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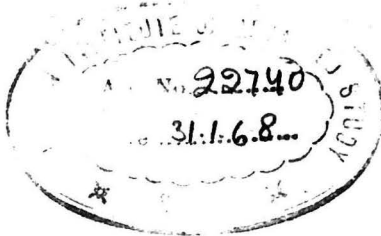
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Hinduism and Modern Culture

By

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I should like to particularize the theme of the Symposium¹ and restrict myself to making a few general observations about the response of Hinduism, particularly of Hindu intellectuals (and let me add that, wherever, in this paper, I speak of Hinduism, I have mainly this class in view), to modern culture as reflected in the Indian way of life and thought of the recent times

I

I shall begin by referring to some of the claims and characteristics of modern culture. In this connection, I am thinking primarily of the five shibboleths of modern culture, namely, rationalism, science, technology, dignity and liberty of the individual coupled with his social obligations (socialism), and secularism. The claims and characteristics of modern culture may be briefly set forth under these five heads.

1. *Rationalism :*

Speaking of rationalism, one finds that great emphasis is now placed on what are called scientific attitude and scientific method. It is averred that knowledge is no doubt important, but the methodology of knowledge is equally important. The validity of the findings of any inquiry depends, in a large measure, on the methods adopted for that inquiry. In this connection, formal logic easily bears the palm. Modern intellectualism feels almost outraged by the traditional Hindu way of thinking, which is said to be completely devoid of the three principles which are fundamental to the modern way of thinking, namely, reason, order, and measure. Knowledge, it is claimed, is a body of strict concepts capable of being set forth in a systematic framework and of being tested on the touchstone of reason. Traditional Hindu thought, it is complained, is dominated by the attitude of blind acceptance, while scientific methodology does not permit anything being accepted on trust. Every bit of new knowledge must be verified by means of reason, experiment, and experience. The pragmatists, for instance, speak of the experimental theory of truth. A true idea, according to them, is one 'whose consequences, when the operations which constitute its meaning are carried out, are such that they are confirmed by experience'. The intellectual division of mankind in the present age is, as pointed by Georges SARTON, not along geographical or racial lines, but between those who understand and

1. This paper was presented at the Symposium on "Traditional Religions under Modern Cultures", organized in connection with the Eleventh International Congress for the History of Religions held at Claremont, U. S. A., in September 1965.

practise the experimental method and those who do not understand and practise it. Authoritarianism is to be discouraged in any field of activity, particularly in the field of knowledge, for, authoritarianism is, in a sense, the very antithesis of scientific research. It is in this connection that one speaks of the 'laboratory mind' as contrasted with the 'seminary mind.' Rationalism is the expression of the laboratory mind, while traditionalism that of the seminary mind. The modern scientific method demands tangible evidence for any theory being rendered acceptable. It also demands opportunities for every one to express dissent from or to challenge the validity of that theory. The traditional Hindu intellectual activity has been generally of the nature of *kṣema*, that is, it has been mostly limited to preserving whatever knowledge had come down through the ages. The Hindu tradition has woefully neglected the *yoga* aspect of the intellectual activity in the sense that it has hardly exerted itself to create new knowledge or to acquire new knowledge. Modern culture, on the other hand, is characterized by the rapidly expanding horizon of knowledge. Naturally enough, modern scientific attitude precludes all talk of absolute knowledge, for, the new knowledge is often seen to supplant the older knowledge. The Hindu tradition regards faith in the absolute validity of the Veda as the most supreme means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*). Faith often tends to breed fanaticism, while reason serves as an effective antidote against fanaticism.

But it is not only in purely intellectual matters that reason is believed to prevail; it claims to constitute the ultimate test also in aesthetics and in ethics. Modern culture recognizes reason as the measure of truth, as the norm of beauty, and as the arbiter of conduct. Reason claims to have established (i) that the world is a system of necessarily connected parts, (ii) that the characters of a thing are not all equally essential, and (iii) that an order, at least causally determined, is essential to ethics.

2. Science :

The real hero in the drama of modern culture is believed to be the man of science, who claims to be 'devoting all energies of his life to the cult of truth.' Science proceeds on the basis of the scientific attitude and the scientific method outlined above. It was Thos. Henry HUXLEY who may be said to have set the tune for the almost extfavagant claims made on behalf of science. Science, according to HUXLEY, was after all 'organized commonsense.' But what was far more important was that, to him, science represented the only valid 'expression of eternal truths.' The achievements in the field of physical sciences in modern times have no doubt been truly remarkable. Much more remarkable, however, has been the indomitable spirit of the scientist who has refused to accept any kind of impasse. Indeed, whenever there has been anything like a deadlock, he has exhibited a surprising audacity of imagination and has thereby further enhanced his mastery of the physical world. The breath-taking pace of scientific advance is verily the pride of modern culture.

