Prof. L. Venkataratnam Lectures for 1962—63

REASON AND INTUTION IN INDIAN CULTURE

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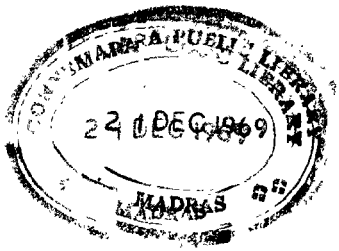

LECTURE I

VIVEKA THE BASIC NOTE OF INDIAN CULTURE

The fourth Adhyāya of the *Bṛhad-Āraṇyaka* Upaniṣad begins with a question by Janaka and Yajñavalkya's reply to it. "What brings you here?", asks the King, "Have you come for cows, or to provoke questions that require subtle answers?" "Both, your Imperial Majesty," is the sage's reply (*Ubhayameva Samrāditi-ho-vācha*). It would be wrong to think that this was just occupational cynicism. The Upaniṣads. beginning with the second *mantra* of the *Isāvāsya*, show that the exercise of prudence and foresight in worldly affairs was not regarded as incompatible with the pursuit of Brahmavidyā. Consider the following well-known *mantra* from the Rg-Veda:[1]

Tryambakam yajāmahe sugandhim puṣṭivardhanam urvārukamiva bandhanān mṛtyor-mukṣīya-māmṛtāt.

Vasiṣta, the ṛṣi, who was the seer of the *mantra*, says, "We pray to Him Who is the father of the three (Brahmā, Viṣnu and Rudra), Whose glory is bruited abroad in the three worlds, Whose power is immeasurable, and Who nourishes His worshipper; may He help us to release ourselves from death (or saṃsāra), as the 'karkati' (the Tamil 'vellari') fruit frees itself from its stem, till we pass on from immortality (or 'Svarga') to the Bliss of Union, which is Mokṣa."

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(1) R.V. VII, 59(12). An alternative rendering of 'Tryambaka', suggested by Sāyaṇa is "The Three-faced".

*All translations of passages cited from the Veda and other sources in these lectures are, where not stated otherwise, free renderings that I have made myself. In dealing with Vedic passages, I have followed Sāyaṇa who represents age-long tradition.

Sāyaṇa, commenting on the verse, says that by worshipping or sacrificing to Trayambaka the worshipper gains not only the fragrance of meritorious deeds well done, and material prosperity, and the satisfaction of all desires, but also liberation from the cycle of births and deaths, naturally and smoothly, like the ripe *karkati* fruit detaching itself from its stem without the world being aware of it. And he emphasises that it is the fourth quarter that brings out the fundamental significance of the *mantra*.

Now, without going into the question what the ṛṣi means by *mokṣa* in this context, I may point out that this Vedic *mantra* affirms the fourth *puruṣartha* as definitely as any Upaniṣadic passage does, while at the same time suggesting that it is not incompatible with devotion to the others (Dharma, Artha and Kāma), that in fact it may come as the natural and orderly consummation of a full and harmonious life lived in accordance with Śāstra. While it is true that the Upaniṣads concern themselves more with *mokṣa*, it is not because they deny validity, in their proper place and order, to the other goals of life, but because they hold that these are not the last word on the human adventure, which does not cease till the Self is realised. Thus there is no rift between the Samhitās and the Brāhmanas on the one hand and the Jñāna Kāṇda on the other, as is too often supposed.[2] Together they represent the fountain-head of our culture.

These lectures will deal in outline with the traditional Hindu view of life, and the cultural patterns in which it has worked itself out. At this point a slight digression may be permitted. The title of the first lecture speaks of 'Indian' culture, and it may be objected that 'Indian' is something more than 'Hindu'. T. S. Eliot,[3] for instance, writes commiseratingly of the peculiar cultural plight of India, with its "Hindu world, which comprehends peoples with an ancient tradition of high civilization and tribesmen of very primitive culture

(2) Thus Prof. Louis Renou in *Religions of Ancient India* (pp. 44—45) says: 'India in her exhaustion has often taken refuge in the Vedantic scale of values"; but he thinks, judging from the case of the Arya Samāj, that the "Veda may once again become a great source of inspiration".

In laying stress on the Veda as the source of Indian culture, I am not ignoring the importance of the Āgamas, and of the vast literatures, sacred and profane, in the modern Indian languages. Apart from considerations of space, there is much justification for looking upon Āgama as closely allied to Nigama.

(3) *Notes towards the Definition of Culture* (pp. 64—65).

indeed"; with[4] its "two or more important cultures on completely different religious foundations"; and with the further confusion caused by the incursion of the British, "with their assurance that their culture was the best in the world, their ignorance of the relation between culture and religion, and their bland assumption that religion was a secondary matter". He thinks it was a mistake on the part of the British to have offered us first their culture and then their religion; they should have reversed the order. And so he comes to the melancholy conclusion that "the only prospect of stability in India seems the alternative of a development, let us hope under peaceful conditions, into a loose federation of kingdoms, or to a mass uniformity only attainable at the price of the abolition of class distinctions and the abandonment of all religion — which would mean the disappearance of Indian culture".

While some of the factors that in Mr. Eliot's view might work for the disintegration of Indian culture are still there, they need not necessarily produce the results he prophesied, nor if due regard be had to our age-long history, are they likely to do so. We have had Muslims with us for a thousand years, and Christians for a longer period. There have been other religious, cultural and racial minorities too, though smaller. In spite of this, India has produced an over-all culture which all the world recognises as distinctively Indian. While political nationalism and religious or racial chauvinism are comparatively new factors that might complicate the development and renewal of that culture in the future, they, it seems to me, can no more cause a rent in its fabric than you can cleave water with a stroke of the sword.

Hinduism is a way of life. The scheme of *puruṣārthas* which that way of life illustrates and clothes with flesh and blood has nothing narrowly national about it. The tolerance of the Hindu derives from his religious convictions. He has no ambition to mould everybody into a uniform social pattern. The Minister for Cultural Affairs for West Germany, who visited India a year or two ago, observed that what had struck him most in this country was the fact that so many peoples of such diverse outlooks and in such different stages of development, should have been able to live together so peacefully and

(4) How many important ideas derived from the Vedas are incorporated in the non-Vaidik systems like Buddhism may be seen from the fact that "mindfulness", decribed as one of the most important duties of the Buddhist monk, has much in common with the "apramāda" with which this lecture largely concerns itself; though of course, in regard to other concepts, such as ignorance, the two differ widely.

harmoniously for centuries. The secret of this success which, if I may say so, we have not lost, is the continual exercise of that *viveka*[5] which I have described as the basic note, what the musicians call the *ādhāra śruti*, of our culture. What I mean by the term will, I hope, appear more clearly in the course of these lectures. I will merely put it down here in a shorthand way, by defining it as reason inspired, guided and controlled by intuition.

