But he who practices only Compassion,
Does not gain release from toils of existence.
He, however, who is strong in practice of both,
Remains neither in Samsāra nor in Nirvāna.

PART THREE
HINDUISM

B.C.	c.500–500 A.D.	Period of Hindu lawbooks, epics, and development of the six orthodox systems of philosophy.
	c.300	Earliest core of Kautilya's *Artha Śāstra.*
	c.100–100 A.D.	Composition of *Bhagavad Gītā.*
A.D.	c.100–200	Early law code of Yājnavalkya.
	c.200–400	Bharata's *Treatise on Dramaturgy.*

Gupta Period

c.300–500	Īshvarakrishna's *Sāṅkhya Kārikās.* Christian community of the Nestorian (Syrian) sect in existence at Cochin in South India.
c.300–888	Pallava rulers of Kānchī in South India.
c.319 [or 318, 320]–335	Chandragupta I.
c.335–376	Samudragupta.
c.376–415	Chandragupta II.
c.400–500	Vātsyāyana's Aphorisms on Love.
c.405	Fa-hsien, Chinese pilgrim arrives in Magadha.
c.454	First Hūna invasion.
c.495	Second Hūna invasion.
c.540	End of Gupta dynasty.
c.550–753 [or, 757]	Kingdom of Western Chālukyas in Deccan.
606–647	Rule of King Harsha of Kanauj in North India.
c.629–645	Chinese pilgrim Hsüan-tsang visits India.
c.630–970	Eastern Chālukyas in Deccan.

Medieval India

c.700–800	Tamil saint Mānikkavāchakar in Mathurai. Dandin, Sanskrit author and rhetorician.
c.760–1142	Pālas of Bihar and Bengal.
c.788–820	Traditional dates of Shankara.
c.800–900	*Bhāgavata Purāṇa. Policy of Shukra.* Jinasena's *Great Legend* (*Mahāpurāṇa*). Sundaramūrti, Shaiva *Nāyanār* of South India. Vāmana and Ānandavardhana, Hindu rhetoricians and aesthetic philosophers.
c.907–1310 [or, c.850–1267]	Chola Empire at Tanjore.

c.973–1189 Second Chālukya dynasty in Western and Central Deccan.

c.1000–1100 Abhinavagupta. Yāmuna Āchārya's (Tamil Ālavandār) *Āgamaprāmāṇya*. Saraha's *Dohākośa*. Rise of Hindu Tantricism.

c.1018–1055 King Bhoja of Mālwā.

c.1100–1200 Mammata's *Kāvyaprakāśa*. Basavarāja founds Vīrashaiva movement in South India.

c.1137 Death of Rāmānuja.

c.1197–1276 [or, 1199–1278] Madhva Āchārya.

c.1200–1300 Shārngadeva's treatise on music, *Saṅgītaratnākara*. Lokāchārya's *Triad of Categories*.

1216–1327 Pāndyas of Mathura.

c.1275–1296 Jnāneshvara's *Jñāneśvarī*.

c.1300–1400 Lallā, poetess of Kashmir.

1336–1565 Vijayanagara, last great Hindu kingdom in India.

c.1420 [or, 1550] Mīrā Bāī, Rājput poetess.

1440–1518 Kabīr.

c.1449–1568 Shankaradeva, Vaishnava saint of Assam.

c.1475 [or, 1479]–1531 Vallabha, Vedānta philosopher.

c.1480–1564 Purandaradāsa, poet-saint of Karnataka.

c.1485–1533 Chaitanya of Bengal.

c.1500–1600 Sūrdās, blind poet of Agra. Vādirāja's *Kṛṣṇastuti* and *Haryaṣṭaka*.

c.1532–1623 Tulasī Dās.

c.1542 St. Francis Xavier arrives in India.

c.1609–1649 [or, 1598–1649] Tukārāma, Mahārāshtra poet-saint.

c.1700–1800 Baladeva, Vaishnava mystic in Bengal.

c.1718–1775 Rāmaprasād in Bengal.

c.1767 [or, 1759]–1847 Tyāgarāja, saint-musician of South India.

INTRODUCTION

Buddhism and Jainism, which appear from archaeological evidence to have achieved considerable influence in India from c.200 B.C. to A.D. c.200, were gradually displaced by what came to be known as Hinduism, so-called because at the time of the Muslim conquest (A.D. c.1200) it was already the religion of the vast majority of Indians (Persian *Hindū*, "Indian"). Even today, despite the long period of Muslim rule (thirteenth to eighteenth centuries), with its numerous conversions to Islam, and the century or two (depending on the area) of British rule, Hindus account for three-fourths of the inhabitants of the subcontinent; the Buddhists have disappeared except in outlying areas (e.g., Tibet, Ceylon, Southeast Asia, etc.); and the Jains form a minority of little but commercial significance.

Hinduism is divided into innumerable sects and has no well-defined, large-scale ecclesiastic organization. Its two most general characteristics are the caste system and agreement about the sacredness of its most ancient scriptures, the Veda, which though considered essentially eternal, were revealed to the sages, the rishis. The caste system is itself supposed to rest on the authority of the Veda and in a sense the whole society forms an ecclesiastical organization, with its own canon law, the Sacred Law (dharma), also based on the Veda. The apex of the pyramidal caste system is the brāhman class, who because they are the authoritative interpreters and transmitters of the Veda, and sole ministrants of the religious sacraments, are likewise considered sacred. The hierarchy of caste is based upon how close a caste comes in its way of life to the pattern set by the brāhmans, who are themselves ranged into a hierarchy of castes on the basis of scriptural learning, adherence to the Sacred Law, and birth (that is, on the recognition won by their particular caste over a long period of time).

Hindus generally believe that the soul is eternal but is bound by the law of karma ("action") to the world of matter, which it can only escape after spiritual progress through an endless series of births. Different

schools and sects have different views about metaphysics and the nature and method of release (moksha) from transmigration. The *Song of the Lord* (*Bhagavad Gītā*) sets forth three basic paths: those of knowledge, selfless action, and devotion to God. They are regarded as complementary rather than mutually exclusive. As understood today, the path of knowledge implies an awareness that reality is one and spiritual, the Brahman, with which each apparently individual soul is identical, and which is sat, chit, ānanda—pure being, intelligence, and bliss. All distinctions, including the entire phenomenal world, have only a relative reality but are ultimately false and the result of the creative illusion (māyā) of the Brahman. The path of devotion implies belief in a supreme personal god as the ultimate reality, the creator, preserver, and destroyer of the universe; salvation, viewed as various degrees of nearness to, and communion with, God, is dependent on God's grace in response to the devotee's intense and unswerving devotion and service. The major division in Hinduism is between the devotees of Vishnu and those of Shiva.

Neither the path of knowledge nor that of devotion need be, or ordinarily is, strictly monistic or monotheistic in practice. After all, man's desires, needs, and sufferings are many, and corresponding to these there are hosts of minor gods as well as various incarnations, manifestations, and aspects of the major gods. All these are generally united mythologically to one or the other major god. Thus Krishna and Rāma are the most important incarnations of Vishnu; Shiva's spouse is the Mother Goddess, known as Devī, Kālī, etc. As the Hindu generally does not follow any rigid dogma, there is a great deal of interpenetration between the various views of the divine, with the result that in India there are polytheistic monists, dualistic monotheists, etc. The various views are ordered by the monists, who follow the philosophy of the Upanishads as interpreted by Shankara (ninth century A.D.) into descending levels of apprehension of one and the same truth. The monistic view, whether pure monism or not, is often referred to as Higher Hinduism, the other views as Popular or Sectarian Hinduism. Included in the latter are more humble beliefs among the lowest strata of the population, such as the worship of various animals, trees, diseases, and even stones.

Devotion to the devotee's chosen deity (*iṣṭa-devatā*) may be purely spiritual, but it is usually manifested by pūjā, the ritual of worship and service of an idol of the deity (bathing the idol, offerings of food and

water, flowers, lights, music and dancing). Just as sacrifice (yajna) was characteristic of early Brahmanism, renunciation (sannyāsa) of the Upanishads (and Theravāda Buddhism and Jainism), pūjā is characteristic of Hinduism (and Mahāyāna Buddhism). The idol or idols must be housed and cared for, and this requires temples and priests. Temples grew more and more elaborate with time, as did the ritual of worship. In fact, temples came to play a most important religious, cultural and artistic, and even economic role in medieval India.

The orthodox Hindu believes that the ultimate truth in matters of religion is to be found in the Veda, which is called *Shruti*, revelation. Later scriptures represent interpretations or codifications of that truth and are therefore called *Smriti* (human) tradition. The sectarian may also believe that his god revealed a more explicit doctrine in some still more recent scripture (āgama or tantra). Thus the Hindu sees religious development in Hinduism as the emphasis of now this, now that aspect of the Veda, or as a gradually deeper and more complete perception of the truth which was there in the Veda all the time. Thus the six orthodox systems of philosophy all claim Vedic authority, a claim which later Hindus have accepted in the belief that all were complementary visions (darshanas) of the one Truth. Even the Hindu's major gods, Vishnu or Shiva, had been worshiped in Vedic times too (though both were quite minor figures in the early Veda), so that later theistic movements were seen as a continuation and expansion of an earlier faith.

We have seen how the ideal of cosmic ethical interdependence of the earliest (the hymnal) portion of the Veda, the Samhitā, gave way to the principle of ritualistic—sacrificial and magical—cosmic interdependence in the Brāhmana period, and the latter, in turn, to the conclusion that ultimate reality was one, the Brahman, identical with man's Self, Ātman, as revealed in the concluding portion of the Veda, namely, the Upanishads. The doctrine of the Upanishads was really only the expression within the Vedic or Brahmanical tradition of a great quietistic movement characterized by a deep disillusionment with life, probably closely associated with the elaboration of the doctrines of karma and rebirth. The same movement was the basis of the heterodox faiths of Buddhism and Jainism. Thus if the earlier periods of the Brahmanical tradition had emphasized the positive values of life, symbolized by the ritual designed to help achieve those values, namely, the sacrifice (yajna), the last period was

pessimistic and its ideal was renunciation (sannyāsa) of worldly life for the life of a religious mendicant.

The new outlook affected first and most profoundly those groups of brāhmans who had been given to theosophical speculations since late Rig-Vedic times, many of whom already lived in forest hermitages. But the ritualists, who formed the great majority of brāhmans, were also affected to some extent and adopted, in the Sacred Law, renunciation as the ultimate religious ideal of man, though to be followed only after a man had fulfilled all his social obligations during most of his adult life. (The elaboration of the Sacred Law is contemporary with the Upanishads in its beginnings but continued on for several centuries after Christ.)

Side by side with these developments in hieratic and intellectual circles, there are indications cropping up even in early texts of more popular religious movements centering around the worship of various supreme gods. This may well be a popular expression of the same search for cosmic unity in an Absolute which we found at the intellectual level in the Veda: e.g., the Brahmā (Sanskrit *Brahman,* a masculine noun) of the *Mahābhārata,* an early supreme creator god, is a personalized form of the Upanishadic Brahman (neuter in Sanskrit). These theistic movements must have grown in importance over a long period before they took on the trappings of philosophical thought, e.g., in a late Upanishad glorifying Shiva, the *Śvetāśvatara,* and from this time we can follow the development of theism through its own vast literature. The somewhat later and much more famous *Song of the Lord* (*Bhagavad Gītā*), dedicated to Krishna further advocates action according to dharma, ordained duty, and thus the Sacred Law comes to form a part of the new dispensation. Thus fortified by philosophy and the Brahmanical Sacred Law, Hinduism, as the new theistic movements are called, spread rapidly and to a great extent absorbed the rival faiths of Buddhism and Jainism.