Modern science claims to have established (i) that reality is ordered, (ii) that man's reason is capable of discerning this order as it manifests itself in the laws of nature, and (iii) that the path to human fulfilment consists primarily in discovering these laws, utilizing them where this is possible and complying with them where it is not. The social function of science, according to J. D. BERNAL, is threefold, namely, the satisfaction of the scientist's native curiosity, the discovery and integrated understanding of the external world, and the application of such understanding to problems of human welfare. This direct application of science to problems of human welfare has tremendously increased the social effectiveness of the scientist. He has now become the keeper of social change, 'the catalyst which stimulates the alteration of human attitudes and values.' It is, indeed, on social and moral grounds that, in his lectures on "The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution", C. P. SNOW pronounces an uncompromising indictment on the humanities and social sciences. He affirms that, since in science there are commonly agreed-upon canons of establishing truth, science alone can compound the differences between nations and thus serve as the basis of a common universal culture. Science is essentially autonomous, and no particular philosophy—political or otherwise—can legislate for scientists.

It is further claimed that the ever-increasing fund of scientific knowledge has delimited—or, in some cases, entirely negated—the scope and the purpose of religion. Science has, for instance, unravelled the mystery of the origin of the world and of man and has thereby rendered religious cosmology and anthropology quite nugatory. Whether God created the world or not is immaterial. What really matters is that the world is left to run according to its own in-built laws. Modern science supersedes religion in that, instead of engaging itself in the futile task of discovering God, it strives to understand and, wherever possible, to regulate those laws of the world. Now, the 'Natural' is given precedence over the 'Supernatural.' Even in the matter of ethics or theory of human value, since science has proved to be the strongest motivating force in human life, the basic assumptions of ethics have to be derived from science.

3. *Technology :*

Technology is the result of the direct application of scientific knowledge to human affairs. It has, therefore, influenced human life as a whole far more vitally than science. The industrial revolution brought about by technology must be regarded as one of the most significant landmarks in the history of mankind. The introduction of machinery has thoroughly changed the structure and character of traditional society. So far as the conditions in the present-day India are concerned, urbanisation and the increasing social mobility, among other things, have led to the gradual crumbling down of the old social order. For instance, the caste-system, which had enjoyed, through the ages, a kind of religious sanction, is now inevitably required to soften its rigours and to connive at the transgression of many of its laws. New social

relationships are now evolving—relationships which are entirely unrelated to religion. Caste is gradually losing its position as the supreme regulator of social organization, and the traditional criteria of age and birth are now yielding place to merit and efficiency.

But perhaps the most striking consequence of modern technology is the clearly noticeable rise in the standard of the material culture of man. This has further given rise to the changed concept of human needs. And all this has resulted in the realisation by man that religion is, by its very nature, not competent to satisfy his new needs.

4. *Freedom of the Individual and Socialism :*

It is suggested that the traditional Hindu social institutions are essentially authoritarian in spirit. They do not recognize the freedom and dignity of the individual which constitute the very core of modern culture. Traditional Hinduism presents a strange paradox : It is at once one of the most liberal and one of the most conservative religions. It allows almost unlimited freedom in speculation, but it insists on strict conformity to practice. But the so-called liberality of the Hindu tradition, it is complained, is deceptive. For, in actual practice, it is not the holding of any specific belief but the strict adherence to certain social customs that has been regarded as the determining factor in respect of Hinduism. In the Hindu social order, which is largely governed by a kind of impersonal collectivity, the individual has no initiative left to him. Modern culture, on the other hand, assumes that man, though a part of nature, has the capacity of redirecting and transforming the natural and social world. It fully recognizes the creative power of man's intellect

Modern ethics is man-oriented ; it takes into account the basic urges of man. It maintains that good in human life is essentially related to human desires. Which things are more to be esteemed and which less is to be determined entirely with reference to secular, inter-personal relationships. Modern ethics is rational in that it properly relates the means to the ends. Further, it denies that any values can be absolute. Values are necessarily relative in the context of the developing human needs and social objectives. Modern institutions have, therefore, to be built up on the basis of this modern ethics which is the very opposite of the transcendental, absolute, and impersonal value-system of traditional Hinduism. It is the characteristic feature of modern culture that, while reorganizing society, it also seeks to rehumanize man. Scientific humanism, which is 'nothing more than an extension of the logic and ethics of scientific inquiry' and which claims that the real test of all social institutions consists in 'the quality of personal experience' and the extent of individual freedom which they make possible, is becoming the dominant philosophy of the modern times.

5. *Secularism* :

But the claim made on behalf of modern culture, which is perhaps most relevant to our present purpose, is that that culture is secular. Secularism it may be pointed out, is understood in various senses. Primarily, secularism is taken to imply irreligion or rejection of all religion. In the modern age of science and technology, religion has become an anachronism. It has outlived its purpose. The empire of religion has, so to say, now become fragmented among its rightful heirs, namely, the different sciences, intellectual disciplines, and cultural pursuits. There is yet another more aggressive side to this attitude of mind. It is averred that religion needs to be rejected because, as history clearly testifies, religion has miserably failed in its avowed mission. It arrogated to itself the authority to arbitrate in matters with which it was by no means intrinsically concerned. It promoted not unity but strife and discord among the people. Religion has often been degraded to become a means to an irreligious end. India, for instance, has witnessed the tragic consequences of the phenomenon of religion serving as a handmaid of politics. Secularism, therefore, seeks to annihilate the evil influences of religion.