We believe we have in the Vedas a body of revealed truth. The remarkable thing is that even in the revealed *mantras*, which scholars regard as the earliest part of the Vedas, conclusions are set forth reinforced by reasoning. Take the Rg-Vedic hymn[6] in praise of the gift of food, which is a remarkable expression of the ethical and humanitarian outlook of the Vedas. The beggar's appeal to the rich man to give abundantly and willingly is supported by a number of reasons. He points out that death comes to all, to him who has enough to eat and more, as well as to him who has not. There is therefore no point in the miser keeping all his food to himself, as it will not save him from the Reaper. Then he observes that wealth does not diminish by giving, whereas he who does not give will be without friends here and hereafter. By hardening his heart against the needy poor he will not find more savour in his food, the suggestion being that the kind of animal who takes pleasure in gorging himself in the very presence of a starving man will be bereft of all sympathy. Then, the argument runs, only the generous giver will reap the fruit of his *yajña*, that is, he will get all that he desires from the performance of 'kāmya karma'. Prosperity, it is added, is by its very nature unstable; so one must put wealth to the best use while it lasts. And at this point the seer, in a mood of prophetic fervour, interposes in his own person with the stern declaration:

Mogham-annam vindate apracetāh
Satyam bravīmi vadha it sa tasya
Nāryamaṇam puṣyati no sakhāyam
Kevalāgho bhavati kevalādī.

(5) Count Hermann Keyserling, in his *Travel Diary of a Philosopher* (p. 233) speaks of the psychological insight shown by Hinduism: "It is indeed wonderful to what a degree the *viveka*, the power of differentiating in matters of religion, has been developed among the Indians. Among cultured Indians, there is no conception that I know of, whose rational elements they do not understand. Here there is no *credo quia absurdum*, incomprehensibility is postulated nowhere. The latter is accepted as a fact, where it is met with; but then its why and wherefore is determined as far as possible".

(6) R.V. X. 117.

"He who does not incline to give gets food in vain. I tell you this of a truth (Sāyaṇa interjects here — 'being a *ṛṣi*'). It will be actually his death. He who does not use his wealth to propitiate the gods, his friends and his guests, but feeds all by himself eats not food but sin."

Then the hymn goes on to point out that it is by un-self-regarding service that the world is nourished; the plough, for example, ploughs not for itself, but in order that the ploughman may eat. On the contrary, by keeping it all to yourself you cannot inflate your ego; for however much you might accumulate, there would be others who have accumulated more, so you can't have the satisfaction of being the richest man in the world. Nor will it do to tell the needy: "Go to my brother", for your brother may not have a surplus to give: "twins are not endowed with the same strength".

The hymn, it will be seen, reinforces the categorical injunction to give, with reasons that range over the whole field of human motives and emotions, as well as those that are derived from the *atīndriya* region, such as the authoritative statement that wealth does not diminish by giving, and that the miser who eats by himself will reap but sin.

Next to the *mantras* come the *Brāhmaṇas*. Modern scholars make fun of the fanciful etymology and the queer reasoning to be found in these treatises, especially in the *arthavāda* portions. They forget that it is not the logical faculty but the imaginative reason that is at work here. The *Brāhmaṇas* held, for example, that to eat flesh was wicked, like lying. This was no doubt an intuitive feeling, closely connected with aversion to cruelty, and not the result of reasoning. Our emancipated moderns would be sure to dismiss it as a superstition. But, E. W. Hopkins,[7] who can himself see no objection of an ethical character to meat-eating, however admits that with this "a new ethics was imported into human consciousness". For from this logically developed "the general aversion from injurious acts done to any living creatures", the great principle of *ahimsā*, in other words. This is a good example of the way in which reason operates to reinforce intuition in ethics, which is pre-eminently the realm of values.

(7) E.W. Hopkins: *Ethics of India*, p. 53.

I gladly acknowledge my indebtedness for many valuable suggestions and references, especially to the Brāhmaṇa literature, to this work, which still remains one of the best studies on the subject.

If we seem to be far removed from the world of ritual with which the *Brāhmanas* are mainly concerned, we are still very far from finding our feet in the depths of metaphysical speculation that the Upanishadic part of the *Brāhmānas* contains. The reasoning that develops the intuited metaphysical truth in the Upaniṣad — such as that which leads to the *Tat Tvam Asi* equation — is to be found in the germ in the *Brāhmanas*.

The operation of the principle of *viveka* in shaping Hindu ethical ideals and social objectives is best illustrated by tracing the development of the concept of the Puruṣārthas (or "the ends of life") which, as I began by saying, sums up the outlook on life of the Vedic Hindu, and is thus the bed-rock of our culture. 'Dharma', 'Artha', and 'Kāma', the first three 'Puruṣārthas' are generally rendered in English as 'religious merit', 'the acquisition of wealth', and 'the enjoyment of the present life', respectively. It would be nearer the mark to define them as 'Responsible moral activity', 'Power over resources', and 'Satisfaction'; while 'Mokṣa' (liberation) is in its essence self-transcendence. The concept of 'Puruṣārthas' is thought to have been formulated in a definite way first in the *Kalpa Sūtras*,[8] which are ascribed to the early post-Vedic period. But in the Tenth Mandala of the Rg. Veda appears a hymn which is remarkable not only for advocating the pursuit of "the ends of life", but also for anticipating and even going beyond the idea of the inter-relatedness of the different parts of the phenomenal universe. The second *rk*[9] of this Sūkta runs as follows:

Pari cin-marto draviṇam mamanyād-
ṛtasya pathā namasā vivāseṭ
Uta svena kratunā samvadeṭa
Śreyāmsam dakṣam manasā jagṛbhyāt.

"Let man wish to get wealth from everywhere, so that he can sacrifice to all the gods. Having got it, let him propitiate them with due rites and offerings. And when about to offer the oblations, let him meditate on the gods. And when the sacrifice is over, let him by their

(8) The Brahmaṇas and the Upaniṣads closely integrate the Puruṣārthas with the *āsrama dharma*. Thus, the *Satapatha-Brhāhmaṇa* (XI. 5. 7 1) says that "the Brahmana has the duty of perfecting the world", and for this he must study and teach without indolence and without intermission; he must be ever active in this behalf. And in return the world accords him respect and liberal support. The exhortation in the *Taittiriya Upaniṣad* to the householder to grow food and earn a competence, so as to be able to support the other *āsramas*, is well known.

(9) R.V. X. 31. 2.

grace meditate on the glorious and all-pervading Ātman."[10] Compare this with the well-known verses of the *Bhagavad-Gīta*, Ch. III, verses 10 and 11, and 14 to 16, which speak of the interdependence of gods and men with the *yajña* as the link between them, and of the Kārmic cycle — men being born of food, food being propagated by rain, rain being caused by *yajña*, *yajña* proceeding from *Karma*, *Karma* from the Veda, and the Veda from the *Akṣara*.