Intellectually, the Upanishadic doctrine of an eternal, immutable essence of all things was easier to reconcile with theism than the Buddhist doctrine of universal impermanence. Socially, the Sacred Law, evolved chiefly on the basis of the older Brahmanism, became the property of Hinduism and was applied and propagated by both kings and brāhmans. Politically, the monistic, monotheistic, and socially hierarchical tendencies of Hinduism accorded better with the growing power and divinization of kings. Finally, by slight adjustments of the mythology the Hindu

gods could be given an antiquity far beyond human traditions, as well as the scriptural authority of the Veda. Thus Krishna became an avatār (incarnation) of the Vedic Vishnu, Shiva another name for the Vedic Rudra, and the other gods of the new pantheon were somehow brought into derivative relationship to these two. The mantle of Vedic authority also covered the Sacred Law, the orthodox systems of philosophy, and, in fact, the whole of Hinduism. Hinduism is thus both a new religion and, in certain respects, a continuation of the older Brahmanism.

In contrast to the earlier Brahmanism which was restricted in principle to those of Aryan birth, and in contrast also to Theravāda Buddhism and Jainism, which offered the prospect of immediate salvation only to the monk, the new theistic movements offered an easy path to salvation for all, the path of devotion to God, without the need for forsaking life in society. The new ideal was also egalitarian as regards the hope of salvation—were not all devotees, from whatever class, equally dear to God? Hinduism thus offered a strong religious bond, transcending class or caste distinctions, to a society threatened with disintegration by the foreign invasions and rule of the second century B.C. to A.D. c.300 and later.

The periods in which these developments were brought to their fullest expression in Hindu culture were the dynasties of the Guptas in the North (fourth and fifth centuries A.D.) and the Pallavas (c. fourth to ninth centuries A.D.) and Cholas (c. ninth to c. twelfth centuries) in the South. The Gupta Age is the classical period of Hindu culture, which was to be imitated but not surpassed by later ages. It was brought to an end in the North c.500 by repeated invasions of the Huns which must have greatly impoverished northern India and which ushered in what we refer to as the Indian medieval period, distinguished from the earlier, classical age not by any break in cultural continuity but rather by lesser creativity and the spread of popular religious movements centered on devotionalism and magic. Politically there was a gradual disintegration and centralized empires gave way to looser, more feudalistic types of political organization, which were no match for the Turkish Muslim raiders and invaders from Ghazni and Ghur in present Afghanistan (c.1000–1200).

While the Dravidian South, which had never been Brahmanical, had early been converted to Buddhism or Jainism, in the North from the Shunga (second to first centuries B.C.) to the Gupta period Hinduism had made much headway against the heterodox religions. From the North,

probably due in part to the prestige of the Guptas, the movement spread to the South, and the Pallava rulers were converted to Hinduism. It was with their help and that of their successors, the Cholas, that southern India became the stronghold of the Hindu tradition after the Muslim invasions in the north.

From the foregoing it will be clear that Hinduism was much more than an aggregation of devotional cults and philosophical schools—it was a way of life. To understand this way of life in its fullness and variety, we must first see how the major fields of human endeavor were ordered, according to the traditional Hindu conception, in relation to the ultimate ends of man.

CHAPTER IX

THE FOUR ENDS OF MAN

One of the main concepts which underlies the Hindu attitude to life and daily conduct is that of the four ends of man (purushārtha). The first of these is characterized by considerations of righteousness, duty, and virtue. This is called *dharma*. There are other activities, however, through which a man seeks to gain something for himself or pursue his own pleasure. When the object of this activity is some material gain, it is called *artha;* when it is love or pleasure, it is *kāma*. Finally, there is the renunciation of all these activities in order to devote oneself to religious or spiritual activities with the aim of liberating oneself from the worldly life; this is *mokṣa*. These four are referred to as "the tetrad" (*caturvarga*).

In early texts it is more usual to find the aspirations of man stated as three: dharma, material gain, and love or pleasure. Dharma then refers to the religio-ethical ideal, which we may translate as "virtue." The basic meaning of dharma, a word derived from the root *dhṛ,* "to sustain," is the moral law, which sustains the world, human society, and the individual. Dharma thus replaced the Vedic word rita, the principle of cosmic ethical interdependence. Though dharma generally refers to religiously ordained duty, in other passages it may just mean morality, right conduct, or the rules of conduct (mores, customs, codes, or laws) of a group. When Upanishadic mysticism and quietism came to be included in the religio-ethical ideal, dharma was classified into two aspects, the one relating to activity (*pravṛtti*) and the other to retirement from life (*nivṛtti*). Then *nivṛtti* itself later became a separate end of man under the name moksha, spiritual liberation. When moksha, now representing the higher religious ideal, is opposed to dharma, the latter no longer refers to the whole of religion but continues to include all ritual activities and ethical duties and ideals, such as right, righteousness, virtue, justice, propriety, morality, beneficence, and nonviolence. Dharma is in fact a key word of Hindu culture, and Hinduism itself is sometimes designated as Sanātana Dharma, the Eternal Dharma.

The great epic, the *Mahābhārata,* carries dharma as its burden, for it states at the end as the essence of its teachings: "With uplifted arms I cry, none heeds; from dharma [religious duty], material gain and pleasure flow;[1] then, why is not dharma pursued? Neither for the sake of pleasure, nor out of fear or avarice, no, not even for the sake of one's life should one give up dharma; dharma stands alone for all time; pleasure and pain are transitory." While this great epic makes its hero, Yudhishthira, the very son of the God of Dharma (*Dharma-putra*) and one who had no enemy (*Ajātaśatru*), the other epic, the *Rāmāyaṇa,* makes its hero, Rāma, dharma itself in flesh and blood.

The pursuits of material gain and pleasure are both necessary for life—for no one can live without either acquiring some goods or enjoying things to some extent—but they should be controlled by considerations of dharma. While material gain and pleasure refer to actuality, dharma refers to an ideal principle or rule or norm to which man should conform in his activities in the world, with reference to himself or in relation to his fellow-beings. Dharma is therefore assigned first place, because it is the regulating factor, except for which the pursuit of material gain and pleasure would lead man to ruin or into conflict with his fellow-beings. The Upanishads call upon man not to covet another's wealth (*Īśāvāsya,* 1.1). Even kings, whose role in life is so closely bound up with material activities and considerations, are asked to observe and enforce dharma;[2] they are considered merely regents and executors of dharma. A king who follows the injunctions of dharma is called a royal sage (*rāja-ṛṣi*); his victories, the victories of dharma (as the poet Kālidāsa says); and his rule, the rule of dharma. The *Lawbook of Yājnavalkya* (*Yājñavalkya Smṛti*) states that where there is a conflict between principle and policy, righteousness and material advantage, dharma and artha, the former should prevail. Similarly control by dharma is insisted upon for love or pleasure (kāma) also. In a well-known passage, the *Bhagavad Gītā* (7.11) makes the Lord identify Himself with such desire (kāma) as is consistent with dharma. The Hindu ideal does not preach abstinence from pleasure for all or at all stages; it rather preaches, universally, the

[1] Fulfilling one's religious duties, which included both ritual and ethical duties, was thought to lead to material rewards and pleasures both in this life and in heaven.

[2] Ordained duty, especially justice, the first and main religious duty of a king, and social duties (i.e., the class system).

ideal of chastened love, or pleasure regulated by considerations of both morality and material wellbeing.

The pursuit of moksha or liberation is placed last, as according to the Hindu scheme of values, it ought to be the final and supreme aspiration of man. The desire for liberation from the endless cycle of transmigration to which the spirit is subjected is so ingrained in the Hindu that however much he may wander about in life, he does not fail in his later years to pursue this yearning of the soul. Even in these days of Western education many who have led a modern life find a change coming over them and heed the nostalgic call of the Hindu spirit. Examples of this change are not wanting even among politicians; be they Moderates, Congressmen, or Praja-Socialists, they hear that inner voice to which the national poet Kālidāsa gave expression as he laid down his pen: "And as for me, may Shiva, the almighty, end this cycle of rebirth."

From the Science of Dharma

Each of the first three ends of man was the subject-matter of a separate science: dharma, religion, of the *Dharma Śāstra,* the science of dharma, which we translate freely as the Sacred Law; artha, material gain, of the *Artha Śāstra,* the science of material gain; and kāma, love or pleasure, of the *Kāma Śāstra,* the science of love. Moksha, spiritual liberation, is not separately mentioned in the readings given below, but is included under dharma.

[From *Manu Smṛti,* 2.224]

Some say that dharma [virtue] and material gain are good, others that pleasure and material gain are good, and still others that dharma alone or pleasure alone is good, but the correct position is that the three should co-exist without harming each other.

[From *Yājñavalkya Smṛti,* 2.2.21]

The science of dharma is of greater authority than the science of material gain.

From the Science of Material Gain: The Conduct of the Ideal King

[From *Kauṭiliyā Artha Śāstra,* 1.7]

Therefore by abandoning the six internal enemies,[1] one should gain the control of his senses; he should gain knowledge by associating himself with elders, use his intelligence department as his eye, acquire and conserve things by exertion, establish righteous rule by commands and directives, and discipline among the people by the extension of education, endear himself to the people by gifts, and provide livelihood to them with what is beneficial to each.

Having brought his senses under discipline he must avoid betaking to others' women, appropriating others' wealth, and injuring others; he must avoid also long sleep, fickleness, falsehood, gaudy dress, associations which would bring him to grief, and activities that are unrighteous and unprofitable.

He should enjoy pleasure without detriment to virtue or material gain; he ought not to deprive himself of pleasure. Or he should take to pursuits virtuous, profitable, and pleasant in such a manner that they are mutually helpful. Of these, virtue, material gain and pleasure, if one is pursued by him to the exclusion of the others, it affects him adversely as well as others.

From the Science of Love

[From Vātsyāyana, *Kāma Sūtra,* 1.1.1; 1.2.1, 14, 49]

Obeisance to virtue, material gain, and pleasure. [1.1.1]

Man, who could normally live up to a hundred years, must apportion his time and take to virtue, material gain, and pleasure in such a way that these are mutually integrated and do not harm each other. As a boy he must attend to accomplishments like learning; in youth he should enjoy himself; in later life he should pursue the ideals of virtue and spiritual liberation. [1.2.1]

When there are all three, virtue, material gain, and pleasure, their mutual superiority is in the order of their precedence. [1.2.14]

Thus taking to material gain, pleasure, and virtue, man attains here as well as in the hereafter happiness which is unimpaired and complete. [1.2.49]

[1] Lust, anger, avarice, delusion, pride, and envy.

From the Rāmāyaṇa

The *Rāmāyaṇa,* one of the two national epics of India, is ascribed to Sage Valmīki.

[From *Rāmāyaṇa,* 2.21.57–58; 3.9.30]

My dear one! In this world, virtue, material gain, and pleasure are all to be found in the fruit accruing from the pursuit of virtue; I am sure they will all be found there even as in the case of a chaste wife who is also beloved and blessed with offspring. If there is a case in which the three are not found together, one should do only that in which there is virtue, for one who is intent solely on material gain is to be hated and to be engrossed completely in pleasure is also not praiseworthy. [2.21.57–58]

From dharma issue profit and pleasure; one attains everything by dharma, it is dharma which is the essence and strength of the world. [3.9.30]

From Kālidāsa

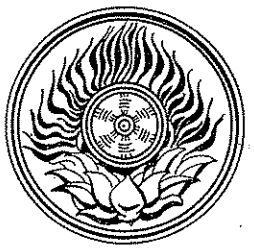
Kālidāsa (c. 400 A.D.), the foremost Indian poet, has enunciated the fundamental concepts of Hindu thought and culture in his poems and plays.

[From *Raghuvaṃśa,* 1.25; 17.57]

In that wise King Dilīpa, who punished only to maintain order and married only for the sake of progeny, even material gain and love[1] were based on virtue [i.e., religious duty]. [1.25]

King Atithi did not put a strain on virtue by his pursuit of material gain and pleasure, nor did he allow these two to suffer by his pursuit of virtue; he did not betake to pleasure at the cost of material gain nor vice versa; he was devoted to the three in a harmonious manner. [17.57]

[1] The basic meaning of kāma is clearly required in this context. The meaning is that the king performed the sexual act not for its own sake but for the sake of the male progeny required to "pay the debt to the Fathers" by continuing the rites to his ancestors. Likewise material possession, in the form of kingly rule, was for the sake of maintaining law and order.