The secular tendencies of modern culture also represent a reaction against the other-worldliness of traditional religions. Particularly in Hinduism, the world-negating philosophy and the transcendental values have generally been most dominant. These latter, however, can be hardly deemed compatible with the urges, needs, and capacities of the man of the age of science and technology. In an underdeveloped country like India, secularism tends to signify yet another attitude. Many Indian intellectuals honestly believe that India has had too much of religion. Indeed, religion has smothered all other aspects of her cultural life. It is argued that the fact that religion has been the controlling interest of most of India's past history accounts for her position today as a bankrupt nation. It is, therefore, desirable and necessary that India soon gets rid of the suffocating burden of her heritage of extreme spirituality and begins to breathe the fresh air of material progress and prosperity.

II

The confrontation of traditional Hinduism and modern culture (in the early stages of its evolution) may be said to have begun roughly with the advent of the British rule in India. The educated classes among the Hindus have reacted to this phenomenon, fraught with serious and far-reaching consequences, in three typical ways. A brief excursus in the recent history of Hinduism may help to clarify this point. The remarkable achievements of science and technology in the West and the new philosophies of life to which they gave rise made a tremendous impact on one section of the Hindu intelligentsia. They analyzed the situation in India and concluded from this self-examination that the root-cause of the material and spiritual poverty of India (yes, even spiritual poverty, for, the much-flaunted Hindu spirituality

was to be found neither in books nor among men!) was the kind of religion which she professed. They, therefore, felt that this root-cause must be removed, that is to say, religion must be rejected. Such rejection of religion took two forms. Firstly it meant the rejection of traditional Hinduism in favour of a religion which was considered to be more amenable to modern developments, particularly of Christianity. The other variety of rejection was far more radical. It cannot, of course, be said to have been restricted only to India. Indeed it was a common universal phenomenon brought about by the multiple material forces. This variety of rejection insisted on religion as such being entirely banished from human affairs. But the rejectionists of neither of these varieties could command any large following in India.

The second kind of reaction is represented by the equally strongly expressed tendency towards the preservation—either wholesale or selective—of the beliefs and practices of Hinduism. It is asseverated that traditional Hinduism cannot and must not be banished, for, it has efficaciously served and will continue to serve as the perennial source of inspiration and the one beacon light for the Hindu millions. There may be said to be three typical manifestations of this tendency. (1) There are, first of all, the obscurantists like the Varṇāśramadharmā-Saṁgha and the Rāmarājya-Pariṣad, who insist that traditional Hinduism with all its social and other implications must be preserved at all cost. They believe that any kind of reform would threaten the very basis of Hinduism. (2) The second group, representing the preservationist attitude, consists of the followers of the Hindu Mahāsabha and the Rāṣṭriya-Svayamśevaka-Saṁgha. They may be characterised as Hindu nationalists. They are not necessarily in sympathy with the extreme obscurantists. Their one and principal claim is that Hinduism is the national religion of India. According to them, the preservation of Hinduism amounts to the maintenance of the national solidarity of India. On principle, they are not averse to suitable reforms in Hindu society. Indeed, many of them entertain the vision of a strong, socially reconstructed Hinduism. Naturally enough, the Hindu nationalists are anti-conversion and pro-reconversion. They firmly believe that, without the basic spiritual and social values of traditional Hinduism, India will lose her national personality. They are quite unwilling to separate Hinduism from the larger national life of the country. For them, Hinduism is the flag of patriotism. (3) Finally, there are the fundamentalists like the Āryasamāja whose main slogan is: "Back to the Veda." The fundamentalists believe that the Aryan religion in its purest form is presented only in the Veda. The weakness and the degradation of Hinduism are due to the non-Vedic elements which have, in course of time, accumulated round the Vedic kernel. Hinduism must be drastically shorn of all its non-Vedic excrescences, and the Vedic Aryan religion must thereby be made to assert itself in its pristine purity and splendour. The Āryasamāja further claims that the Vedic religion has nothing to fear from the so-called modern sciences. For, the Veda distinctly anticipates most of these sciences and technological inventions.

The third kind of reaction resulting from the confrontation of Hinduism and modern culture is reflected in the attempts made to restate Hinduism in the light of the newly arisen complex situation in India and the world. This tendency is perhaps the ruling tendency of the recent times. It issues from the firm conviction that Hinduism possesses the innate character of what may be called the eternal religion, *sanātana dharma*, that it can adequately satisfy the religious urge of any age. The past history of Hinduism, as RADHAKRISHNAN points out, encourages one to believe that it will be found 'equal to any emergency that the future may throw up, whether on the field of thought or of history.' All that needs to be done is to reinterpret Hinduism to suit the changing conditions (and this can be done without any serious violence to the basic character of Hinduism) or to isolate and emphasize such characteristics of Hinduism as are universal and perennial in their appeal and thereby relate its teachings suitably to modern developments. This tendency towards restatement, reinterpretation, or revision of Hinduism has manifested itself in various ways, but I shall refer only to three of its manifestations.