Here we find a metaphysical base is provided for the concept of the Puruṣārthas. The *Madhu Brāhmaṇa* of the *Bṛhad-Araṇyaka Upaniṣad* emphasises the same idea of cosmic inter-relatedness; while in the famous *Yajñavalkya-Maitreyi-samvāda*, where the sage affirms, "It is for the sake of the Ātman that everything becomes dear to one", (*Ātmanah kāmāya sarvam priyam bhavati*),[11] the idea takes a leap forward and we reach the very heart of the Indian ethic.

The Kārmic cycle, which has been referred to, is not a closed cycle. *Viveka* is the Open Sesame for him who wants to get out. We will not go into that just now. But we must look a little more closely at its ethical implications. *Yajña* is not a narrow concept, a nexus between gods and men only. The sphere of moral obligations is much more extensive, and it is represented schematically in many ways. Thus the institution of the *Pancha-yajña* linked man not only to the gods, but also to the sages from whom he derives his intellectual and spiritual heritage; to the *pitrs* (manes) who represent the family tradition, the most intimate of all the strains that go to make the past of the race that still lives in the present; to the *bhūtas*, the voiceless things at our doors and the elementals that deserve our compassion; and above all to our fellow-men.[12]

Now the self-sufficiency of the senses, supported by the robust materialism of the modern world, would dismiss out of hand all but the last of the five elements that this scheme regards as worthy of our devout consideration. But let us examine one of these, the family for instance. Culture, and religion which is the backbone of culture, are regarded everywhere as alive and exerting their full influence only when they issue in a way of life. This is inevitably a work of time, and it is the unceasing labour of many generations that goes

(10) C. H. Wilson's translation of this passage reads, in the latter part, "Let him grasp with his mind the best and most mighty (of the universal deities)".

(11) For a discussion of the import of this passage see the third lecture.

(12) The idea of a man's "debts", again, goes back to the Vedas: *Jāyamāno vai brāhmanah tribhi-ṛnāvā jāyate*. These are the debts to the *ṛiṣis*, the debts to the manes, and the debts to the gods. The discharge of "five debts" by the daily *Pancha-yajña* is described in the *Śatapatha-Brāhmana* XI. 5. 6. 7.

to mould a tradition. And to the maintenance of this constant process the family makes easily the most important single contribution. T. S. Eliot maintains that "by far the most important channel of culture transmission remains the family". He goes on to say, "When I speak of the family I have in mind a bond which embraces a longer period of time than this (a single generation): a piety towards the dead, however obscure, and a solicitude towards the unborn, however remote".

Then, as to our duty towards what are arrogantly described as "the lower orders of creation". Albert Schweitzer,[13] most conspicuously among modern philosophers, has testified to the value of the great ethical principle of *ahimsā*. The desire to pay our debt to the gods, "the children of light", would naturally not appeal to those who do not believe in the gods; while the idea that there could be such a thing as a debt to the *rishis*, the spiritual benefactors of the race, must seem to the sophisticated a piece of naive sentimentalism. But, if the basic premiss of Hindu thought is granted, that things are not what they seem, that there are heights and depths which are not measured by the aneroid and the plumb-line, that the universe is far more than little man and his doings, recognition of one's obligations to spiritual principalities and powers follows logically.

The Dharma Sūtras,[14] and following them, the later system-builders take the line that you must not seek in the Vedas for knowledge that can be had from the testimony of the senses or can be ascertained by the unaided reason. But when there is an explicit and clear direction in the scriptures imposing duties, which cannot be justified by logical reasoning, the direction has to be followed. Not all directions, however, are clear or explicit; nor could the profound intuitions of the seers with regard to ultimates be expected, owing to the very nature of the higher intuitive faculty, to fall into easily intelligible and consistent patterns. Thus both lawgivers and systematic thinkers had to deal with complex material, in the unravelling of which independent reasoning had necessarily to play a large part. "It is the result of this reasoned enquiry that we have to understand by *Śabda* as originally conceived in Indian philosophy", says Prof. Hiriyanna,[15]

(13) Schweitzer is however wrong in maintaining that *ahimsā* did not develop out of compassion but was the result of the philosophy of non-activity. For an examination of Schweitzer's criticism of Indian thought generally, see the third lecture, "India's Image in the West".

(14) See Āpastamba Dharma Sūtra, I-12-8 (Ārya-samayo-hyagṛhyamāṇa-kāraṇah)

(15) "Outlines of Indian Philosophy" (p. 179). I gratefully acknowledge my indebtedness to this book for many valuable suggestions.

in explaining the doctrine of *apauruṣeyatva* of the Veda. The same thing applies *mutatis mutandis* to the ascertainment of Dharma. The Pūrva Mīmāmsa science of exegetics is wholly devoted to this kind of enquiry.

It is laid down that, next to *Śruti* and *Smṛti*, guidance should be sought in *Śiṣṭācāra*, the practice of the *Śiṣṭas*, well-versed in the Dharma Śastras and in love with Dharma; and the last of the criteria is *Ātma-tuṣṭi*, the approval of the enlightened conscience of the individual himself.

Development of the enlightened conscience is indeed the nub of the matter. *Viveka*, as I started by saying, is reason guided and controlled by intuition. And *viveka* must be exercised in regard to every human concern, including the highest. The realisation in one's own life, as an inalienable personal experience, of the fundamental intuition of the Vedic seers — that Reality is one,[16] which the wise call by many names — is the consummation of the metaphysical quest. But one has a long way to go before that summit comes into view. From that metaphysical truth of the oneness of Reality, the Upaniṣad derived, as we have seen, the basic ethical law of *maitri*. The practical application of that law constitutes the whole field of Dharma. Sri Rama[17] showed, by his own example, that in the pursuit of Dharma, no less than in other matters, a man must follow the promptings of conscience. And reason can be a staff and guide in such difficult situations as he is faced with, only if it is exercised by a trained and disciplined mind.[18] An important element in that discipline is self-control, which comes only from self-awareness. *Pramāda*, the opposite of self-awareness, is the enemy of the ethical life and the exercise of reason in the service of the enlightened conscience.

Here, I would like to emphasise that word *pramāda*, for we shall meet with it, or the idea it conveys, again and again, wherever a lapse from ethical standards occurs in the whole range of epic and *purānic* literature. The Veda itself leads with the well-known injunction,

(16) R.V.I-164(46) (Ekam sad viprā bahudhā vadanti)

(17) See his replies to the arguments advanced by Kausalyā, Vasiṣtha, and above all, by Jābāli. (Ayodhyā Kānda, 21. 108, 111). All references to the "Ramayana" are to the M.L.J. edition.

18. This is what Sri Rama impresses on Vāli. And it is vividly brought out by the fact that, though Rama and Jābāli start from the same premisses, they arrive at exactly opposite conclusions, because Jābāli, in his eagerness to persuade Rama to go back to Ayodhyā, is not too particular as to the arguments he employs.