CHAPTER X

DHARMA, THE FIRST END OF MAN

The older Brahmanism of the Samhitās and Brāhmanas, when faced with the popularity of the non-Brahmanic religions and the appeal among intellectuals of Upanishadic mysticism, began to consolidate, reorganize, and revitalize the Brahmanic way of life and thought. In this process a synthesis was achieved between the older Brahmanical ideal of action—of life viewed as a ritual—and the newer, quietistic ideal of withdrawal and renunciation developed in the Upanishadic period. This revivalist movement within Brahmanism touched all spheres of human life—religious, academic, domestic, and social. Indeed, it was then for the first time that conscious efforts were made to evolve a definite pattern of Brahmanical society. The movement found expression in the texts of the Sacred Law (*Smṛti* or *Dharma Śāstra*) as well as in the Epics, the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa,* and in literature generally, even that dedicated to such profane subjects as material gain or love.

For vast numbers of Hindus throughout the ages there has been no more inspiring symbol of dharma than the hero of the epic *Rāmāyaṇa,* a text which gives expression to the two main tendencies of the new revivalist movement—social and devotional. Rāma, eldest son and rightful heir to Dasharatha, King of Ayodhyā, is deprived of the throne by his stepmother's sudden demand that Dasharatha, in fulfillment of a boon granted long before, crown her own son king and banish Rāma. So that his father may keep his pledge to his wife, Rāma voluntarily withdraws to live in the wilderness for fourteen years with his faithful wife Sītā. In the forest the sages who have been leading a life of penance and austerity seek help from the great warrior Rāma against demons who are harassing them. This brings Rāma into conflict with the demons, whose king abducts Sītā and keeps her captive in his stronghold, hoping to win her love. After many struggles Rāma and his allies, the monkeys, overcome Rāvana and rescue

Sītā. Thereupon Rāma is restored to his throne in Ayodhyā and sets an example as king of the most righteous and benevolent rule.

Rāma's noble example of devotion to duty, to his father, and to his people, as well as Sītā's long-suffering fidelity to Rāma, have been looked to as religious and ethical ideals down through the ages. Rāma is seen as the embodiment of dharma, and his triumph over wicked Rāvana as the overcoming of vice (*adharma*) in order that virtue and the moral law might prevail in personal and public life. Rāma, the embodiment of dharma, is also adored as the incarnation of the Supreme Lord who has come into the world to restore the moral order. In this form he became the object of a great devotional movement which swept the country in the first centuries A.D. Generation after generation, poets have celebrated Rāma in poems and plays, in both Sanskrit and vernacular; temples have been built to him, where sculpture, song, and drama told of his glory and enthroned him in the hearts of the masses. Eventually the *Rāmāyaṇa* spread to the whole world of Southeast Asia where one can still see Rāmāyana sculptures and Rāmāyana plays. Even today, the epic, in its original Sanskrit or its vernacular versions, is read and expounded to large gatherings of devout listeners and in the national struggle for freedom which Mahātmā Gandhi waged, he held forth the establishment of *Rāma-rājya,* a reign of truth and nonviolence, as the ideal.

The Sacred Law and the epics are viewed by the Hindus as only slightly less sacred than the Vedas and together form the body of semi-canonical scriptures called *Smriti* "(human) Tradition"—as opposed to the Vedas, which are *Shruti* "(divine) Revelation." Smriti is supposed to be based on Shruti, as indeed it largely is, and its authority is therefore only derivative. It is best represented in the Lawbooks, namely, the earlier *Aphorisms on the Domestic Ritual* (*Gṛhya Sūtras*) and *Aphorisms on Dharma* (*Dharma Sūtras*), in prose, and the later expanded versified codes, called *Dharma Śāstras* or *Smṛtis,* and related texts. The most famous of these latter codes are the *Lawbook of Manu* (*Manu Smṛti,* Shunga period, second to first centuries B.C.) and that of Yājnavalkya (*Yājñavalkya Smṛti,* early Gupta period, c. fourth century A.D.).

In time the major period of Smriti (the Lawbooks and epics) covers roughly a thousand years (c.500 B.C. to A.D. c.500). Smriti gave India an integrated philosophy of life and social organization which stood the test, on the one hand, of foreign invasions and rule over several centuries

(second century B.C. to A.D. c.300), and on the other, of the heterodox religions, furnishing a pattern for the integration and absorption of both. The same period of foreign invasions and rule saw the rapid spread of theistic devotional cults, which after early opposition came to accept the authority of the Sacred Law and the Vedic scriptures, and in return gained the support of orthodox Brahmanism. The alliance soon grew into the single, dynamic movement—though divided into several schools and sects—known as Hinduism. In contrast to Brahmanism, Hinduism was a mass movement, which brought together into a single culture and polity, presided over by the Sacred Law of the brāhmans, various peoples, classes, and religious traditions. This fusion of diverse forces produced one of the world's great classical periods, that of Hindu culture in the Gupta Age (fourth and fifth centuries A.D.).

The central concept which was elaborated and emphasized by Smriti was that of dharma. The word has been used in most of the Brahmanic texts from the *Rig Veda* downwards, and in different contexts, as we have seen, it has denoted different ideas, such as, Vedic ritual, ethical conduct, caste rules, and civil and criminal law. The Sacred Law is the codification of dharma. Actually, the concept of dharma is all-comprehensive and may be, broadly speaking, said to comprise precepts which aim at securing the material and spiritual sustenance and growth of the individual and society. Another significant characteristic of dharma which deserves to be specially noted is that it was regarded as not being static. The content of dharma often changed in the changing contexts of time, place, and social environment.

In spite of the comprehensive character of dharma, in its most common connotation it was limited to two principal ideals, namely the organization of social life through well-defined and well-regulated classes (varnas) and the organization of an individual's life within those classes into definite stages (āshramas). Thus, in popular parlance, dharma almost came to mean just varna-āshrama-dharma, that is the dharmas (ordained duties) of the four classes and the four stages of life.

The system of the four classes has come to be regarded as the most essential feature of Brahmanic society. Even later Hinduism, which differs from Brahmanism in many significant respects, has scrupulously preserved this peculiar social organization. Though the word *varṇa-vyavasthā* is generally translated as caste system, it should be remembered that,

strictly speaking, varṇa does not denote caste as we understand it today. Caste system is *jāti-vyavasthā,* which, no doubt, represents a ramification of the original system of classes. From the early Brāhmanic texts we can derive but little historical information regarding the origin and development of classes and castes. The aim of those texts was avowedly to glorify and defend the social organization governed by the concepts of classes and castes. They either speak of the divine origin of those social phenomena or give some mythical accounts in respect to them. A complex social phenomenon such as the caste system must be the result of the interaction of a variety of factors. The word *varṇa* (color, complexion) itself would indicate that one of these basic factors was racial distinction. In the *Rig Veda* we actually come across references to the *ārya varṇa* (the "Aryan color," i.e., the Vedic Aryans) and the *dāsa varṇa* ("the Dāsa color," the name collectively given to all racial groups other than the Vedic Aryans). In territories where the Aryans were dominant, the color-line dividing the three upper Aryan social orders from the fourth, that of the despised shūdras, was very strict. Draconian penalties were prescribed for the shūdra who struck or insulted an Aryan, or even presumed to sit on the same seat with him. This social cleavage was given religious sanction and was thus preserved to this day in the distinction between caste Hindus and shūdras. The shūdras were denied all access to the Veda, the Vedic sacrifices, and the Aryan sacraments, especially the investiture with the sacred thread symbolic of the Aryan child's admittance to membership in his class.

Another important factor was magico-ritualistic in character. The four main classes were distinguished from one another on account of the specific roles which they played in connection with the communal sacrifice. These were determined by certain definite concepts of taboo, pollution, and purification. Corresponding to their roles in the ritual these classes were assigned distinct colors, which fact also seems to have confirmed the use of the word *varṇa* with reference to them. This magico-ritualistic origin of the four classes is indirectly indicated by their mention in the Purusha Sūkta (*Rig Veda,* 10.90), as the limbs of the cosmic sacrificial Purusha. Then there was the impact on the social organization of the Vedic Aryans of the pattern of social life already evolved by the indigenous Indian communities, which must have also been responsible for the consolidation of this social phenomenon. In the initial stages,

these classes were more or less fluid and elastic. But in course of time they hardened into a definite social system characterized by a large number of endogamous and commensal castes, sub-castes, and mixed castes. Elaborate discussions occur in texts of the Sacred Law regarding their respective duties, and social and legal privileges and disabilities.

Within these classes and castes, an individual's life was organized into four distinct stages, called āshramas, in such a manner that the individual should be enabled to realize, through a properly graded scheme, the four ends of life. These four stages of life are those of the student, the householder, the hermit or recluse, and the ascetic. It will be seen that the system of the four stages of life seeks to resolve the conflict between two ideals, namely, consolidation and progress of society on the one hand and the spiritual emancipation of the individual on the other. In connection with the scheme of the four stages the texts of the Sacred Law have stated clearly and at some length the Brahmanic ideals regarding such topics as education, position of woman, and family life. Attempts have also been made to render the broad scheme of the four stages more viable and effective by prescribing various sacraments (samskāras), which are, as it were, the lampposts on the road leading to the full-fledged growth of man's personality. These sacraments cover man's whole life, beginning from the prenatal and ending with the post-mortem condition.

It will thus be seen that the Brahmanists had developed a most comprehensive system of social thought. This system continues to constitute—though in a more or less modified form—the basis of Hindu society even to this day.

What Is Dharma?

It is difficult to find any one single passage wherein the comprehensive character of dharma is adequately brought out. Some typical passages are, therefore, given below with the idea that they might cumulatively indicate some characteristic features of this highly significant concept in Brahmanism and Hinduism.

[From *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka,* 10.79]

Dharma is the foundation of the whole universe. In this world people go unto a person who is best versed in dharma for guidance. By means of dharma one drives away evil. Upon dharma everything is founded. Therefore, dharma is called the highest good.

[From *Mahābhārata,* 12.110.10–11]

For the sake of the promotion of strength and efficacy among beings the declaration of dharma is made. Whatever is attended with nonviolence (ahimsā),[1] that is dharma. Such is the fixed opinion.

Dharma [from a root *dhṛ,* "to sustain"] is so called on account of its capacity for the sustenance of the world. On account of dharma, people are sustained separately in their respective stations.[2]

[From *Vaiśeṣika Sūtra,* 1.1.2]

That from which result material gain and spiritual good is dharma.

[From *Manu Smṛti,* 8.15]

Dharma, when violated, verily, destroys; dharma, when preserved, preserves; therefore, dharma should not be violated, lest the violated dharma destroy us.

The Sources and Extent of Dharma

A discussion about the more tangible nature and extent of dharma, as it is generally understood, is given in the following passages.

[From *Yājñavalkya Smṛti,* 1.1.1–3, 6–9]

Having paid homage to Yājnavalkya, the lord of yogins, the sages said: Please expound to us fully the dharmas of the four classes, the four stages of life, and others.

The lord of yogins, living in Mithilā [capital of Videha], having meditated for a moment, said to the sages: The laws of that country in which the black antelope roams freely,[3] do you understand carefully.

The four Vedas, together with the Purānas,[4] logic, the science of Vedic interpretation, the Sacred Law [Dharma Shāstra], and the [six] limbs of

[1] In thought, word, and deed: violence of any kind disturbs the proper functioning of the individual and society, and, therefore, represents the negation of dharma.

[2] Confusion regarding the respective duties and functions (and privileges and disabilities) of different classes unbalances society. One of the king's chief duties is to prevent such confusion.

[3] That is, the open grazing lands of the north Indian plain. According to Manu (2.23), such a country alone is fit for sacrifice, that is, for Aryan habitation.

[4] Semihistorical and religious legends.

the Veda,[5] constitute the fourteen seats of sciences and of dharma. . . .