- (1) Firstly, there were attempts made, mostly under the inspiration of Christianity, to liberalise, humanize, and rationalise traditional Hinduism. The Brāhma Samāja is a typical example in point. This movement sought to overcome the formidable contradictions in the traditional Hindu way of life and thought—contradictions, for instance, between renunciation and sordid sensuality, between unnatural insistence on chastity and sex-obsession, between morbid respect for animal life and beastly cruelty to fellow human beings. Among other things, it lay stress on monotheism (which was supposed to be more rational, and, from the practical point of view, more conducive to the intensity of religious feeling); it discouraged idolatry (which was regarded as being reminiscent of primitive totemism and as a morbid growth on the original religion); it promoted congregational worship (which was believed to engender a sense of religious integrity in the community); and it exalted the human values in religion above other values. The Brāhma Samāja, however, never became an all-India movement. Its influence was mostly restricted to Bengal and that too only to certain sections of the community. Of course, religious and social movements similar to the Brāhma Samāja, such as the Prarthana Samāja, were started in other parts of the country as well, but they too cannot be said to have caught the imagination of the people as a whole.
- (2) The second religious movement, which undertook to reinterpret Hinduism in the light of modern developments in thought and life was that of the Ramakrishna Mission. The remarkable work done by the Mission in different parts of the world is too well known to need recounting. The Mission lays special emphasis on

the universality of the fundamental teachings of Hinduism, such as the divinity of man, the non-duality and spiritual character of the ultimate reality, the basic solidarity of all existence, the insistence on religion as realization and not as mere creed, and the essential harmony of all religions. The humanatarian activities of the Ramakrishna Mission in India, particularly in the field of education and medical and other relief, need special mention.

- (3) It is, however, the third kind of the manifestation of the tendency of restatement and reinterpretation of Hinduism that appeals most to the Hindu intellectuals today. Surprisingly enough, this kind of manifestation did not come in the form of any organized religious movement like the Brähma Samāja or the Ramakrishna Mission. It is largely the result of the endeavours—which are mostly academic in character—of individual thinkers (the foremost among whom is RADHAKRISHNAN), who having become 'conscious of many of the imperfections and disabilities of the historical faith, seek to find within it, by some kind of rationalization, a faith adequate to meet the demands of Indian life in the present age.' RADHAKRISHNAN's re-evaluation of Hinduism is rational, critical, and, shall I add, metaphysically oriented. His attitude is one of trust tempered by criticism. Traditional Hinduism is by no means free from mistaken concepts, excesses, and abuses; but these are but excrescences to be gotten rid of. Underneath these are solid, universal principles to be held to without hesitation. 'Our times', says RADHAKRISHNAN, 'require not a surrender of the basic principles of Hinduism, but a restatement of them with special reference to the needs of a more complex and mobile social order.' 'The great ideals of our culture', he says elsewhere, 'cannot be discarded; but their embodiment in forms and institutions we must get beyond. There is no reversing history.' Change in religion is inevitable, but tradition must grow. Indeed, RADHAKRISHNAN has a larger vision of Hinduism. He does not regard it merely as a faith fit for a section of the people of India. He entertains the hope that, if the Hindu religious thought and practice were suitably reorganized, Hinduism would 'recover its conquering force and power to advance, penetrate, and fertilise the world.'

It, however, needs to be remembered that a revised version of a traditional religion does not generally appeal to the people at large as much as the traditional religion itself.

III

I believe that Hinduism—perhaps alone among the traditional religions of the world—can adjust itself with modern culture harmoniously and without

its essential character being in any way violated. History offers abundant guarantee for this. But there are other valid reasons as well for this supposition. I may here refer to a few of them.

- (A) Firstly, several of the claims of modern culture—particularly from among those which imply the futility of religion in modern times—have been proved to be inherently untenable. Similarly, several features of modern culture have been found to be not very desirable—indeed, they have been instrumental in stirring up serious crises in the life of man. In a sense, therefore, they may be said to have produced a propitious atmosphere for a fresh rethinking about the need for religion.
- (B) Secondly, certain characteristics of Hinduism, arising from the very nature of its origin and growth, render it capable of adequately meeting the challenge of any new set of circumstances.
- (C) And, thirdly, many elements of modernity have already been there in the Hindu tradition. Similarly, on account of its proverbial tolerance and resilience as also on account of its essentially realistic outlook, that tradition has been assimilating several other elements of modern culture.

Let me briefly consider these points.