Satyān-na pramaditavyam;[19] and the word covers a whole spectrum of meanings, beginning with the simple primary significance of 'heedlessness' and comprehending that *pramāda* which is forgetfulness of the true nature of the Self, the sense it has in Sanatkumāra's teaching:[20]

Pramādam vai mṛtyum-aham bravīmi
Sadā-'pramādam amṛtatvam bravīmi

Balanced devotion to the Puruṣārthas as the surest way to happiness here and hereafter has long been part of the traditional wisdom of the country. There has been difference of opinion as to the priori-

(19) Taitt. I-11-1. Sri Sankara in his commentary points out that the use of the term 'pramāda' is intended to emphasise that untruth should not be uttered even by inadvertance or in forgetfulness. And commenting on "Kathā" vi-ll he observes that the duty of being "apramatta" is enjoined on one at the very beginning of the yogic discipline; for when "yoga" is completed and the senses have been steadied, the question of pramāda or carelessness will not arise at all. Here attention may be drawn also to the special importance attached to *viveka* in Sānkhya-Yoga.

(20) *Mbh* Udyoga Parva, 42-4. Sri Sankara renders "pramāda" here, as "pracyutih svābhāvika-brahmabhāvāt". This fall from the state of Brahman-consciousness is the cause of false knowledge (mithyā-jñāna). And Apramāda is true knowledge. Detailing the spiritual discipline to be followed for the control of the mind, the "Sanatsujāteeya" (Ch. II 21, 29) describes the eighteen faults that militate against control; apramāda lies in conscious and careful avoidance of those faults. It is a state of mind that is achieved by cultivating the six kinds of renunciation including "vairāgya", the most important of them; and "apramāda" in its turn leads to Satya, Dhyāna and other virtues that are the gateway to Self-realisation. The ethical qualities dealt with in this chapter are as conducive to social morality as to self control and self-purification.

In an interesting passage in Jose Ortegay. Gasset's "Concord and Liberty" (quoted by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan in "Recovery of Faith"), the author derives the need for wariness from the etymology of the word 'religion' itself. He writes: "To live not wantonly but warily—wary of a transcendant reality—is the strict meaning of the Latin word 'religiosus' and indeed the essential meaning of all religion. What a man believes and what he therefore regards as unquestionable reality constitutes his religion. 'Religio' does not derive from 'religare', to bind—that is, man to God. The adjective, as is often the case, has preserved the original meaning of the noun, and 'religiosus' stands for 'scrupulous', not trifling, 'conscientious'. The opposite of religion thus would be negligence, carelessness, indifference, laxity."

While this is, so far as it goes, a good definition of Pramāda in religion, it is necessary, not only to be wary of a transcendental reality, but to couple that wariness with "viveka", in which, as I have pointed out, there are two elements—an intuitive grasp, not of any reality, but of the One Reality, and secondly, reason. Ortega Gasset fights shy of the fact that the Reality of realities is not something purely subjective.

ties that should be observed, especially in the realm of public affairs, in case of conflict between Dharma and Artha; the writers on Dharma[21] taking the view that it should prevail, while those on Artha, like Kautilya, take the contrary view. But even the latter admit in theory the superiority of Dharma, though they point out that expediency cannot be wholly ruled out in politics and government, the decisive test being the good of the community.

The concept of **puruṣārthas** is, however, primarily a matter for the individual conscience. Here authority is practically unanimous that Dharma should prevail where there is a conflict of interest. The reason for this was once for all stated by Śrī Rama when he pointed out[22] that Dharma should be regarded as its own reward irrespective of consequences, but it is not incompatible with Artha and Kāma, as the greater includes the less. (And Śri Krishna declared the legitimacy of that Kāma which is not repugnant to Dharma.) Śrī Rama was no world-denying ascetic, as the residents of Ayodhyā testified,[23] when they, grieving over his departure to the forest, said, "If, capable as he is of savouring life to the full, he yet prefers to submit himself to privations, it is because of his paramount faith in Dharma." And Nārada,[24] expounding kingly duties to the newly crowned Yudhiṣtira, gave expression to the same philosophy when he said, "I hope you accumulate wealth, delight in Dharma, enjoy pleasures, and do not frustrate your natural and legitimate impulses (*manasca na vihanyase*)." That showed both understanding of human psychology and faith in the capacity of man, as a reasonable being, to maintain moral equilibrium.

But before one can follow Dharma, one must know it and then will it. The word has over the ages acquired many connotations. One definition is that "Dharma is what sustains" (*Dhāraṇat dharmamityāhuh*). In this respect it derives from the Vedic concept of *Ṛ*ta. A Rg-Vedic hymn declares,

[25]*Ṛtam ca satyam cābhīddhāttapaso-dhyajāyata.*

(21) K. V. Rangaswami Iyengar, Hindu View of Life, P. 178.

(22) Ram. II. 21 (57, 58)

(23) Ram. II. 33 (7)

(24) Mbh. II. 5 (17). The references to the Mahābhārata are to the Gorakhpur Edition.

(25) R. V. X. 190 (1). (C. H. Willson translates literally: "Turth (of thought) and truthfulness (of speech) were born of arduous penence".

Commenting on this, Sāyaṇa says, "Ṛta is truth as conceived in the mind, Satya is truth as it issues in speech; and the use of the word 'cha' twice is intended to indicate that the whole body of Dharma known from Śastra is also to be understood here. It is these three, Ṛta, Satya and Dharma, that were the first fruits of Brahmā's *tapas* before he started on the work of creation". Another hymn says, "It is truth that sustains the earth" (*Satyenottabhitā bhūmih*: R.V. X. 85-1).

Dharma may thus be taken as truth in action, which is identical with truth in thought and word; in other words, it stands for perfect integrity; and in the perfectly integrated individual, it issues as the spontaneous expression of personality. This is rather strikingly illustrated by the well-known incident in the *Mahābhārata* in which Kunti,[26] hearing her sons say that they had brought *bhikṣā*, told them, "Divide it among yourselves", and then found to her great consternation that what they had brought was not *bhikṣā*, but Draupadi, whom Arjuna had won in the *svayamvara*. She took her trouble to Yudhiṣṭira, and said, "I was inside the house, and not knowing what they had brought, I said without bestowing thought on what I was saying (*anavekṣya ...pramādāt*), 'All of you should share it'. Now you must find a way out of this tangle, so that I may not stand guilty of having uttered an untruth (anṛtra), and sin may not visit the daughter of Drupada." Yudhiṣṭira thought over it and told Arjuna, "You won her, and you should have her". Arjuna protested, saying that he would be guilty of *adharma* if he should do so without first giving his elder brothers, beginning with Yudhiṣṭira himself, the choice to wed her. When the idea was thus sown in the minds of the brothers, they all secretly coveted her. Yudhiṣṭira saw this, and being afraid of dissension cropping up among the brothers, said,[27] "We will all wed her together."

Now this might look like expediency run mad, not a deliberate decision by one whose mind prized Dharma above everything else. But Yudhiṣṭira stoutly defended his decision on *a priori* reasoning: "My tongue has never uttered an untruth, and my mind has never inclined to *adharma*. My mother spoke the word, and I have endorsed it, as to obey the mother is the highest law. Dharma is exceedingly subtle and difficult to comprehend. But there have been similar cases in the past, of a good woman marrying more than one man at the same time." And the great Vyāsa approved of the decision and stated

(26) Mbh. I-90, and I-94 (29 to 31).