In a certain country, at a certain time, through certain means, when a thing is given over to a deserving person with faith—then, in that case, all these items, among others, indicate the concept of dharma.[6]

The Vedic scriptures [Shruti], the Sacred Law [Smriti], the practices of the good, whatever is agreeable to one's own self, and the desire which has arisen out of wholesome resolve—all these are traditionally known to be the sources of dharma.

Over and above such acts as sacrifice, traditional practices, self-control, nonviolence, charity, and study of the Veda, this, verily, is the highest dharma, namely, the realization of the Self by means of yoga.

Four persons versed in the Vedas and dharma, or a group of those who are adept only in the three Vedas, constitute a court. Whatever that court declares would be dharma; or that, which even one person who is the best among the knowers of the lore of the Self declares, would be dharma.

This passage, which is of the nature of a table of contents, indicates the scope and extent of the Sacred Law, as it was traditionally understood.

[From *Manu Smṛti,* 1.111–18]

The creation of the universe, the procedure in respect of the sacraments, the practices relating to the vow of studentship [the respectful behavior toward teachers, etc.], the highest rule regarding the ceremonial bath [to be taken at the termination of studentship],

The taking of a bride, the definitions of various kinds of marriages, the regulations concerning the great sacrifices, the eternal rule of the obsequies,

The definition of the modes of gaining subsistence, the vows of a graduate in Vedic studies [i.e., of a brāhman householder], the rules regarding what may be eaten and what may not be eaten, the purification of men and the purification of things,

The laws concerning women, the rules relating to a hermit's life, spiritual emancipation, renunciation of worldly life, the whole set of the duties of a king, the deciding of law-suits,

The rules regarding the examination of witnesses, the law governing the relation between husband and wife, the law of inheritance and partition of ancestral property, the law concerning gambling, the removal of men who prove to be thorns of society,

The behavior of vaishyas and shūdras, the origin of mixed castes, the law for all four classes in times of distress, similarly the expiatory rites,

The threefold course of transmigration resulting from a person's karma, the spiritual good, the examination of merits and demerits of actions,

The laws of specific countries, the laws of specific castes, the eternal laws of individual families, the laws of heretics and [tribal] communities —all these topics Manu has expounded in this treatise.

[5] They are: science of correct pronunciation and accentuation, aphorisms concerning Vedic ritual, etc., grammar, Vedic etymology, Vedic metrics, and astronomy.

[6] The various constituents of the activity of giving away, which is, indeed, the main basis of all dharma, at least in the final age of a cycle, form, according to the commentator, the causative attributes of dharma.

Dharma Is Not Static

The following passage brings out a very significant characteristic of dharma, namely, that the concept and content of dharma change in accordance with the changing circumstances. Ancient tradition speaks of four ages (yugas)—Krita, Tretā, Dvāpara, and Kali—their duration, respectively, 1,728,000; 1,296,000; 864,000; and 432,000 human years. It is believed that each of these four succeeding ages is characterized by an increasing physical and spiritual deterioration. No one uniform set of dharmas can, therefore, be made applicable to all the four ages. It is further believed that when one cycle of four ages is completed, there occurs the end of the universe, which is followed by a new creation and a new cycle.

[From *Manu Smṛti,* 1.81–86]

Four-footed and complete is dharma in the Krita age—it is, verily, identical with Truth. Through behavior contrary to dharma, no gain of any kind accrues to men.

In the other three ages, by reason of some kind of gain [accruing to men even through behavior contrary to dharma], dharma is deprived successively of one foot [i.e., one-fourth]. On account of the prevalence of theft, falsehood, and deceitfulness, dharma disappears successively quarter by quarter.

In the Krita age men are free from disease, accomplish all their aims, and live four hundred years; but in the ages beginning with the Tretā, their span of life decreases successively by one quarter.

The span of life of mortals mentioned in the Veda, the desired results of sacrificial rites, and the special spiritual powers of the embodied souls (that is, of mortals)—these result as fruits of men's actions in this world in accordance with the character of a particular age.

CHAPTER XI

ARTHA, *THE SECOND END OF MAN*

As we have seen, the ancient Indian concept of dharma as religiously ordained duty touched all aspects of man's relation with the society. One such aspect was political in character and often manifested itself in the form of the relation between the subject and the state. In view of the fact that the state in ancient India was mostly monarchical, this aspect of dharma was known as the *Rāja-dharma,* the dharma (duty) of kings. Naturally enough, the *Rāja-dharma,* which, by and large, corresponded with political science, formed but one of the many topics dealt with in the larger scheme of Dharma Shāstra. The latter was normally divided into three main sections, namely, rules of conduct (*ācāra*), civil and criminal law (*vyavahāra*), and expiation and punishment (*prāyascitta*). The *Rāja-dharma* was included in the section embodying the rules of conduct. In the course of time, however, polity came to be considered important enough to be recognized as an independent branch of knowledge, under the name of *Artha Shāstra,* the science of profit or material gain. As against Dharma Shāstra, Artha Shāstra may be said to have given quite a new orientation to political theory and practice. This new orientation reflected, at least to a certain extent, the increasing intensity of the struggle for power in ancient India and the growing complexity of the methods used to gain and keep control over the land and its peoples. Indeed, it is possible to find some indications of this new political ideology in the *Mahābhārata* itself. In order to overpower the Kaurava warriors like Bhīshma, Drona, and Karna, the Pāndavas often employed, under the active direction of Lord Krishna himself, ruses and stratagems which were not in strict accordance with the traditional rules of righteous war (*dharma-yuddha*). The ultimate victory of the Pāndavas over the Kauravas symbolizes, in a sense, the predominance of the new Artha Shāstra ideal over the older epic ideal of chivalry. As for the essential difference between the sacred law

and the science of material gain, it may be stated in broad and rather oversimplified terms as follows: While Dharma Shāstra insisted on the righteousness of both the means and the ends, Artha Shāstra concerned itself primarily with the attainment of the ends irrespective of the nature of the means employed for that purpose. It is not unlikely that one of the reasons why Artha Shāstra is traditionally believed to be a science ancillary to the *Atharva Veda* is the similarity of their attitude toward the means and the ends. The Artha Shāstra ideology completely dominated the polity of ancient India. Attempts were made, however, from time to time to reassert the superiority of Dharma Shāstra over Artha Shāstra by prescribing that, in case of conflict between the two, Dharma Shāstra should prevail.

It is probable that besides the mostly theoretical *Dharma Sūtras* (Aphorisms on Dharma) which do not seem to have been specifically related to any particular set of social and political conditions, there had existed some kind of Artha Shāstra literature—presumably in the form of sūtras or aphorisms and more realistic in outlook—which served as a practical guide for the pursuit and exercise of power. That literature is now unfortunately not available—except perhaps in fragments—and is mainly known through references to it in later works. In 1905, however, a remarkable monument belonging to the second phase of the evolution of that literature—the phase of thorough amplification of the older aphorisms—first came to public attention. This is the well-known *Treatise on Material Gain (Artha Śāstra)* [1] attributed to Kautilya, the minister of Chandragupta Maurya, who was a contemporary of Alexander the Great. Though the kernel of the work may perhaps look back to the fourth century B.C., in its present form it is possibly as late as the fourth century A.D. This work is of exceptional interest and value, for it has almost revolutionized the traditional view regarding certain aspects of ancient Indian history and culture.

The *Treatise on Material Gain* of Kautilya reflects, in a striking manner, the social and political forces which were at work in India during the fourth century B.C. Alexander's incursions into India (326–325 B.C.) had helped to emphasize the need for establishing a central political and military power. The *Treatise on Material Gain* has, accordingly, laid down policies aimed at welding together, into a more or less unified pattern and under the control—direct or indirect—of a single authority, the multi-

[1] *Śāstra* means treatise, collectively "a discipline *or* science."

plicity of smaller states that had crowded the stage of Indian history at that time. Interstate relations thus constitute one of the main topics in Kautilya's *Treatise*. Kautilya defines Artha Shāstra as the science which treats of the means of acquiring and maintaining the earth, and indeed deals with practical government administration more fully than with theorizing about the fundamental principles of political science. In social matters, Kautilya has transcended the exclusiveness of ancient Brahmanism and has at the same time successfully counteracted the renunciatory tendencies of the Upanishads and early Buddhism. The exaltation of royal power in the legislative sphere and the elaboration of a complex bureaucracy in the executive sphere were certainly new to Indian polity. It is not unlikely that in these matters Kautilya has derived inspiration from foreign—more particularly, Hellenistic—sources.

To the intense political and military activity of the early Maurya period, which is reflected in the teachings of the science of material gain, there was a reaction in the reign of Ashoka (c.273–232 B.C.), the grandson of Chandragupta and the third Maurya emperor, who turned away from the Machiavellian ways of Artha Shāstra to the ways of righteousness or dharma, and in particular to the teachings of the Buddha. Under Ashoka's patronage Buddhism received great impetus and, consequently, threw out a strong challenge to the ancient Brahmanic traditions. The last Maurya monarch's commander-in-chief, Pushyamitra Shunga, who overthrew his master and thereby established his own dynasty in Magadha, was, on the other hand, a strong adherent of Brahmanism. Therefore, when he came to power he made a bold bid to resuscitate the Brahmanic way of life and thought. He performed the traditional horse sacrifice, helped the promotion of the Sanskrit language and literature, and tried to reestablish the Brahmanic ideals in the social sphere. It is out of this last activity that the *Lawbook of Manu* (*Manu Smṛti*) has presumably evolved, but in whatever little the author has said about polity one finds hardly anything original. The epic *Mahābhārata,* which is, in its final literary form, more or less contemporaneous with the *Lawbook of Manu,* is definitely richer in political speculations. The entire *Rāja-dharma* ("dharma of kings") section of the *Śāntiparvan* ("the Book of Peace," the twelfth book), for instance, constitutes a veritable compendium of political theories, rules of diplomacy, and details of administration. But the main achievement of the *Mahābhārata* consists in the synthesis of the older theories which it has attempted rather than in the enunciation of any new ones. And perhaps more significant than such theoretical discussions are the indications of political thought and practice which can be gleaned from the events actually described in the epic. At any rate, the total polity of Hindu India throughout its history from the Shunga period (second to first centuries B.C.) onward may be said to have been the result of a blending together of the political ideology of Kautilya's *Treatise on Material Gain* (in its present or an earlier form) and the social ideology of the *Lawbook of Manu.*

Among later works in Sanskrit dealing with the subject of political science may be mentioned the *Lawbook of Yājnavalkya,* the *Essence of Policy of the School of Kāmandaki* (*Kāmandakiya Nīti Sāra*), and the *Policy of Shukra* (*Śukra Nīti*). What the Lawbook of Manu was in relation to the Shunga period, the *Lawbook of Yājnavalkya* may be said to have been in relation to the Gupta period (fourth to fifth centuries A.D.). Though the latter, like its predecessor, makes no original contribution to ancient Indian polity, it reflects, to a large extent, the social changes which had been brought about by the beginning of the Gupta epoch. The Gupta lawgivers brought all persons, irrespective of caste, property, and position in society, under the purview of the king's supreme law. No person was regarded as being above the law. For instance, the *Lawbook of Yājnavalkya* denied to the brāhmans several legal concessions which they had previously enjoyed. It also did away with the many legal inequities from which the shūdra suffered. The law relating to women was also considerably revised and brought in line with their changed social status. The Gupta rulers were by no means bent on social revolution; indeed they retain much that has the sanction of orthodox tradition. Nevertheless, it is significant that whereas in earlier lawbooks there is no distinction between secular and religious law, in the *Lawbook of Yājñavalkya* these two aspects of law are clearly separated and *vyavahāra* or law proper is discussed far more systematically. It further lays greater stress on private law than on criminal law.