The apotheosis of formal logic by modern rationalism has actually tended to crush out life. It seems to have been forgotten that, after all, life is larger than logic. Modern intellectualism has completely failed to realise the true nature of faith and the significance of the role which faith plays in the life of man. In this connection, it needs to be emphasized that credulity is to be distinguished from faith. Faith is, indeed, nothing other than mature reason. Particularly in the moral realm, reason is incomplete and arrested in growth if not allowed to blossom into faith. In his *Reason and Belief*, BLANSHARD has tried to show how reason in the sense in which the idealists understand it can still be used to bolster up religious faith. It may be pointed out that intuition which is so much glorified in the Hindu tradition is not a-logical; it is, indeed, supra-logical. Faith and intuition have proved to be veritable sources of strength for man. TOYNBEE has struck the right note when he says that the attitude of mind which sterilizes fanaticism at the cost of extinguishing faith is the supreme danger to the spiritual health. It seems as if, while combating one kind of fanaticism, modern intellectualism has fermented another kind of fanaticism, namely, the fanaticism regarding the invulnerability of reason. Reason discourteously faith, but at the same time it insists on faith in itself. Actually, never before has man lost, so completely as now, faith in reason as the final arbiter in metaphysics, aesthetics, and ethics.

The fact that reason is now on the defensive (as evince such works as *Reason and Goodness*, *Reason and Belief*, and *Reason and Analysis* by BLANSHARD) is not without significance. As the holocaust of the two world

wars and the fear of a third have amply demonstrated, human reason has failed miserably in ordering the affairs of the world. Even science, whose mainstay reason claims to be, may be said to have become an enemy of reason in that 'it has put such weapons into man's hands as cannot be used to any rational end.' A wholly rational individual is a myth. Has not the new psychology unravelled the dark forces of the unconscious and also exposed the incapacity of reason to deal with them? Similarly, modern art and literature have almost ceased swearing by the saving power of reason. But the most telling attack on reason has come from the various philosophical systems of the recent times. The logical positivists and linguistic analysts, for instance, seriously doubt that reality has an absolute order which man's reason can comprehend. The existentialists deny reason any say in the field of ethics by insisting that there are no common moral principles. Further, the naturalists and the instrumentalists have divested reason respectively of its independent activity and contemplative initiative.

'The obscurantists of any generation', says WHITEHEAD, 'are in the main constituted by the greater part of the practitioners of the dominant methodology; today, the scientists are obscurantists.' It will be easily conceded, in view of what has been said above, that the claims made on behalf of scientific method are very much exaggerated. Actually the extreme specialization which is now aimed at in science engenders an undesirable narrowness of outlook. It is suggested, rather hyperbolically, that the average scientists, who are prone to see but little beyond their restricted field, represent a new kind of barbarism. It is also not sufficiently recognized that one would find it theoretically impossible to deny that 'feeling' is a necessary element of scientific attitude.

As for the assumptions of modern science such as that reality is ordered, that man's reason is capable of discerning this order as manifested in the laws of nature, and that the path to human fulfilment consists in discovering and controlling these laws, have now been almost completely smashed by what may be called 'post-modern' science. Reflective men, it is pointed out, are no longer confident of these postulates. Reality, for instance, may not be personal, but it cannot also be said to be ordered in a way that man's reason can lay bare. Modern science, says HUSTON SMITH, showed us a world at odds with our senses; post-modern science is showing us one which is at odds with our imagination. The structure of nature, scientists now confess, has eluded them. They are confronted with something which is truly ineffable.

So far as the claim of science in connection with ethics is concerned it is asserted (for instance, by logical positivists) that judgements of value, especially moral value, are not objective and descriptive in character, and that their validity or invalidity cannot be established by scientific reasons. Science by itself does not constitute a value. On the other hand, the scientist has to accept without question the system of ethical values current in his time

and his society. As WADDINGTON says, 'maintenance of scientific attitude does imply the assertion of a certain ethical standard.' Thus the limitations of the role of science in human life are being more and more emphatically pressed in. Human life, it is now realised, is 'too broad, deep, subtle, and rich to be exhausted by anything that scientist would find out in his own field.' Science, therefore, cannot pontificate any longer. The attitude which has gained ground among the scientists that one can be either *in* science or *outside* of it is exclusivist and arbitrary. Science must abjure the tendency to overstep.

There is no doubt that technology has affected human society more vitally than science. For, its influence is more direct and more extensive. The consequences of technology are not merely academic; they have what may be called a practical significance. And many of these consequences are distinctly undesirable. For instance, technology has given rise to a social organization which is essentially impersonal in character. It does not inspire a sense of belonging. It has engendered extreme utilitarianism. The introduction of machinery has, so to say, reduced man to the position of a machine. It has dehumanized man. Similarly, technology cannot be said to have succeeded in counteracting the authoritarianism in society. Only, one kind of domination, namely, by caste, is substituted by another kind of domination, namely, by experts and managers. Technology has actually led to the concentration of authority, power, and wealth—and, what is worse, by its very nature, it does not possess the capacity of laying down the norms in the matter of the use of that authority, power, and wealth. Technology is responsible for fostering a strange kind of paradox in modern life, a paradox, that is to say, in the form of material comfort and opulence on the one hand and spiritual poverty and frustration on the other. The rush of the machine-age has disturbed the equilibrium in human life; it has created a kind of imbalance. Man can no longer hope to enjoy personal solitude which is so essential to his spiritual health. The persisting conditions of war have revealed technology in a grave and dangerous perspective. Of course, science and technology by themselves are not to be condemned. Indeed, man cannot now do without them. All that is intended to be suggested here is that the employment of science and technology needs to be governed by a proper sense of values. It may be pointed out that technology, like science, is value-free in the sense that the scientist or the inventor, as scientist or inventor, has always remained neutral in the matter of evolving any human values as such.