(27) "Abravīt sahitān bhrātṛn mitho bheda-bhayānnṛpah": Nilakanta's comment on above: "bheda-bhayānnṛpa iti yasya Draupadī tasya itare śatravah syuh iti bhedah."

that there were supernatural factors that were responsible for the situation. He convinced the doubting Drupada by giving him suprasensuous vision to see for himself that he spoke the truth.

If you leave out the supernatural element, the thing worthy of note here is the implicit conviction of both Kunti and Yudhiṣtira that they could not, even in a fit of absent-mindedness, utter an untruth, because they had all their life thought, spoken and practised that truth which was the highest Dharma. This sublimity of conviction in the infallibility of the integrated man reminds one of Bhavabhūti's[28] memorable saying that the word of the seer comes first and meaning pants after it.

But the integrated individual is a rare phenomenon indeed; he is so rare, in fact, that one must look for him in the dreams of the poets and not in the dusty environs of the market-place. That was no doubt what Vyasa meant to convey, when he surrounded not only the above episode but almost every crucial happening in his great saga with the aura of the supernatural. Kuntī as a happy young girl without a care had all but unwittingly let herself in for the supreme sorrow of her life. It was the fatal curiosity to put to the proof Durvāsa's gift, the half-faith that led her to doubt a *ṛsi's* word, which was her *pramāda*.

Even the impeccable Yudhiṣtira succumbed to *pramāda* once, again with consequences that changed the whole face of Kaurava and Pāṇḍava history. I refer of course to his insatiate passion for gambling, which was in proportion to his lack of skill in the game. Yudhiṣtira no doubt maintained that he was actuated by principle in agreeing to the game of dice that Śakuni challenged him to. It was the game of kings; and he as a Kṣatriya could not, if challenged, refuse; besides he had made a vow that he would not decline. Now with regard to this so-called principle, it may be admitted that the Kṣatriya code of honour supports Yudhiṣtira's contention. But Manu[29] classifies gaming as one of the occupational failings of kings and denounces it in no uncertain terms, saying that it is a failing directly traceable to the inability to keep a tight rein over that kind of Kāma which is incompatible with Dharma. And in coupling it with drink and other forms of indulgence, which result in failure of self-control, Manu is in line with the Vedic seers; who, it is said, established seven rules of con-

(28) "Laukikānām hi sādhūnām artham vāg-anuvartate Rṣīṇām punarādyānām vācam artho-nudhāvati."

(29) Manu Smṛti VII (46.59).

duct (*maryādā*)[30] tabooing seven things, (including drink and gaming, according to Sāyaṇa,) on the ground that each of them was enough to land a man in great sin; the cumulative effect of the whole bunch is left to the imagination.

But, though Yudhiṣṭira had said at the time that he had no option but to accept the challenge, later, during their sojourn in the forest, he acknowledged,[31] when taunted by Bhīma, that he had done wrong in agreeing to the game, and that he had done so because he had wished to wrest the kingdom from the son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra. And thus, while confessing to a lapse—and thereby showing his true greatness — he proclaimed with more conviction than ever that his paramount duty was to truth and that, having promised that he would live in exile for thirteen years, he would not go back on his word.

Almost all the other great characters in the epic are thus caught napping, at one time or other; and this lapse (*pramāda*) in that vigilance which is the price of Dharma has endless consequences. As the great epic is the last word in the connoisseurship of Dharma, I must refer here to some of these incidents, even at the risk of seeming to tell a twice-told tale. At the very beginning, we are shown King Parīkshit[32] pursuing a stag; he misses his quarry, and asks the sage Śamīka whether he has seen it; the sage, under a vow of silence, does not reply. The king, roused to anger, picks up with his bow's end a dead snake and puts it on the shoulder of the silent rishi and walks away. What follows is well known. The king, who should have known better, had by heedlessness succumbed to an impulse of *ahamkāra*. Almost immediately he was sorry for his misdeed. But in businesslike fashion he set about fortifying himself in an island, hoping thus to thwart the curse of the sage's son. Takṣaka, on whom was laid the duty to end his life, was more than his match. He entered a lemon as a small worm, arranging to have the fruit presented to the king by respected anchorites who visited him in his island to bless him. When the king received the fruit he saw the small worm creeping out of it.[33] And then he did something

(30) R. V. X-5 (6) (Sāyaṇa suggests that gambling was one of the seven; but he also quotes another list from Nirukta, which does not include it.) Besides, a whole Sūkta of the Rg-Veda (X-34) is devoted to the havoc wrought by the game of dice, the gambler graphically describing his insatiate passion and his travails, and exhorting his hearers (as the god Savitar had exhorted him) not to play, but to devote themselves to agriculture, which would bring wealth and happiness.

(31) Mbh. III - 34

(32) Mbh. I-chapters 40 to 43. The Bhāgavata version of the story is different in material particulars. See the last lecture.

(33) Mbh. I - 43 (31 to 35)

that was far worse than his first fault had been. He was guilty of bravado in the face of death, which is not cheated. Half-piously, half jestingly he said, "The sun is at the setting, the time to fear the fang of Takṣaka is past. Let not the Brahmana's word be falsified. Let this little worm bite me, acting as Takṣaka's deputy." So saying, he applied it to his neck, and the next instant was reduced to ashes.

And by a quirk of fate his act involved many others in its endless consequences. Takṣaka had but done his duty, but the snakes had been cursed by their goddess-mother[34] in another context, and the serpents had to pay the forfeit in the snake-sacrifice that Janamejaya, Pariksit's son, started, to avenge his father's death. He was egged on to it by a Brāhmana Uttanka, a man of great penance and a rigorous but narrow sense of justice, who had vowed the destruction of the serpents, because when once he went about on lawful business in the nether-world, a snake, taking him unawares, ran away with a jewel which the Brahmana was bringing to his Guru's wife in fulfilment of a promise. The vicious circle was at last broken by the plea for patience and mercy voiced by another Brāhmana, Āstīka, and the wisdom and humanity shown by Janamejaya.[35]

Then there was Droṇa whose valour was equalled only by his austerity. But the insult of his boyhood friend Drupada rankled in his breast; and this initial fall from the state of mind a Brāhmana should cultivate had, again, ever-expanding consequences. When Droṇa offered himself as a tutor in the art of war to the Princes and told his tale of grievance against Drupada, the wise Bhīṣma told him, "Unstring your bow[36], teach these children the arts you excel in, and all that the Kurus have shall be at your disposal". That was a hint that he need not follow the warrior's profession to earn a living, and that sustained rancour was unbecoming one of his cloth. That hint should have been sufficient. But Droṇa could not free himself from his past. He wreaked his vengeance on Drupada, only to find later that this had goaded Drupada into practising austerities to get a son who, as a divine voice proclaimed at the time of his birth, was to be

(34) Mah. I - 3

(35) Mbh. I - 58. The moral—that non-violence should be practised, and one should not be punished for another's fault—is further reinforced by the story of Ruru and the water-snake, which preludes the Āstīka Parva. The repentance of Ruru, when his eyes are opened, and his distracted search for the Guru who had mercifully brought him enlightenment and then disappeared, are intended to show how the heart is cleansed by true understanding.