The *Essence of Policy* . . . which also is traditionally ascribed to the Gupta period (A.D. c.400), is but a metrical conspectus of Kautilya's *Treatise on Material Gain*. Its author shows no originality whatsoever nor are any traces to be found in it of any practical experience of governmental administration on his part. The *Essence of Policy* indicates on the one

hand the unique sway which Kautilya's work held over ancient Indian polity, and on the other, the general decline of political thought in the succeeding periods. The same may be said of the *Kuraḷ*, a comprehensive work in Tamil by Tiruvalluvar, which deals with the three ends of man. This work probably dates from A.D. 450–500 and, like most of the Tamil literature produced in that period, shows unmistakable influence of earlier Sanskrit works. Even a casual perusal of the section on polity in the *Kuraḷ* would make it quite evident that Tiruvalluvar was closely acquainted with Kautilya's *Treatise* and has derived his inspiration and material from that work. Contrary to our expectations, therefore, the *Kuraḷ* does not contain any political thought which can be characterized as peculiar to South India. The last phase of the history of ancient Indian polity is represented by the *Policy of Shukra*, which is usually ascribed to about A.D. 800. This work also is in the nature of a conspectus of earlier works on polity, but it is remarkable for its detailed treatment of the administrative machinery, foreign relations, and military policy.

Dharma As the Supreme Authority

The normal form of the state in ancient India was monarchy. Temporal sovereignty, however, was usually considered to be based on religious authority. Thus, the dharma, the religious and moral law, elaborated and preserved by the brāhmans, was thought to be the source of kshatra, the sovereign power of the king, and therefore superior to it. The coronation ceremony, it is true, represented the application of this spiritual power in the temporal realm, and in that respect the custodians of spiritual power on earth were regarded as subordinate to the temporal authority vested in the king. Nevertheless, the king's chaplain (purohita), who was considered the embodiment of brahman, spiritual power, served as the king's mentor in temporal as well as spiritual matters. In this capacity he and other brāhman advisers attempted to guide and restrain the king's exercise of power, reminding him that it was not absolute. In so far as they actually succeeded in inspiring respect for dharma in the ruler, the brāhmans were thereby able to serve as a kind of check on the monarchy.

Social prosperity and the harmonious functioning of society were believed to depend upon a society composed of the four social orders, namely, brāhman, kshatriya, vaishya, and shūdra, representing respectively spiritual authority, temporal power, wealth, and labor. The society could not flourish in the absence of any of its four constituents. The regulation and prosperity of such an ordered society was not so much the function of the king as it was of dharma or law. Thus, in the *Rig Veda* each person in the ordered universe (sat) had a particular function (*vrata*) to perform. The regulation of this ordered universe was established by cosmic law or order, rita or dharma. Hence, the performance of duty in accordance with this law brought about a state of harmony with the ordered universe (sat) and was regarded as *satya* (truth). In this way, cosmic law was identified with truth and was regarded as the ultimate authority to which even the king was obliged to yield. This supremacy of dharma is the basic concept of ancient Indian social and political thought.

[From *Bṛhad Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, 1.4.11–14]

Verily, in the beginning this [world] was brahman, being only one. That brahman, being one, did not prosper. It therefore brought forth an excellent form, kshatra, such as those among the gods who are embodiments of kshatra, namely Indra, Varuna. . . . Therefore, there is nothing higher than kshatra. Therefore, the brāhman sits below the kshatriya at the coronation [*rājasūya*] sacrifice. Thereby, indeed, brahman confers honor on kshatra. The source of kshatra, however, is this very brahman. Therefore, even though the king attains supremacy, finally he has to resort to brahman, which is, indeed, his own source. So a king who injures a brāhman attacks his own source. He becomes more sinful as does one who injures his superiors.

Still he did not prosper. He created the community [*viś*, i.e., the vaishyas], such as those classes of gods, who are designated by groups, namely, the Vasus, the Rudras, the Ādityas. . . .

Still he did not prosper. He created the menial class [*śūdra-varṇa*], such as Pūshan among the gods. Verily, this earth is Pūshan for it nourishes all this, whatever there is.[1]

Still he did not prosper. That brahman brought forth an excellent form, dharma [law]. This dharma is the sovereign power ruling over kshatra itself. Therefore, there is nothing higher than dharma. Thereby, even the weak can overcome the strong with the help of dharma as with the help of a king. Verily, that which is dharma is truth [*satya*]. Therefore, they say of a man who speaks dharma, that he speaks the truth, for, verily, these two are one and the same.

The Origin of Kingship

In Vedic literature there are various speculations, mostly embodied in mythical legends, about such topics as the origin and nature of kingship, the functions

[1] Pūshan is a Vedic deity represented as a pastoral divinity and pathmaker *par excellence*. The principal functions indicate his service to gods and men. Similarly, the shūdras are the servants of the three higher classes. There is here, too, a pun on Pūshan and the earth which nourishes (*puṣyati*) the world.

CHAPTER XII

KĀMA, THE THIRD END OF MAN

The place of kāma or the pursuit of love and pleasure in the balanced Hindu scheme of life derives from the importance attached to the life of the married householder (*grhastha*). In more than one authoritative text, the householder's life is considered to be the greatest of the four stages of life. Hinduism does not hold up monasticism or eremitism as a common ideal for all; it considers, rather, that the strains and trials of household management, family life, and social obligations are a useful discipline contributing to the preparation of man for the final life of retirement and spiritual endeavor. The place assigned to pleasure provides also for its regulated enjoyment, rather than its suppression, and thus for the development of a well-rounded personality. Constantly reminding the householder of his duties (i.e., dharma) as also of the higher nature of the Ultimate Reality which was the final goal to be attained, the Hindu code of conduct saw to it that the normal man did not degenerate into an epicure or profligate. Love chastened by suffering was held up even by poets and dramatists as capable of effecting a lasting spiritual union, and some of the best poetry in Sanskrit reflects this spirit and attitude toward love. The longing of hearts in love was taken as the most effective image to depict the yearning of the devotee to God or the seeking by the individual soul of the Supreme Soul, a symbolism which is at the base of a greater part of the erotic art of India. Hindu aesthetes explained the philosophy of beauty in terms of the enjoyment or perception of a state of sublime composure or blissful serenity which was a reflection, intimation, image, or glimpse of the enduring bliss of the spirit in its true realization through knowledge.

As in the case of the science of material gain (i.e., of polity), the science of love or pleasure (Kāma Shāstra) also was studied systematically

and in exhaustive detail, the object being to comprehend all types of persons and situations, normal and otherwise. The separate disciplines and techniques elaborated upon, however, as well as the special cases and situations dealt with, should be considered in relation to the general view of life from which these branches of knowledge were evolved, and which continued to regulate and guide them. The history of the growth of these separate disciplines is set forth at the outset in texts like the *Aphorisms on Love* (*Kāma Sūtra*) of Vātsyāyana, where it is said that it was the gods and sages that promulgated these sciences of material gain and pleasure, along with the sacred law, and that at the beginning it was all one comprehensive code of conduct. As time went by, each section was separately elaborated by later sages and teachers, in conformity with the comprehensive scheme of values represented by duty (dharma), material gain, pleasure, and spiritual emancipation.

The cultured person and in particular the courtesan of Sanskrit literature (the Indian equivalent of the Japanese geisha) was expected to be educated in sixty-four *kalās* (arts and sciences), a term often equated with *śilpa* "art" or *vidyā* "science." Though this number may vary in older Jain and Buddhist texts, a standard list of sixty-four is given by Vātsyāyana in the *Kāma Sūtra* and a slightly different one in the *Policy of Shukra.* These arts include dancing, singing, acting, flower-arranging, gambling, legerdemain, distillation of spiritous liquors, sewing and embroidery work, first-aid, metallurgy, cooking, chemistry, posture, dueling, gymnastics, horology, dyeing, architecture and engineering, minerology, calligraphy, swimming, leatherwork, archery, driving horses and elephants, composition and solution of riddles and other puzzles, nursing and rearing of children, and the like.

The Man of Taste and Culture

In contrast to the characterization of the Hindu outlook as pessimistic and other-worldly, is the following description, taken from Vātsyāyana's *Aphorisms on Love* (c. A.D. 400), of the man-about-town who enjoys the good things of life, has a cultured taste, and moves in the most refined social and artistic circles.

The word for civilization in Sanskrit is, like its Western counterpart, associated with the town and city (nagara). The *nāgaraka* in Sanskrit means the civilized or cultured urban individual.

[From Vātsyāyana, *Kāma Sūtra,* 1.4]

After acquisition of learning, a person should with the help of the material resources obtained by him through gifts from others, personal gain, commerce or service,[1] marry and set up a home, and then follow the ways of the man of taste and culture (*nāgaraka*).

He may make his abode, in accordance with the calling chosen by him, in a city, in a commercial center, or a town; any of these that he chooses should be inhabited by good people.

There he should make for himself a house, with water nearby, having a garden, provided with separate apartments for different activities, and having two retiring rooms.

In the retiring room in the forepart of the house, there shall be a fine couch, with two pillows, pliant at the center, having a pure white sheet; there shall be by its side another couch of lesser height [for lying down]; at the head, there shall be a wicker-seat [for doing his prayers] and a platform for the sandal paste left over after the night's use, a garland, a box for wax and scents, peelings of pomegranate fruit [a mouth deodorant] and betel leaves; a spittoon on the ground; a lute hanging on a bracket on the wall, a painting-board and box of colors, some books and garlands of *kuraṇṭaka* flowers; not far away on the floor, different kinds of seats; a dice-board; outside the room, cages for the birds kept for playing with; and at a remote end [outside], things for private use.

In the garden a swing, well covered and under the shade of a tree, as also an earthen platform strewn with the falling flowers of the garden. Such is to be the layout of his residence.

He must get up early in the morning, answer the calls of nature, wash his teeth, smear his body with just a little[2] fragrant paste, inhale fragrant smoke, wear some flower, just give the lips a rub with wax and red juice, look at his face in the mirror, chew betel leaves along with some mouth deodorants, and then attend to his work.

Every day he must bathe; every second day, have a massage; every third day, apply *phenaka*[3] to the legs; every fourth day have a partial shave and clipping of the nails; every fifth [?] or tenth day a more complete

[1] These four means of acquiring wealth—acceptance as gift, personal gain, commerce, and service—apply respectively to the four classes, brāhman, kshatriya, vaishya, and shūdra. This suggests that the refined accomplishments, cultural preoccupations, and pursuit of art and pleasure were not restricted to any single segment of society.

[2] The commentary hastens to state that too much of these do not speak well of the person's refinement.

[3] To ward off stiffness of the legs.

shave; he must frequently wipe off the perspiration in the armpit; have his food in the forenoon and afternoon.[4]

After eating [in the forenoon] comes playing with parrots and myna birds and making them talk; and indulging in cock and ram fights and in other artistic activities; also attending to the work he has with his friends and companions. Then a little nap. In the forenoon still, he dresses and goes out for social calls and for enjoyment of the company of others. In the evening he enjoys music and dance. At the end of it, in his own apartments, decorated and fragrant with smoke, he awaits, along with his companions, his beloved who has given him an engagement, or else sends her a message and himself goes out to meet her. . . . Such is the daily routine.

He should arrange excursions in parties for attending festivals, salons for enjoying literature and art, drinking parties, excursions to parks, and group games. Once a fortnight or month, on the day sacred to particular deities, the actors and dancers attached to the temple of Sarasvatī [the Goddess of learning] gather and present shows [for the cultured citizens of the place]; or visiting actors and musicians from other places present their programs in the Sarasvatī temple.

AESTHETIC SPECULATIONS

Beauty has been a subject of Indian comment and speculation since the earliest times. The Rig Vedic poet reveled in the beauties of both nature and man; he attached the highest value to beauty of expression in the art of poetry, and had, besides several general terms, the specific names Lakshmī and Shrī for beauty. In the supplementary hymns of the *Rig Veda* he had already devoted a poem to the concept of a deity presiding over beauty and prosperity. In the Brāhmanas we come upon the word *śilpa*, the common term for art in the sense of a perfect or refined form or replica, and the whole world is described as a brilliant piece of divine art or handiwork. The Upanishads, which conceive of the ultimate reality as the one imperishable substratum of the form of existence, knowledge, and bliss, speak of it also as the fullness of perfection and the fountainhead of all enjoyment, *rasa* (*Taittirīya*, 2.7); from it proceed literature and other

[4] But in the forenoon and evening, according to the medical authority Chārāyana.

forms of artistic expression (*Bṛhad Āraṇyaka,* 2.4.10); and to it, as in praise of the Supreme Being, all song is sung (*Chāndogya* 1.7.6). The epics, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata,* along with the Purānas, set forth the conception of a personal God, who is the embodiment of all beauty, and the object of man's devotion, service, and rapturous exaltation. Whatever is beautiful here in this world is so because of the spark of this divine beauty in it, says the *Bhagavad Gītā* (10.41).