As regards the emphasis laid by modern culture on the freedom of the individual, one may bear in mind that a 'free' individual, like a 'rational' individual, is a myth. The materialistic view, which is one of the most dominant views of the present age, actually looks upon man as 'a passive creature moulded and pushed from behind by mechanical forces, a slave of physical energy he can never control.' The two ideals of modern culture, namely, individual freedom and socialism, have remained incompatible.

Indeed, the socialization of the individual is threatening to develop into a major crisis of the modern times. And, finally, it needs to be emphasized that all values are not necessarily relative and objective. Since there do exist common interests and common needs in the life of man, the assumption of what may be called universal ethics is perfectly relevant.

As for the secularism sponsored by modern culture, to think of secularism merely in negative terms as irreligion or anti-transcendentalism or non-spirituality is to do injustice to that concept. As will be shown in the sequel, secularism is a very positive and pragmatic concept.

I have said above that certain characteristics of Hinduism, arising from the very nature of its origin and growth, render it capable of adequately meeting the challenge of any new set of circumstances. I should like to begin by emphasizing one feature of Hinduism, which is perhaps almost unique, namely, that Hinduism has developed as a religion without the "Book", the "Prophet", and the "Church". In the thought-ferment which followed the period of the major *Upaniṣads*, certain distinct tendencies became evident in the cultural history of India. Without going into details, one may set forth these tendencies as follows: First of all, the heterodox systems of thought (that is, the systems of thought which did not accept the ultimate validity of the Veda), like Buddhism and Jainism, particularly the former, began to assert themselves. They took advantage of the atmosphere of free thinking and spiritualism (as against ritualism) engendered by the *Upaniṣads*, but at the same time they scrupulously avoided the deficiencies from which the *Upaniṣads* suffered. These heterodox systems no doubt made a rapid and impressive advance. But they were not able to supplant completely the Vedic way of life and thought which was based on solid foundations and had a long tradition behind it. On the contrary, there emerged, on behalf of the Veda, a strong reaction against this non-Vedic heterodox current of thought. Even during the interregnum, which followed the Upaniṣadic period and which was marked by a temporary break in the continuity of the Vedic tradition, there had been active some veteran protagonists of Vedic thought and practice. These rear-guards of Vedic culture took upon themselves to re-confirm that culture. They started a movement for the reorganization, systematization, and popularization of Vedic thought and practice. The *Sūtra-Vedāṅga* literature is the outcome of this second cultural tendency.

The third cultural tendency, which became evident in the period of the Vedic interregnum, resulted in the rise of Hindu religion and culture. Even from very early times, there had existed in India, side by side with the prevailing Vedism, a large number of mutually distinct tribal religious cults. From the point of view of their origin, nature, and currency, many of these religious cults must be said to have been essentially non-Vedic. One thing, however, is certain, namely, that these religious cults soon came to be adopted as its proteges by the expanding Vedic religion. When the non-Vedic religions began to assert themselves, with a view to counteracting

their influence, these popular religious cults, each professing a different pantheon and a different ritual, formed themselves into a kind of loose federation—the thin thread of a nominal and formal allegiance to the Veda serving to hold them together. It is this federation of religious cults which we have come to know as Hinduism. Such being, in brief, the story of the genesis of Hinduism, Hinduism as such cannot be said to have been revealed through or founded by any particular Prophet or messenger of God. Similarly, the allegiance of Hinduism to the Veda was such that the Veda could hardly be designated as the Book or the Revelation in respect of that religion. There could also not be, naturally enough, any one Church or organization to govern the heterogenous belief and worship of Hinduism. In other words, in its origin and early growth, Hinduism remained free from any kind of institutional rigidity. This is surely the secret of its remarkable responsiveness to the changing conditions of life and thought. This is also why Hinduism has continued to be a ‘growing’ religion. As RADHAKRISHNAN points out, ‘Hinduism is a movement, not a position; a process, not a result; a growing tradition, not a fixed revelation.’ Hinduism, indeed, represents an exercise in expanding exploration. There is, accordingly, no possibility of any serious conflict arising from the confrontation of Hinduism and modernity. One need not be surprised if, in course of time, modernity itself silently merges into Hinduism and thus becomes an organic part of the Hindu tradition.

Another striking feature of Hinduism, which is relevant in our present context, is its wide-extending and ever-expanding appeal. Hinduism has ‘evolved’ through a long period of eventful history, and, therefore, includes within itself all stages of that evolution. It is picturesquely compared to a snow-ball. Hinduism is not a system but a system of systems. It can claim to have expressed almost every possible variety of religious experience. It has become a veritable encyclopaedia of religion and ethics. Every type of mind can derive inspiration and nourishment from it. It is in this peculiar essential character of Hinduism that we have to discover the reason why no definition of Hinduism has been possible. Hinduism has been variously described as a juridical entity or a social organization or an anthropological process, but these and similar other descriptions are comparable to the blind men’s descriptions of the elephant. Hinduism has actually defied all attempts at defining it. Indeed, Hinduism did not have a specific name for a long time. This is quite understandable, for, Hinduism may be said to have evolved as Religion and not as a *particular* religion.