(36) Mbh. I - 130-77

the death of Droṇa. But Droṇa[37] accepted his fate with a stoic calm. He would not deny instruction in the art of war to his mortal foe Dṛṣṭadyumna.

And look at the case of Duryodhana. From the beginning a clear alternative is presented to him. Either he makes friends with the Pāndavas and lives happily, or he is destroyed by them, there is no third alternative. A whole series of episodes in which the bitter truth is brought home to him leads up to a reprimand[38] by Maitreya, the friend of Vyāsa in the presence of Dhrtarāṣtra, which he receives in supercilious silence in an attitude suggestive of contempt, though Vyāsa had warned the blind King that if his son slighted Maitreya's counsel, "he will assuredly lay upon him a curse that no one can annul." The dread curse falls on the luckless man, while his doting father stands by helpless.

So far we have been considering the problem of ascertaining what is the true Dharma and the obstacles that stand in the way of doing that. But it is not enough to know the Dharma, you should have the will to practise it. It was here that Dhṛtarāṣtra woefully failed. He had very clear and just ideas in regard to what was Dharma and what was Adharma; it was not for nothing that he was known as *Prajñācakṣus*. But a fatal weakness of will not only paralysed him at crucial moments, it bred a habitual hypocrisy that made it easier for his evil-minded son to exploit him, and for his friends like Śakuni and Karṇa to despise him and use him as a cover for their activities.

In Karṇa, on the contrary, we have a powerful will harnessing itself *con amore* to purposes that are destructive of all that he, in his better mind, values. His is an exceptionally gifted, generous nature corrupted by an implacable wrath. Homer's Achilles reminds us powerfully of Karṇa in this respect, though scarcely in any other; and the parallel goes so far that Karṇa alone of all the characters in the Mahābhārata, brings the gods into the fray, Indra intriguing on behalf of Arjuna, Sūrya trying in vain to save Karṇa from his own self-destructive altruism. Sūrya tells him that he must not give away the armour with which he was born, but Karṇa politely rebuffs him, saying that he cannot break his vow, whatever the consequences to himself. It is magnificent, but it is not war. Karṇa might have seen more clearly if he had reflected on the truth that Dharma is not easy to discover, and in any case it should not be so practised as to become

(37) Mbh. I. 137, and I - 166 (55-56)

(38) Mbh. III. 10.

self-defeating. He harbours an obscure but consuming anger against fate; it is the death-wish, nature turning in upon itself.

From the foregoing sketch of some of the chief characters, a few conclusions emerge. Dharma, the right thing to do at any moment, can be known if one is keen to know it and listens anxiously to that conscience whose voice is muffled in no one, however depraved. What drowns its voice is *pramāda*, that indifference, or even unwillingness to know, which may be prompted by a hundred motives, often but half-avowed even to one's own innermost self. In a man like Yudhiṣṭira, in whom zeal for Dharma has been fostered by the constant practice of the faculty of discrimination, that *viveka* which is the antithesis of *pramāda*, an occasional lapse proves no hindrance to his spiritual ascent. But with those who allow themselves to be blown about by any chance gust of passion, every backsliding makes recovery more difficult.

And when an evil thought lodges firmly in the mind, it is only a matter of time before it issues in an evil deed. For there is no such thing as being neutral in one's attitude towards Dharma. Life confronts one constantly with the imperative duty of making a choice between right and wrong. Occasionally, it may look as if Destiny took a hand in the game. But if fate is your own past tripping you up, there is little satisfaction to be found in laying the blame on it.

The Mahābhārata and the Purānas show endless virtuosity in illustrating the operation of the force of *Karma*. The *Karma* doctrine is perhaps the most outstanding contribution to ethical theory made by the ancient Indian thinkers who investigated the problem of human destiny in the spirit of *viveka*. Given the postulates of the immortality of the soul, and the existence of the moral order, *Ṛta* — metaphysical intuitions both, — reason had to find an explanation why that which was by its nature free appeared bound, and had also to show how it could regain its status. This it did by putting forward the hypothesis of *Māyā* on the one hand, and on the other, that of transmigration and the complementary doctrine of *Karma*, which declares that man reaps but as he sows. He is what he is because of the good and evil that he did in past lives. He has to work out that *Karma*.

But the *Karma* doctrine is not to be understood as determinism. While because of his past his impulses may prompt him to do what is wrong in a given situation, the *Gītā* teaches that if only he be awake and vigilant, anxious to ascertain and do what is right, his

higher self may prevail against the promptings of the lower. And enlarging on the theme in a very interesting chapter in the *Vana Parva*.[39] Draupadī makes out a strong case for initiative and positive action. If a man's efforts in a righteous cause prove of no avail, it is no blame to him, as destiny in the shape of his own past has prevailed. But a good deed is its own reward; as the Lord points out in the *Gītā*, "Even a little of this Dharma saves one from a great fear."

The world, according to the *Karma* doctrine, is the theatre in which the soul proves itself. Work is the law of life. So the question is, not how to avoid work — it cannot be done — but how to avoid doing the wrong work, or the right work wrongly. The Lord tells Arjuna in the *Gītā*, "Look upon your work as worship; but if you cannot do that, do your allotted work without hankering after the fruits thereof." That is *Karma Yoga* in a nutshell. Whether you do it for the greater glory of God, or because it is your duty, in either case it is not tainted by self-interest, and will not, therefore, queer your judgment or lead you to adopt wrong means for securing right ends. Thus you do your share of the world's work, but keep your inner poise, which is freedom. *Karma Yoga* shows the way to free oneself from the thraldom of Karma by opposing, to the promptings of our unregenerate ego, which is our *svabhāva*, a trained will that enables one to confront life's occasions with moral earnestness; for whatever the work that falls to us to do, we do it because it is *ours* (our *svadharma*) and because in the interests of the world it must be done.

'Work' here is interpreted by some as referring only to the duties enjoined by the *Varṇa Dharma*. While that interpretation no doubt suits the context, there is no necessity to restrict the scope of the teaching in this way; for the general tenor of the *Gītā* is to formulate a practical teaching that covers the vast variety of human temperaments and predicaments. That the world's work should be carried on in a spirit of selflessness is a teaching no less relevant to modern conditions. Here in India, it is increasingly the case that men no longer follow their fathers' vocations; and only too often are aptitude and opportunity ill-matched. That no man must work against the grain if his work is to have any value is a profound psychological truth. But it is no less true that even in countries where freedom of choice is theoretically unlimited, the vast majority of men no longer

(39) Mbh. III. 32

look upon work as a vocation; it is a job. Not all men can get the work they like or think would suit them. Having to choose a career in early adolescence, when a boy does not really know himself, the odds are even that a man becomes an engine driver or a town surveyor, all the schemes of vocational guidance notwithstanding.