Musicians later developed their philosophy along lines indicated by the Vedas and Upanishads, according to which music and spiritual endeavor were closely linked. All songs were to be composed and sung in praise of God; less lofty themes were not considered acceptable. Furthermore, the very act of singing was likened to the yogic discipline involving the control of breath and concentration. Indian music is, unlike the harmonic system of the modern West, a melodic or modal system in which the highest form of art is the continued singing of pure melody (rāga) unaided by any words. This pure melodic elaboration helps both the singer and listener to become absorbed in the depths of his own being or transported to a plane where all mundane memory ceases to intrude or disturb the blissfulness, restfulness, or poise which the spirit achieves. The high spiritual value set upon music is not only attested in the texts and the songs, but is also demonstrated by the fact that all the great musicians of India have been revered as saints.

The art of sculpture, iconography, and painting, as exemplified in the temples and rockcut caves, had a similar spiritual inspiration, content, and purpose.

It is in the fields of drama and poetry that a theory of art was systematically developed. Though the popular roots of the drama are shown in some of its social forms, the highest type of drama was conceived to be the heroic play in which the acts of gods, incarnations of the Supreme Divinity, or the sublime royal heroes of the epics were "imitated" or "represented"; similarly the highest form of the poetic art was also the epic or the grand poem which was a continuation of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata,* following them in theme and treatment, though at less length. The holding forth before the people of elevated character and action was, nevertheless, a secondary purpose; critics agreed that the didactic aspect of a play or poem should always be subordinated to the primary aim of artistic enjoyment.

But if enjoyment of poetry and drama is the primary end, what then is the essence of this enjoyment? If poetry and drama depict a variety of characters and actions, with a consequent mixture of pleasant and unpleasant feelings, how is it all rendered equally or uniformly relishable? What is there in art that distinguishes it from the world and nature? If the poem, play, or picture presents a different reality, what is the nature of this reality? To questions such as these Indian critics have addressed themselves.

For them the essential thing in poetry or drama is not story and character as such, but the emotion which they embody and which the poet tries to communicate. The emotional interest of a work centers around certain primary sentiments felt by all human beings, around which other secondary emotions hover. Thus love, heroism, pathos, and a few others are seen as ultimate sentiments which constitute their own explanation; not so the subsidiary or transitory feelings such as doubt or despondency, anxiety, longing, or jealousy—all of which require further and multiple explanations as to their causes. Now these major enduring sentiments (*sthāyī-bhāvas*) are embedded as impressions in every heart, and the portrayal of situations in poems and plays touches the corresponding emotional instincts in the cultivated reader or spectator. Though any human being possesses a similar emotional endowment, only the cultivated person can respond fully to artistic presentations. In others the response may be hindered either by a lack of culture or by momentary preoccupations arising from irrelevant and distracting circumstances. In overcoming or eliminating the latter, the artistic atmosphere of the theater, the music, the poetic diction are all helpful. One who is thus responsive is called "a person of attuned heart" (*sa-hṛdaya*), one who identifies himself with the representation. Because the rapport is achieved through an emotional response and appreciation, such a person is also called a *rasika,* one who has aesthetic taste (rasa, lit. "flavor," "relish"). These words *rasa* and *rasika* are as much key words of Indian culture as *dharma* or *brahman,* and suggest how in Indian culture there is an imperceptible shading-off from the spiritual to the aesthetic, and vice versa.

How can the designated emotions, circumscribed by person, time, and place, be shared by spectators or readers? In life, one's emotions produce in onlookers quite varied reactions; what happens to them, then, in art? Bharata said in his *Treatise on Dramaturgy* (*Nāṭya Śāstra,* c. second

century B.C. to second century A.D.), and this was further elucidated by the tenth-century critic Bhatta Nāyaka,[1] that in the emotions of the world a process of universalization occurs, thanks to their artistic expression, in music, acting, etc., and it is in their universal aspect, as love or heroism as such, and not as the love and the heroism of such and such characters, that a spectator finds them appealing to his own corresponding instincts. Along with this universalization, there is also a process of abstraction which detaches a painful situation from its painful setting. When the worldly emotion ceases to have its former personal reference, its painfulness, loathsomeness, etc., are all transcended. Thus, all the emotions presented in art are transferred to a supramundane plane, and the so-called enjoyment comes to represent a unique category of experience unlike anything that is known to result from ordinary worldly pleasures. This universalization and sublimation also disassociates the emotion from its particularized form, e.g., love, etc., so that it is relished simply as aesthetic emotion (rasa).

This aesthetic emotion is therefore of the nature of a serenity (*viśrānti*) of the heart or spirit, a condition in which the restlessness attendant upon mundane activity[2] is stilled by the play of artistic presentation. It is in this respect that aesthetic bliss is considered akin to the Supreme Beatitude. This is not, of course, the same as the Supreme Beatitude, from which, when once attained, there is no falling away. The realization of aesthetic bliss is a condition brought about and brought to an end by the presentation and withdrawal of the artistic stimulus. Yet it offers a momentary glimpse of the Supreme Bliss, and continuous efforts to partake of it are a means of preparing the soul for its supreme self-realization.

Now the artistic stimulus which brought forth this end is neither real nor unreal; it is indescribable; the cognition of this is again unique, being none of the known types of actual perception, inference, memory, etc. It is best described by analogy to the nature of the world as seen in idealistic metaphysics such as that of Kashmir Shaivism or Shankara's Advaita (monism). Like Shaivism and Advaita, Sānkhya also contributed its

[1] His work is called the *Mirror of the Heart* (*Hṛdayadarpaṇa*).

[2] The critic Abhinavagupta adopts here the Sānkhya psychology of the three qualities or dispositions of the mind: the sublime, "purity"; the restless, "passion"; and the stupid, "darkness" (see below under Sānkhya). Sorrow is the outcome of the restless disposition of "passion," but thanks to the artistic presentation, the sublime disposition of "purity" dominates over it and sublimates the tragic situation.

ideas to the theory set forth above; it is from the Sānkhya system that Abhinavagupta (A.D. c.1000),[3] the foremost exponent of this point of view, seeks assistance when explaining the phenomenon of our enjoyment of tragic plays and the sentiment of pathos.

This notable theory of aesthetic bliss is first adumbrated in both its broad outlines and technical details in Bharata's comprehensive *Treatise on Dramaturgy*, which is the earliest extant work in the field. Later, critics asserted that the emotional theory applied primarily to drama, where the actual impersonation of characters by different actors, and actual acting, made emotional communication direct, while in poetry this communication was indirect, since everything had to be put into words. Therefore, according to these early rhetoricians, Bhāmaha, Dandin, Vāmana[4] (seventh, eighth, and ninth centuries) who dealt with poetry primarily, emotion or rasa was subordinated to expression, which was embellished by various elements such as style, figure, and elegance. Subsequently the school of neo-critics headed by Ānandavardhana[5] (ninth century) unified criticism by treating the problems of poetry and drama as fundamentally identical, and restoring the supreme place to emotion.

Ānandavardhana's thesis was elucidated and developed further by the Kashmirian Shaiva philosopher Abhinavagupta, but even after the work of this writer, some younger critics like Kuntaka,[6] almost contemporary with Abhinavagupta, reargued the case for poetic art being one preeminently of expression, to which everything else was subordinated. Bhatta Nāyaka, whose contribution to the problem of aesthetic emotion in the theory of universalization has already been noted, and who wrote a little before Abhinavagupta, also upheld the expressionistic view of poetry. He clearly distinguished poetry from scriptural injunction on the one hand, and story or news on the other. In scripture, the words or the letter of the text was the chief thing; in story or narrative, the ideas alone mattered; but in poetry the *way*, the *manner* in which one used words or put his ideas, was what mattered.

Even those who took their stand on rasa or emotion as the essence of

[3] Author of a commentary on Bharata's *Treatise on Dramaturgy* and another on the *Light on Suggestion* (*Dhvanyāloka*) of Ānandavardhana.

[4] The works of these writers are called, respectively: the *Ornaments of Poetry* (*Kāvyālaṅkāra*), the *Mirror of Poetry* (*Kāvyādarśa*), and *Aphorisms on the Ornaments of Poetry* (*Kāvyālaṅkāra Sūtra*), with commentary by the same author.

[5] His classic is called the *Light on Suggestion*.

[6] Author of the *Life of Striking Expression* (*Vakroktijīvita*).

poetry had to take into consideration the unique character of poetic expression; they were required to explain how this communication of emotion took place. While ideas actually can be conveyed by words, emotions cannot be evoked by mere mention of them. Poetry must represent the attendant emotional factors, the human participants, the background of nature, and the actions resulting from those feelings which come in the train of a major sentiment. It is through these that the sentiments of love, etc., are aroused in a responsive reader or spectator. Now this realm of emotion is something which lies beyond the reach of either the primary sense or its secondary metaphorical shifts; it is only through *suggestion* that emotion can be communicated. Therefore the leading neo-critic, Ānandavardhana, expounded the doctrine of suggestion (*dhvani, vyañjanā*) or revelation (*prakāśa*) as the chief means by which art achieves its highest communication. This *dhvani,* which has to do with the overtones of words, could render even the communication of ideas and figurative turns more charming by the power of suggestion than by straightforward statement. One paramount reason adduced by Ānandavardhana in support of his claim that suggestion is the sole means of communication was the emotional response produced by music through the inarticulated sounds of pure melody, where there obviously could be no question of verbal communication, primary or secondary. And this was as true of sight as of sound. The look in a lady's eye might have a profound emotional significance, unexplainable except in terms of suggestion.

There were, however, a few critics who still refused to acknowledge the need to ascribe to words such an intangible quality as suggestion when known processes of verbal import or cognition existed, such as the speaker's intention, presumption, and inference. King Bhoja[7] (eleventh century), who tried to take a rather dispassionate view of the Kashmirian contributions from his distant Malwa, found it more reasonable to take an eclectic approach, which would not reject the idea of suggestion, but would make it part of the poet's intention. He tried also to reconcile the ancients and the neo-critics in regard to the respective importance of expression and emotion. The most noteworthy contribution of Bhoja lies in his theory of aesthetic emotion, which, however, few after him understood properly. Bhoja tackled the problem of poetry and the world

[7] His two works in this field are the *Necklace of Sarasvatī* (*Sarasvatīkaṇṭhābharaṇa* [Sarasvatī is the Goddess of learning]) and the *Illumination of Love* (*Śṛṅgāraprakāśa*).

together and tried to find some common basis for explaining culture itself. Aesthetic emotion, according to him, is a refinement of the human ego (ahamkāra) or the development of one's self-consciousness (*abhimāna*) which takes one's personality to that peak of perfection at which one reflects upon one's Self and feels the joy of its fulfillment. Such was the interpretation given to the word *śṛṅgāra* which ordinarily means love, but which to Bhoja meant the Self's Love for Itself, and of which the love for various persons and things in the world is only an empirical manifestation. This inner Self, not so much at rest with itself as aglow with its own essential energy of love, is the one aesthetic emotion which is fed and nourished by the other feelings arising out of it and surrounding it, like the flames of a fire. The poetic emotions, such as love, heroism, etc., only enkindle this inner fire of the Self; and in the measure of their contribution to the burnishment of this inner Self—this sublimated ego—the poetry, art, or cultural activity of the world may be considered fruitful.

