generality
sāmānya-guṇa: common quality
amatva: equanimity or evenness of mind
samavāya: inherence
sāmīpya: vicinity of God
samprajñāta-samādhi: lower form of *samādhi*
saṁsāra: transmigration
saṁśaya: doubt
saṁskāra: faculty, residual impression
saṁnyama: restraint
saṁnyoga: conjunction
sañcita: accumulated karma of the past
sandhyā-vandana: twilight-prayers
śaṅkha: conch
saṅkhyā: number, enumeration
san-mārga: direct path leading to *sat* (God)
sannyāsa, sannyāsin: renunciation, monk
śānti: peace
santoṣa: contentment
śarīra: body
śarīrī: soul
sārūpya: obtaining the form of God
sarvagata: omnipresent
savikalpaka: determinate
sarvottama: supreme reality
śaśī: moon (Iḍā)
śāstra: scripture
sat: existence
sat-kārya-vāda: doctrine of the pre-existent effect
sat-putra-mārga: path of the good son
sattva: purity, (the first *guṇa* of Sāṅkhya)
satyāgraha: truth-force
satyam: real, true
śauca: purity
sāyujya: absorption in God
śeṣin: principal
siddha: existent entity
siddhānta: established conclusion
siddhi: perfection
siddhopāya: ever-attained means
smṛti: secondary scripture, memory
sneha: viscosity
sparsa: touch
śraddhā: faith
śravaṇa: hearing, study (of the Vedānta texts)
śreyas: the good
śrotrīya: learned in the sacred lore
śṣṭi: evolution
śruti: fundamental scriptures, i.e., Vedas
stava: chanting of hymns
sthala: place, position, abode
sthita-prajña: one with steady wisdom
śuddha: pure
sukha: pleasure
sūtra: short aphorism
sūtra-kāra: *sūtra*-maker, i.e., systematizer of a school
suvaḥ: heaven
svābhāvika: natural
svādhyāya: study of one's own section of the Veda
svarga: heaven

- svārthānumāna*: inference for oneself
svarūpa-jñāna: self-awareness
svarūpa-śakti: self-power
svataḥ prāmānya: self-valid
svatantra: independent
svataḥsiddha: self-established
svasaṃvedya: self-evidencing
svaya ṅprakāśa: self-luminous
- tamas*: dullness (the third *guṇa* of Sāṅkhya), darkness
tāmbūla: betel
tamayogya: destined for blinding darkness (hell)
tanmātra: subtle essence
tapas: austerity
tarka: logic, *reductio ad absurdum*
tattva: principle
tattva-vicāra: inquiry into truth
tejas: fire, brilliance
titikṣā: forbearance
triguṇātīta: one who has gone beyond the three *guṇas*
tri-mūrti: trinity
tryaṇuka: triad
tyāga: sacrifice, renunciation
- udāharāṇa*: universal concomitance and example (in Nyāya)
uṣamāna: comparison
uṣanaya: (in Nyāya) subsumptive correlation between the universal concomitance and the present instance
uṣanayana: ceremony marking the second or spiritual birth
uṣapatti: intelligibility
uṣarati: renunciation
uṣāsanā-kāṇḍa: meditation section (of the Veda)
- uṣāya*: means
uṣya: end
ulḥsepaṇa: upward movement
ullara: later
- vacana*: saying
vācika: verbal
vāda: arguing for truth, doctrine
vaidhī: formal
vaidika: Vedic
vaidika-dharma: Vedic dharma, i.e., Hinduism
vairāgya: dispassion, passionlessness
vāma: left
vāmācāra: left-hand practices
vāmana: dwarf
vānaprastha: hermit
varāha: boar
varṇa: colour, caste, letter of the alphabet
vātsalya: love of the parent to the child
vāyu: air
vibhāga: disjunction
vibhava: incarnated form
vibhūti: supernormal power
videha-mukta, *videha-mukti*: one who is liberated when the body dies, that state
vidhi: positive command
vijñāna: knowledge
vikṣepa: power of projecting
vimarśa: evolution
vīparyaya: false knowledge
vīra: hero
vīrya: virility
visarjana: bidding farewell (to the Deity)
viśeṣa: particularity
viśeṣa-guṇa: special quality

- viśeṣaṇa*: quality
viśeṣya: substance
viśiṣṭa: (that which is) qualified
viśvāmaya: immanent, of the form
of the universe
viśvottīrṇa: transcendent, beyond the
universe
vitaṇḍā: mere, destructive argument
vivarta-vāda: theory of phenomenal
appearance
vrata: vow
vṛtti: psychic medium
vyākaraṇa: grammar
vyāvahārika: relative standpoint
vyoman: heaven, sky
vyūha: (grouped) form
yāga: sacrifice
yajña: sacrifice
yama: abstentions, controller
yantra: diagram
yavana: Greek
yuga: world period
yuj: to join

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