But it is equally true that a man, unless he is a singular misfit, ends by liking the work he is doing, however casually he came into it. It has been said that in India marriage leads to love, and not the other way. That may be truly affirmed about most men's attitude to their work. And though the hereditary principle is gone, men do take a pride in their work and in doing it well. The old guild spirit is finding new ways of expressing itself, though it is often submerged in the organised ganging up which the chronic civil war in industry instigates. Men constantly form themselves into groups with a corporate character based on affinity of interest. The words 'professional code' and 'professional morals' are on everybody's lips. Here obviously is plenty of scope for the application of the *Gītā* teaching. We may have abolished God as an ancient superstition, but the scientist to whom it is the fashion to look up, claims to pursue truth for its own sake. To the extent that all work is done in this spirit, to that extent we shall succeed in transforming our society into a Dhārmic society.

It must not, however, be forgotten that the *Gītā* injunction aims primarily at re-making the individual; it proceeds on the assumption that the rule of righteousness in a society presupposes that it is composed of responsible, un-self-seeking individuals who have established harmony in their own lives. When a man is imbued with confidence that life has purpose, his zeal to know, will and practise Dharma should be enormously strengthened; and this should help him maintain unremitting vigilance against the temptations of sloth on the one hand and of heedless activity on the other, Which the *Gīta* compendiously describes under the terms *tamas* and *rajas* respectively. A society composed of such individuals will not offend against righteousness whether in dealing with its own members or with the outside world.

The practice of self-scrutiny, which I have been describing, is not a matter of painfully minding your step at every turn and asking yourself timorously whether you have transgressed this or that injunction of the scriptures. That is the erroneous impression that even sympathetic foreign students of Indian religion and philosophy are apt to carry away. The more a man exercises his moral thews and

sinews, the easier it should become for him to walk on the razor edge of self-knowledge. The Gurukula system of education was founded on the recognition of this truth. The education of the whole man was its object. It could not be started too early, and it was a long process. It was a conscious preparation for the practice of *Svadharma*[40] in a functional society, and kept in view the simple truth that race horses and dray horses cannot be trained in the same way. As to the factors that had a bearing on the training, it was recognised that both nature (*svabhāva*) and nurture can influence the shaping of a man's moral personality no less than his intellectual development. The teacher under whose care the boy grew up could study and understand him as few else, including his own parents, could. And by helping him to know himself and constantly fight against his own instinctive and irrational urges, he armed him with the best safeguard against the twin evils of *pramāda* and *adharma*.

It is interesting to find Prof. Carstairs, in his Reith Lectures for 1962-3, making a suggestion for dealing with the malaise of modern western youth, which is as unexpected as it is refreshing, coming as it does from one who shares the traditionalist outlook so little that he maintains, for example, that chastity is an overrated virtue. He thinks that the phenonenon of Teddy boys calls for some such training in self-awareness as in old India was imparted by the *guru* under a system of personal guidance.

Because the pupil's training was invested with such importance the young boy was inducted into it by the sacrament of *upanayana*. In regard to this *samskāra* I would like to invite your attetion to certain observations made by Heinrich Zimmer, which show an understanding of the psychological value of it which is rare among western critics. In his interesting exploration of the significance of symbols in a work entitled *The King and the Robber*, he writes, of Abu Kassim whose worn-out slippers dogged him like fate, "He is one of those who will not let themselves pass with the passing of time, but clutch themselves to their own bosom and hoard the self which they themselves have made. They shudder at the thought of the consecutive periodic deaths that open out, threshold after

40. The *Śatapatha-Brāhmana*, in a section exalting Vedic study, points out that the duty of the Brahmana is to perfect himself and the world, and for this he must devote himself zealously and unremittingly to study regarding it as sacrifice. If he does this, the Veda is prepared to overlook minor lapses on his part, such as indulgence in the use of unguents, etc. V. 7. (Eggeling Vol. IV. pp. 99-101).

threshold, as one passes through the room of life, and which are life's secret. They cling avidly to what they are—what they were." The Indian *āśrama* scheme, he points out, "helps to ease men out of this Peter Pan mentality." "Civilizations like India, founded on a corner-stone of magic, help their children through these necessary transformations that men find it so hard to accomplish from within. They do this by sacraments". It is not necessary to accept Zimmer's opinion that sacrament savours of magic or hypnotism, in order to see the validity of the view that a child grows into a man only when you treat him as a man.

That the reverence for the *guru* did not stand in the way of independence of judgment and capacity for reflection is shown by the numerous references to the *guru-Śishya* relationship in Indian sacred and secular literature from the Veda downwards. Thus in the famous Eleventh *Anuvāka* of the first chapter of the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* the Achārya impresses on the pupil who has completed his studies, that he should not blindly imitate the conduct of his teacher, but should only follow him when he is right; that whenever he is confronted with a dilemma arising in the observance of Dharma or in following his occupation, he should be guided by the practice of those great Brāhmaṇas worthy of respect, who are experienced in discrimination, are kind-hearted and in love with Dharma.

The pupil stood in such intimate relation to his teacher that codes like Āpastamba's[41] enjoin on him the duty of reasoning with him in private, should he be guilty of a moral lapse or of failure in prescribed duties (*niyamātikrama*), and do his best to wean him by gentle pressure. The pupil was also permitted to seek a new teacher if he found that the equipment of the man under whom he was studying was limited. Manu expressly declares that one should zealously learn even from a man of a lower *varna* if he should be master of a *Sūta-vidyā*, and the highest of Dharmas, Moksha Dharma itself, even from a chandāla,[42] Above all, though the inspiration and the living example of the *guru* was, as shown already,

41. Āpastamba Dharma Sutra I.5. 25 to 28.

42. Manusmṛti Ch. II. 238. One of his commentators Kulluka Bhatta, would restrict the meaning of 'Sūta vidyā' to Gāruda vidyā (cure for poisons) and such like; but Medhātithi and others say that such secular subjects as Nyāya, Poetry and drama can be learnt from men of lower castes; but curiously enough, while Medhatithi would interpret 'param dharma' as worldly widom' ('loukikadharma'), Kulluka sharply criticises him for thus debasing the word.

highly esteemed and regarded as indispensable, it was but one of the factors that went into the education of the pupil. The *guru* was by definition the dispeller of ignorance; he did not pump wisdom into him. but helped to remove the obstacles to the *Ātman*, whose nature is intelligence, shining forth in him. The pupil did not absorb knowlege like a blotting-pad. An old *sloka* quoted in the commentaries on the *Sanatsujāteeya* (Ch III-13) says that knowledge is the result of four factors, the *guru*, the student's own intelligence, his engaging in fruitful discussion with his fellow-students, and the power of time, which brings about intellectual maturity and depth of understanding.