Among the lesser critics, there was about the same time (eleventh century) in Kashmir, the pupil of Abhinavagupta, Kshemendra,[8] who worked out the idea of proportion and propriety, *jīvita,* as the very life of poetic beauty. Lastly, we might mention Jagannātha Pandita,[9] who flourished in the seventeenth century. Following in the main school of thought handed down by Abhinavagupta, he defined poetry as words which convey an idea of beauty, and beauty as the delectation of a unique category of supramundane joy.

DRAMATURGY

Bharata's Treatise on Dramaturgy

[From *Nāṭya Śāstra,* 1.14–15, 17, 104–8, 113–14; 6.10, 15–21, 31, 32; 27.49–53, 55, 56, 59–62; 36.72, 74–76]

[God Brahmā said:] I will create the lore of drama which promotes dharma [virtue], material gain, and fame, which will show for posterity all activities, which is enriched with the ideas of all branches of knowledge and presents all the arts; I shall create it, along with the story required for its theme, with its teachings and the summary of its topics.

[8] Author of the tract *Examination of Propriety* (*Aucityavicāracarcā*).
[9] Author of *The Bearer of the Ganges of Emotion.*

CHAPTER XIII

MOKSHA, THE FOURTH END OF MAN

The fourth and final aim of man, moksha, is the culmination of the other three, but especially of the religious ideal originally associated with dharma. In the earliest phase of Indian thought the observance of the cosmic and moral law (rita) and the performance of dharma in the form of sacrifice were believed in as means of propitiating the gods and gaining heavenly enjoyment in the afterlife. From this idea—that an act of dharma achieved some merit or benefit which might be enjoyed on death—developed the karma theory and its corollary, the doctrine of rebirth. At this point, however, the thought that one thus passed from life to life and that there was no end to this series led to deeper reflection. An act being finite cannot produce a result different from it or more lasting; a thing that does not last is imperfect and cannot be the ultimate truth; what has been conditioned by acts, namely, this life, is therefore perishable and hence not capable of producing real happiness. To one perplexed with this problem, Death itself, as in the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad,* revealed the secret. As one passed from birth to birth and death to death, what was it that endured and continued as the substratum of conditioned experience, of the happy and unhappy results of acts? What was it in man that formed the basis of all this transmigratory drama? If there was something which endured such changes, it might yield the secret of restfulness, infinite peace, and lasting happiness. To attain it, one would naturally have to turn away from the so-called limited good or happiness and the equally circumscribed means to it. To one intent on the supreme good or everlasting bliss, even the pleasures of life were no different from its miseries, as both lead to an endless cycle of experience and have to be transcended. As anything done within the sphere of cause and effect was caught up in the same chain, action was no remedy; knowledge of the

truth alone could help one to rise above the transmigratory cycle or the world of cause and effect.

This line of thought serves as the common background for later systems which expounded the goal or the reality or the path in different ways. All were agreed that experience in this life was on the whole to be considered miserable and that deliverance (moksha) from it or its cessation was to be sought. The Upanishads considered that knowledge of the truth would lead to realization of the Self as such, beyond the conditioned existence in which it was involved; and that behind this world of cause and effect, underlying the phenomenon of things that come into being, change, decay, and disappear, there was one permanent reality: existence (sat), changeless and consequently sorrowless, and of which knowledge was not a quality but its very form. The Upanishads, for the most part, held this monistic view of one transcendent absolute, but sometimes they spoke also of the truth as a transcendent personality. While the former view led to a monism such as Shankara's, the latter view led to theistic schools, which considered one supreme god as the creator, sustainer, and destroyer of the universe, and which developed the doctrine of devotion, love, and surrender. To them release from the world (moksha or mukti) brought absorption into or essential identity with the Lord.

Like the first mentioned pantheistic Upanishadic or Vedāntic school, there were others which also took their stand on knowledge as the means of attaining the everlasting good. They likewise turned away from sacrifices and similar ritual to inquire into the nature of reality. Sage Kanāda, the founder of the Vaisheshika system, examined creation and the universe whose creation he attributed to atoms as the material cause; God was for him an efficient cause and also a teacher and helper; knowledge of all physical, mental, and spiritual categories—which comprised matter, mind, spirit or soul, both human and divine—and their respective qualities and differences contributed to the attainment of the everlasting good, *niḥśreyasa.*

Sage Gotama, the founder of the Nyāya school, asserted that the misery experienced by man was due to birth (which involved death), the latter to activity, activity to desire and dislike, and these to erroneous knowledge—a causal chain akin to that which the Buddha preached. The followers of this school were theists, pluralists, and realists, and for them release or moksha was a state in which the soul of man was absolutely rid of all

experience of sorrow (inclusive of so-called "pleasure") and was like unto a stone.

The Sānkhya of Sage Kapila, whose doctrines are found echoed in the Upanishads, considered release from the misery of all life here and in the heavens as attainable by the knowledge of the truth concerning Self or soul, on the one hand, and the material universe on the other. The truth about these two is that all experiences are due solely to the latter and not to the ever-pure soul. It is only imagined that they belong to the soul because of its proximity to matter and its erroneous identification with matter as agent and enjoyer. The Yoga of Sage Patanjali set forth the process of psychological discipline by which one could attain this release (moksha) or isolation (*kaivalya*) of the soul from involvement with matter and its doings.

Now all these five schools of Hindu philosophy aimed at release from the misery (*duḥkha*) of mundane experience and transmigration (samsāra), and all emphasized knowledge of one kind or another. Among these, the school which primarily based itself on the Upanishads, the Vedānta, took different forms, monistic and pantheistic or theistic. The Mīmāmsā alone, as a school, still stood for the performance of ordained duties (dharma) and sacrificial and meritorious acts (karma). Action, of course, could not be eliminated so long as a man lived; the most philosophy could do was to take the sting out of action. The monistic philosophers, recognizing the disciplinary value of acts and duties, as indeed of ethics, accordingly assigned them a place under *sādhanas* or preparatory disciplines. Acts could function in this way as ancillary to knowledge providing they were not done with the expectation of personal gain, or from the theistic view, as an expression of devotion, provided they were dedicated to the Lord. Either way, the doer abandoned not the act, but the desire for its fruit. Thus when action was adjusted to Vedānta and qualified by knowledge or devotion, it too became a means of liberation.

This reconciliation of action with knowledge and devotion, which also removed the contradiction between dharma and moksha, was the great contribution of the *Bhagavad Gītā*. In modern times, when increased activity has become a dominant feature of Indian life, it is to this text with its philosophy of selfless and dedicated action that the whole Indian nation has turned for inspiration.

THE BHAGAVAD GĪTĀ

The *Song of the Lord* (*Bhagavad Gītā*), which is by far the best known religio-philosophical text in Sanskrit, may be considered the most typical expression of Hinduism as a whole and an authoritative manual of the Krishnaite religion (i.e., the popular cult of Krishna) in particular.

Even in very early times there had existed, side by side with the hieratic Vedic religion, several popular, tribal religions. The gods and goddesses of these tribal people differed from the divinities of the official Vedic pantheon, and the religious practices associated with them also differed fundamentally from the religious practices of the Vedic Aryans. Nevertheless, these indigenous religions eventually found a place under the broad mantle of the Vedic religion. While Brahmanism remained in the ascendancy, their sphere of influence was restricted to the tribes among which they had originated. But the gradual decline of Brahmanism, in the face of competition from Buddhism and Jainism, afforded these popular religions an opportunity to assert themselves; and indeed, the Brahmanists themselves seem to have encouraged this development to some extent as a means of meeting the challenge of the more heterodox movements. At the same time, among the indigenous religions, with their variety of gods and religious practices, a common allegiance to the authority of the Veda provided a thin, but nonetheless significant, thread of unity. This is the genesis of Hinduism, which brought together under its banner large masses of people, and, at the same time, kept the Vedic tradition alive.

One significant constituent of this all-embracing Hinduism was Krishnaism, which seems to have originated and spread among the tribes of Western and Central India, like the Vrishnis, the Sātvatas, the Ābhīras, and the Yādavas. Its principal teacher was Krishna, who was associated with the above-mentioned tribes as either their temporal or their spiritual leader, and was in course of time, transformed into a tribal god. That this tribal god and the religious movement inspired by him were originally not countenanced by the Vedic religion is suggested by the episode at the Govardhana mountain (*Harivaṃśa*, 72–73), which describes the antagonism to and subsequent subjugation by Krishna of the chief Vedic

god Indra. This is clearly symbolic of the growing predominance of the popular religion over the hieratic Brahmanic religion. But the religion of Krishna typifies the paradoxical characteristic of Hinduism mentioned above, namely, that it was a fundamental departure from Brahmanism which nonetheless remained within the bounds of loyalty to the Veda.

The *Gītā*[1] forms part of the great epic of India, the *Great Poem* (or *War*) *of the Descendants of Bharata* (*Mahābhārata*), which has gathered a veritable encyclopedia around the epic story of the rivalry between the Kauravas, led by Duryodhana, and their cousins the Pāndavas, led by Yudhishthira. Both houses were descended from Kuru and ultimately from the famous Vedic tribe of the Bharatas which gave India her name *Bhārat*. The struggle culminated in the great war won by the Pāndavas and their allies with the help of Krishna. Chiefly due to its numerous and elevated passages on the subjects of wisdom, duty, and liberation from mundane existence, the epic, which probably underwent its last major revision c. fourth century A.D. in the Gupta period, became sacred to later Hindus as part of the Smriti scriptures.

When in the course of the growth of the *Mahābhārata,* the bardic historical poem relating to the Kuru-Bharatas was being transformed into an early form of the epic, two principal processes had been in operation, namely, the bardic enlargement of the original ballad-cycle relating to the Kuru-Bharatas, and the Krishnaite redaction of the bardic material. The *Gītā* must indeed have served as the cornerstone of this Krishnaite superstructure. Though the *Gītā* mainly epitomizes the teachings of Krishna, after it had been included in the epic it also was subjected, like the rest of the epic, to the final process of Brahmanic revision.

The religion of Krishna differed from the Upanishads, as well as from Buddhism and Jainism, first and foremost in its teaching about the goal of human life. The Upanishads generally put forth the view that, since this phenomenal world and human existence are in some sense unreal, man should renounce this worldly life and aim at realizing the essential identity of his soul with the Universal Self, which is the one and only absolute reality. The Upanishadic attitude toward life and society is fundamentally individualistic. The *Gītā,* on the other hand, teaches that man has a duty to promote *lokasaṅgraha* or the stability, solidarity, and progress of society. Society can function properly only on the principle of the

[1] The abbreviated title of the *Bhagavad Gītā.*

ethical interdependence of its various constituents. As an essential constituent of society, therefore, man must have an active awareness of his social obligations. The *sva-dharma* (lit. one's own dharma, set of duties) or the specific social obligations of different types of men are, according to the *Gītā,* best embodied in the doctrine of the four classes. The *Gītā,* however, emphasizes the metaphysical significance of that scheme, according to which all classes are equal and essential, while it insists mainly on man's active recognition of *sva-dharma* or his own specific social obligations.

The second fundamental point on which the *Gītā* differs from Upanishadic thought follows logically from the first. The Upanishadic ideal of spiritual emancipation through knowledge involves the acceptance of the unreal character of the phenomenal world. Through his actions, consciously or unconsciously, man becomes involved in the tentacles of this fictitious world and is thus removed farther and farther from his goal. A complete abnegation of action, therefore, came to be regarded almost as a *sine qua non* of a true seeker's spiritual quest. The ideal of social integrity (*lokasaṅgraha*) through *sva-dharma* enjoined by the *Gītā,* on the other hand, implies an active way of life. The *Gītā,* indeed, most often speaks in terms of yoga (application to work or self-discipline) rather than of moksha (release or liberation). The teacher of the *Gītā* has discussed, at great length, the why and the how of the yoga of action (karma-yoga). The activism inculcated by the *Gītā* is, however, not of the common variety. It is tinged—perhaps under the influence of Upanishadic and Buddhist thought—with an element of renunciation. It argues that action, as such, is not detrimental to one's attainment of his spiritual goal. It is only one's attachment to the fruits of action that keeps one eternally involved in the cycle of birth and death. The *Gītā,* therefore, teaches the art of "acting and yet not acting," i.e., acting without becoming personally involved in the action.