Tolerance is often named as the most outstanding characteristic of Hinduism. It is, however, complained that Hindu tolerance is the expression of an amazing nonchalance. It is not rationalistic in the sense that it is not, for instance, like the tolerance reflected in the words of VOLTAIRE who said that he knew his opponent to be wrong and yet was prepared to fight the battle for tolerance, that is for his opponent’s right to say what he wanted. Hindu tolerance being rooted in indifference has proved intellectually barren

Another complaint that is made against Hindu tolerance is that, in most cases, it actually amounts to abject and uncritical submission to the other's point of view, or that—and this is perhaps worse—it represents a tendency to make virtue of necessity. But the history of Hindu thought definitely gives the lie to such suggestions. Hindu tolerance is deliberate, critical, positive, and realistic. It is the result of a Hindu's capacity to 'entertain a thought, to entertain a person, and to entertain himself.' Gandhiji used to say: 'It is not necessary for tolerance that I must necessarily approve of what I tolerate.' But one must be always willing and prepared for intellectual and social accommodation. This represents just elementary good manners in civilized life. In the matter of religion, Hindu tolerance implies a kind of sublimation of religious feelings—a recognition on the part of a Hindu that religion is polymorphic.

A third reason why Hinduism will be able to meet the challenge of modern culture adequately is that Hinduism either already possesses many of the elements of the so-called modernity or it has been steadily assimilating them in the course of its growth. Rationalism as such, for instance, is by no means new to the Hindu tradition. It is well known that Hindu thought can boast of a well-developed epistemology. Indeed, Nyāya, which is recognized as one of the six systems of orthodox Hindu philosophy, has played a significant role in the development of almost every branch of Hindu knowledge. As for the *Veda-prāmānya* or faith in the ultimate validity of the Veda, it has been already pointed out that, in actual history, that doctrine had only a formal and nominal significance, that it served merely as a thin thread binding together various systems of thought and practice. And, further, though the Veda was regarded as the final authority, complete freedom was allowed in its interpretation. Do we not find systems of various shades of thought, ranging from absolute monism to dualism, claiming to have the fullest and exclusive sanction of the Veda? The spirit of inquiry has always been a ruling passion with Hindu thinkers. They are seen to have devoted themselves to a fearless and uninhibited pursuit of truth regardless of where it led. A Cārvāka or a Kauṭilya is not unknown to Hindu intellectual history. It is, verily, a strong point of Hindu thinkers that they have duly recognized the limitations of human intellect. *Śraddhā* or faith is an indication of their epistemological optimism.

Like modern scientists, Hindus also tested their knowledge, limited in scope and variety though it was, pragmatically, that is, by the quality of personal experience which it made possible. Immediate experience of reality, and not merely its mediate knowledge, was the goal towards which all the intellectual activities of the Hindus were directed. This accounts for the fact that Hindu seekers after truth often had recourse to supra-intellectualistic disciplines like Yoga. In a sense, Hindu philosophy is an 'applied' philosophy; it looks upon human life as a laboratory for 'experiments with truth.'

It further needs to be pointed out that, for a Hindu thinker, the 'attitudinal' aspect of philosophy has been more important than the 'cognitive' aspect. What really matters is not what one 'knows' but what one 'becomes.' All this makes Hinduism an essentially mystic-personal religion. It need not, therefore, come into any serious conflict with modern culture. The theologic aspect of religion, as claimed by the modernists, may have lost its *raison d'être* after the rise of modern science and secular ethics, but its mystic aspect, as even the strongest protagonist of modernity is now inclined to admit, will ever remain coeval with man.

As for Hindu ethics, it can be hardly characterized as absolute. Actually, Hinduism has developed a regular value-system with different levels. Indeed, it has gone to the extreme in this matter, as is evidenced by its theory of Varnadharma and Āśramadharma. But Hinduism also duly recognises the wholeness of life and the need for reconciling antinomies. Hindu ethical system lays stress on values as what KANT calls 'conditions of the possibility of social existence.' It must also be emphasized that, in the ideal pattern of society, the co-ordination of its constituent members and not their subordination to one another has been the governing principle. Another point that is relevant in the present context is that Hindu practices have never been static; there have been in existence different practices—often mutually contrary—in different times and in different regions. Due recognition of the dignity of the individual, on which modern culture prides itself so much, is again not new to Hindu thought. Metaphysically, the individual is said to be not different from the ultimate reality. The recognition of the essential divinity of man is one of the basic characteristics of the Hindu tradition, and the real purpose of religion is said to be the actualisation of this latent divinity of the individual. Hindu ethics, through its theory of the four Puruṣārthas, aims at the growth of the 'full' individual, by suitably co-ordinating his aesthetic, economic-materialistic, socio-ethical, and spiritual propensities and capabilities.