Whereas Vedic ritual practices were exclusive in character, Krishna sponsors a way of spiritual life in which all can participate. It is the yoga of devotion (bhakti yoga). In contrast to ritual sacrifice the *Gītā* offers a concept of sacrifice embracing all actions done in fulfillment of one's *sva-dharma* and without attachment to their fruits. This way of devotion presupposes the recognition of a personal god—in the present context, of course, Krishna himself—who is regarded as being responsible for

the creation, preservation, and destruction of the universe. The devotee serves that God like a loyal servant, always craving some kind of personal communion with Him. The criterion of true worship, according to the doctrine of devotion, is not the richness or profuseness of the materials used for worship nor the number and variety of religious observances involved in it. It is rather the earnestness, the faith, and the sense of complete surrender to the Divine on the part of the devotee (bhakta). Such a devotee—whatever his age, sex, learning, and social status—compels God to become his friend, guide, and philosopher. The way of devotion is thus more simple, more direct, and more effective than any other religious practice. To this teaching of devotion, however, Krishna makes one significant addition. He insists that a true practitioner of the yoga of action (karmayogin) also become a true devotee, for, by following his own duty (*sva-dharma*), the karmayogin is doing the will of God and participating in the divine project.

Krishnaism cannot boast of any independent philosophical system of its own. The great virtue of the *Gītā* is that, instead of dilating upon the points of difference among the various systems of thought and practice, it emphasizes the points of agreement among them and thereby brings about a philosophical and religious synthesis. We have already suggested that the *Gītā* underwent a kind of Brahmanic reorientation. One of the more significant results of this reorientation, as far as the personality of Krishna is concerned, was that this tribal god, who was essentially non-Vedic in origin and whose character had already become syncretic, came to be regarded as an avatār (incarnation) of the Vedic god Vishnu, and as identical with the Upanishadic Brahman.

Due no doubt to this synthetic character, study of the *Bhagavad Gītā* has given rise to a variety of problems pertaining both to its form and its content. It is, for instance, asked whether the text of the *Gītā*, as we have it today, actually represents its "original" text. Then there is the question concerning the relation between the *Gītā* and the *Mahābhārata*. Can the elaborate teaching embodied in the *Gītā* have been imparted by Krishna to Arjuna just when the great battle of Kurukshetra was on the point of commencing? Further, can the various teachings of Krishna be said to have been presented in the present text of the *Gītā* in a logical sequence? Would a rearrangement of the text not yield better results in this respect? Coming to the teachings of the *Gītā*, some scholars aver that

its main metaphysical foundations have been derived from the Sānkhya system, the Vedāntic (monistic) tendencies being superimposed on them only in a superficial manner, while other scholars are of the opinion that it is just the other way around. Arguments are again adduced in support of the two opposing views that the *Gītā* in its original form was a philosophical treatise only later adopted by Krishnaism, and, on the other hand, that basically it embodied the kshatriya code of conduct as sponsored by Krishna, the philosophical speculations having found their way in it only incidentally. There is also the problem concerning the norm of ethical conduct. The views expressed on the subject by the *Gītā* itself do not appear to be quite consistent. At some places (5.14; 18.59) it is said that it is man's inherent nature (*svabhāva* or prakriti) which determines his actions, while elsewhere (11.33; 18.61) man is described as functioning only as an instrument of the Divine Will. It is further suggested (2.35) that one should act in such a manner that he is not thereby subjected to public disgrace. The teacher of the *Gītā* also points (16.24) to scripture as the authority for determining what should be done and what should not be done, and concludes by saying (18.63) that, reflecting fully on the doctrine declared by him, one should act as one chooses. These are only some typical problems of the many which are often discussed in connection with the work. The *Gītā* need not be approached as if it were a systematic treatise, in which the principal subject is treated with scientific or logical rigor. Being included in the popular epic, the *Gītā* also inherited epic characteristics of style and presentation. Nevertheless, this original compendium of Krishnaite religion, philosophy, and ethics has been presented in the epic on a very dramatic background and in such a manner that there should be no ambiguity so far as its principal teachings are concerned.

You Have To Fight

When the armies of the Kauravas and the Pāndavas were arrayed on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, waiting for the signal to commence the fight, the Pāndava hero, Arjuna, seeing that relatives and friends were ranged against each other, was suddenly overcome by deep spiritual despondency. It would be sinful, he felt, to kill his own kindred for the sake of kingdom. Therefore, not as a coward, but as a morally conscientious and sensitive person, he lay down his bow and declared to his friend and charioteer, Krishna, that he would not fight. Krishna then attempted to convince Arjuna that he would be committing a sin if he

failed to perform his own duty (*sva-dharma*) as a warrior. As for his concern over taking the lives of others, this arose from a delusion which Krishna proceeds to dispel in the following passage:

[From *Bhagavad Gītā*, 2.11–37]

The Blessed Lord said:

You grieve for those who should not be mourned, and yet you speak words of wisdom! The learned do not grieve for the dead or for the living.

Never, indeed, was there a time when I was not, nor when you were not, nor these lords of men. Never, too, will there be a time, hereafter, when we shall not be.

As in this body, there are for the embodied one [i.e., the soul] childhood, youth, and old age, even so there is the taking on of another body. The wise sage is not perplexed thereby.

Contacts of the sense-organs, O son of Kuntī, give rise to cold and heat, and pleasure and pain. They come and go, and are not permanent. Bear with them, O Bhārata.

That man, whom these [sense-contacts] do not trouble, O chief of men, to whom pleasure and pain are alike, who is wise—he becomes eligible for immortality.

For the nonexistent (asat) there is no coming into existence; nor is there passing into nonexistence for the existent (sat). The ultimate nature of these two is perceived by the seers of truth.[1]

Know that to be indestructible by which all this is pervaded. Of this imperishable one, no one can bring about destruction.

These bodies of the eternal embodied one, who is indestructible and incomprehensible, are said to have an end. Therefore fight, O Bhārata.

He who regards him [i.e., the soul] as a slayer, and he who regards him as slain—both of them do not know the truth; for this one neither slays nor is slain.

He is not born, nor does he die at any time; nor, having once come to be will he again come not to be. He is unborn, eternal, permanent, and primeval; he is not slain when the body is slain.

Whoever knows him to be indestructible and eternal, unborn and immutable—how and whom can such a man, O son of Prithā, cause to be slain or slay?

[1] Cf. *Rig Veda*, 10.129.

Just as a man, having cast off old garments, puts on other, new ones, even so does the embodied one, having cast off old bodies, take on other, new ones.

Weapons do not cleave him, fire does not burn him; nor does water drench him, nor the wind dry him up.

He is uncleavable, he is unburnable, he is undrenchable, as also undryable. He is eternal, all-pervading, stable, immovable, existing from time immemorial.

He is said to be unmanifest, unthinkable, and unchangeable. Therefore, knowing him as such, you should not grieve [for him].

And even if you regard him as being perpetually born and as perpetually dying, even then, O long-armed one, you should not grieve for him.

For, to one who is born death is certain and certain is birth to one who has died. Therefore in connection with a thing that is inevitable you should not grieve.

Unmanifest in their beginnings are beings, manifest in the middle stage, O Bhārata, and unmanifest, again, in their ends. For what then should there be any lamentation?

Someone perceives him as a marvel; similarly, another speaks of him as a marvel; another, again, hears of him as a marvel; and, even after hearing of him, no one knows him.

The embodied one within the body of everyone, O Bhārata, is ever unslayable. Therefore, you should not grieve for any being.

Further, having regard to your own dharma [duty] you should not falter. For a kshatriya there does not exist another greater good than war enjoined by dharma.

Blessed are the kshatriyas, O son of Prithā, who get such a war, which being, as it were, the open gate to heaven, comes to them of its own accord.

But if you do not fight this battle which is enjoined by dharma, then you will have given up your own dharma as well as glory, and you will incur sin.

Moreover, all beings will recount your eternal infamy. And for one who has been honored, infamy is worse than death.

The great car warriors will think of you as one who has refrained from battle through fear; having been once greatly respected by them, you will then be reduced to pettiness.

Those who are not favorably inclined toward you will speak many unutterable words, slandering your might. What, indeed, can be more painful than that?

Either, being slain, you will attain heaven; or being victorious, you will enjoy [i.e., rule] the earth. Therefore arise, O son of Kuntī, intent on battle.

Why Karma-Yoga?

In the preceding passage, Krishna has addressed himself specifically to the case of Arjuna. Now he initiates a more or less general discussion of the theory and practice of the yoga of action, arguing against the view that renunciation entails only physical renunciation of all activity, or that such a renunciation, by itself, is conducive to the attainment of one's spiritual goal.

[From *Bhagavad Gītā*, 3.4–24]

Not by nonperformance of actions does a man attain freedom from action; nor by mere renunciation of actions does he attain his spiritual goal.

For no one, indeed, can remain, for even a single moment, unengaged in activity, since everyone, being powerless, is made to act by the dispositions (gunas) of matter (prakriti).[2]

Whoever having restrained his organs of action still continues to brood over the objects of senses—he, the deluded one, is called a hypocrite.

But he who, having controlled the sense-organs by means of the mind, O Arjuna, follows without attachment the path of action by means of the organs of action—he excels.

Do you do your allotted work, for action is superior to nonaction. Even the normal functioning of your body cannot be accomplished through actionlessness.

Except for the action done for sacrifice,[3] all men are under the bondage of action. Therefore, O son of Kuntī, do you undertake action for that purpose, becoming free from all attachment.

Having, in ancient times, created men along with sacrifice,[4] Prajāpati

[2] Cf. note 19.

[3] That is, action done in the spirit of sacrifice does not entangle the doer in its consequences.

[4] In this and the following six stanzas Krishna develops another argument in favor of the yoga of action, namely, that every man has to recognize his role in the scheme of cosmic ethics and has actively to promote its functioning. If he fails to do so, the cosmos will be turned into chaos. This is the basic theory of early Brahmanism.

said: "By means of this [sacrifice] do you bring forth. May this prove to be the yielder of milk in the form of your desired ends.

"Do you foster the gods by means of this and let those gods foster you; [thus] fostering each other, both of you will attain to the supreme good.

"For the gods, fostered by sacrifice, will grant you the enjoyments which you desire. Whoever enjoys the enjoyments granted by them without giving to them in return—he is, verily, a thief."

The good people who eat what is left after the sacrifice[5] are released from all sins. On the other hand, those sinful ones who cook only for themselves—they, verily, eat their own sin.

From food creatures come into being; from rain ensues the production of food; from sacrifice results rain; sacrifice has its origin from action (karma).[6]

Know action to originate from the Brahman and the Brahman to originate from the Imperishable. Therefore, the Brahman, which permeates all, is ever established in sacrifice.

Whoever, in this world, does not help in the rotating of the wheel thus set in motion—he is of sinful life, he indulges in mere pleasures of sense, and he, O son of Prithā, lives in vain.

But the man whose delight is in the Self alone, who is content with the Self, who is satisfied only within the Self—for him there exists nothing that needs to be done.

He, verily, has in this world no purpose to be served by action done nor any purpose whatsoever to be served by action abnegated. Similarly, he does not depend on any beings for having his purpose served.

Therefore, without attachment, always do the work that has to be done, for a man doing his work without attachment attains to the highest goal.

For, verily, by means of work have Janaka and others attained perfection. You should also do your work with a view to the solidarity of society [*lokasangraha*].

Whatever a great man does, the very same the common man does. Whatever norm of conduct he sets up, that the people follow.

There is not for me, O son of Prithā, in the three worlds, anything that

[5] That is, those whose first and foremost concern is the promotion of cosmic order which sacrifice sustains, and not any selfish interest.

[6] Action is, indeed, the basic force which sets and keeps in motion the cosmic wheel: action—sacrifice—rain—food—creatures—action.