It must, however, be pointed out that the ultimate world-view of the Hindus is cosmic and not anthropocentric. It is, indeed, on account of this that the socialization of the individual, which has become almost inevitable in modern times, does not pose any serious problem to the Hindu way of thinking as it does to the individualistic way of thinking such as that of the West. There is also another way in which the Hindu ideology has encountered the challenge of socialization of the individual. Individual freedom and socialization, it will be generally agreed, are incompatible. At the same time, under the present set-up, socialization of the individual cannot be avoided. According to the Hindu thought, man's personality has two distinct aspects, namely, the 'person' or the essential self or the Ātman and the 'individual' or the empirical self characterized by the body-mind-complex or the Jīva. It is the Jīva or the 'individual' that is involved in this phenomenal world and may, therefore, be subjected to the process of socialization, but the Ātman or the 'person' remains unconcerned with the worldly life and

can thereby retain his essential freedom. The Anāsakti-Yoga of the *Bhagavadgītā* represents perhaps the most efficacious solution to the problem of the socialization of the individual which modern culture is required to face so persistently.

IV

I shall now conclude this statement of mine with a few general observations on the present conditions and the prospects in India, so far as religion—particularly Hinduism—is concerned. Today, India, like the rest of the world, is witnessing a major conflict of values. In India, as elsewhere, there is a distinct shift of interest. Interest in politics and economics is becoming more and more predominant and the tendency is becoming evident to subordinate all other values to this sole value. TOYNBEE has characterised such a state of things as marking the decay of civilization. Particularly on the background of the religion-dominated past history of India, this shift of interest strikes one in a very pronounced manner. In the matter of religion, the Hindus have now generally become listless. They are merely drifting. What is, therefore, urgently needed is a positive and constructive attitude. It is clear that the kind of equilibrium which traditional Hinduism had established, has now been seriously disturbed by modernisation. But it is equally clear that, for the sake of the national—indeed human—solidarity, a new kind of equilibrium must be substituted and that Hinduism, as indicated above, has the innate capacity to respond to this challenge quite adequately. The first and foremost requisite in this connection is to banish the prevailing atmosphere of frustration and cynicism and to reassert our 'faith' in the spiritual future of man.

Man is essentially religious. Constituted as he is, he cannot live without some kind of religion—it is for him a psychological and a sociological necessity. Man as a finite being instinctively yearns for the Infinite. He seeks in the Infinite the solace and support for his own life. As the *Upaniṣad* says: *nālpe sukham asti, yo vai bhūmā tat sukham*. Psychologically, transcendentalism has a strong fascination for man. Man has always had faith in spiritual progressivism. It is well and truly said that, for man, 'to be is to transcend.' Man's spirituality, according to SANTAYANA, implies his 'living in the presence of the ideal.' Religion is indeed a necessary and universal experience, inseparable from the nature of man.

This being so, irreligion or rejection of religion is positively unnatural. As pointed out elsewhere, the secularism, which is now accepted by the Indian people as an article of faith, does not imply irreligion or anti-transcendentalism or non-spirituality. Indian secularism has two main features. Firstly, it implies a positive good will and respect for all religions; and, secondly, it insists that institutionalized religion shall not be employed to influence adversely the civic life of the people and the normal functioning of the State. In a country like India, which is characterized by religious

pluralism, this doctrine of secularism is fully justified. In the India of today, communities professing different religious faiths and practices have not only to live together in harmony, but they have also to work together in a spirit of active and responsible collaboration. Under these circumstances, secularism, properly understood, can alone operate as a positive force in the development of the country. Secularism, it must be emphasized, does not contemplate an outright reversal of the spiritual tradition of the country. It rather promotes a healthy evolution of that tradition so that it may suitably respond to the changing conditions.

The greatest danger of the modern age is the disparity between man's mastery of external nature and his mastery of his own inner nature. The humanists and the social scientists have not been able to keep pace with the natural scientists. While the latter have been assiduously exerting themselves to overcome every deadlock in the matter of the mastering of the external nature, the humanists and the social scientists have almost yielded to a counsel of despair—ever harping on the refrain: 'Things will continue to be as they are as long as human nature is what it is.' They have failed to bring about a revolution of the spirit comparable to the revolution in physical sciences. Here, they have a lesson to learn from the scientists who do not stop at any impasse. The social effectiveness of the humanists and the social scientists must be deliberately promoted, and the spiritual energies of man must be fully exploited. It, however, needs to be remembered that anything like a spiritual revolution must be governed by certain compelling conditions of the modern age. It is obvious that the social participation in a common faith will become increasingly less common. An institutionalised religion and social order cannot be regarded as synonymous any longer. The theologic, credal, institutional, ritualistic aspect of religion will have to be subordinated to the mystic, personal, spiritual aspect. And finally it will have to be clearly realised that the future of religion lies not in aggressive censorship but in the imperative of aloofness.