It is often assumed that, as the *aśrama dharmas* and the *varṇa dharmas*, with which the Dharmaśāstras are so largely taken up, regulate mainly the lives of the first three castes, little attention was paid to the moral uplift of the vast majority even within the Aryan fold. This is to overlook the nature of the ethical ideals comprehended under the term *Sāmānya-dharma* and the importance attached to them. Manu[43] declares that *ahimsā*, the practice of truth, 'non-stealing', purity and control of the senses are incumbent not only on all the *varṇas*, but also on the numerous mixed castes; and they are rated as the highest virtues. Elsewhere it is impressed that even in extreme suffering a man should not use cruel words[44] that would lacerate another's heart, nor do any act that would cause him affliction. These moral precepts were in fact regarded as elementary, and so obviously conducive to the mutual benefit of the members of society that many writers like Āpastamba did not think it necessary to lay them down in express terms. That their works seem to be excessively preoccupied with rules of ritual purity and ceremonial tabu, is due to the fact that they are concerned mainly with those matters that are beyond the reach of the senses and in regard to which alone *śruti* (the revealed word) lays down injunctions to regulate man's conduct.

Though from the scope of the Smrtis the last two of the *āśramas*, that of the *vānaprastha* and the *sannyāsin* are not excluded, they do not loom large. The lawgiver's chief preoccupation is with the regulation of the life and conduct of the student and the householder. Indeed Āpastan ba stoutly maintains that the householder, being the linchpin of society, is more important than the *sannyāsin*.

It was, however, open to every man, irrespective of his *varṇa* or social status, to strive for the highest spiritual attainment; though

43. Manusmṛti Ch. X. 63.

44. Manusmṛti Ch. II. 6.

different disciplines were provided for different types, and these had to be adhered to. It was repeatedly affirmed that every human being could achieve the *Summum bonum*. Take the institution of sacrifice for example, which is central to the Hindu scheme of life. Vedic sacrifice has largely fallen into desuetude these days. But even in its palmy days, in the period of the *Brāhmaṇas*, it became a mystical rite which conceived of man as identified with his sacrifice and thereby with the Divine Nature.[45] It was this mysticism of knowledge that laid the foundation for the metaphysical formulations of the *Upaniṣads*. But the sacrifice was also looked upon as worship offered to the Divine Person; thus in the *Bhāgavata* the sage-king Bharata is described as developing intense love for Vāsudeva by looking upon the gods invoked in the sacrifice as so many limbs of the Supreme Lord. In both these views of the sacrifice, the mystical element implicit in the notion of sacrament was marked, and so the sacrifice was naturally regarded as the province of the 'twice-born'.

But the devotional element was not less valuable, and its appeal was universal. Hence simple *bhakti* without mystical overtones developed and established its sway over the masses as the result of adapting the ideas of sacrifice to the universal hunger to give what you value to that which you love. And we have Sri Krishna declaring in the *Gītā* that by offering to the Lord what comes of His bounty (which was what the gods did, when they sacrified the Puruṣa to Himself, as described in the *Puruṣa Sūkta*), even if it be only a trifle, a fruit or flower, a leaf or water, the worshipper lays himself open to the inflow of the Divine Grace. And from this simple idea again developed the great schools of Bhakti mysticism.

All these disciplines, Jñana, Bhakti and Karma, alike postulated *chitta-śuddhi*, the purification of the inner man, as an indispensable preparation for the more strenuous life, which the spiritual athletes,

45. See Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa, XI. i.8.6. And in XI. ii.6.13 and 14 it is pointed out that the sacrfice of the self is the highest of sacrifices, the offering of sacrifice to the gods being of far less worth. "A self-offerer doubtless is he who knows, 'This my (new) body is formed by that body of yajña, the sacrifice, this, my new body, is procured thereby'. And even as the snake frees itself from its skin, so does he free himself from his mortal body, from sin. .....A god-offerer doubtless is he who knows, 'I am now offering sacrifice to the gods, I am serving the gods'; such a one is like an inferior who brings tribute to his superiors, or like a man of the people who brings tribute to the King; verily he does not win such a place (in heaven) as the other:"(Eggeling's translation.) See also S.P.B. XIV.iii 2.1: 'The sacrice is the self of all beings and all gods".

always and everywhere a small minority, must undergo before they could embark on the quest of the Self. The need for an ethical discipline that would bring about this purification was accepted not only by the Vedānta but also by other Darśanas, such as the Pūrva-mīmāmsa, which do not posit a God. The ethical programme compendiously described as 'Yama' and 'Niyama' comprehended not only virtues that aimed primarily at self-reform and self-improvement, but also those that were un-self-regarding and that aimed at promoting the good and happiness of others. They laid great stress on the elimination of the ego; and the insistence in this regard on ceremonial purity and observances obviously derived from the mystical value of sacraments. But it is worth emphasising that the virtues of *ahimsā* etc., above referred to as incumbent on all men, were regarded as no less indispensable for him who would scale the heights of spirituality. And the *vairāgya* on which the Vedānta lays such stress is not an atavistic turning away from life, but a stable and equanimous relationship established towards it. As one writer well puts it, "it is pre-eminently an attitude of peace which does not imply passivity."

This is well brought out in the famous section of the *Bṛhad-Āranyaka Upaniṣad*[46] which relates the legend of Prajapati instructing the gods to practise self-control, the Asuras to cultivate compassion, and man to learn charity. The gods here stand for power, and power must be kept in hand by self-control if it is not to be destructive. The Asuras stand for strength, and strength must be tempered by sweetness. And man, whose besetting sin is that clutching at the heart of emptiness which is greed, must learn to give, and thus open himself out to all the gentle winds of heaven.

The highest ethical qualities, comprehended under the term 'Ātma-guṇa' (which has been translated as 'inner ethical virtue') are spoken of as positive virtues that must be constantly practised in order to put to rout the debilitating (*bhūta-dāhīyān*) impulses that lie deeply embedded in the psyche as a result of past *karma*. Āpastamba[47] gives a long list of them, and so do some of the other *Sūtras* and *Smṛtis*. They include forbearance, emotional poise, uncovetousness, discriminating awareness, modesty, regard for others' feelings, truthfulness, continence, the abjuring of slander and envy, the sharing of one's substance with those in need, renunciation, to the limit of one's capacity, of the hankering after pleasure, straightforwardness, gentleness, control of the mind and the senses, dignity, kind-

46. Br. U. V.2.

47. A.D.S.I - 23.6.

ness, contentment, and above all, friendliness towards all creatures (*sarva-bhūta-avirodhan*), more commonly described as *ahimsā*. The list is a long one, but all the items boil down to the three crucial virtues emphasised in the Upaniṣad. of self-control, generosity and compassion. And it will be seen that they include not merely self-regarding virtues, but also others that are the best guarantee of social morality. And even the virtues that are primarily to be cultivated for the sake of self-improvement are of such a character that they must loose the bonds of egotism, and make it progressively easier for the individual to identify himself with the interests of the community and, without losing his balance, to work to the extent of his capacity for the general good.

The chief obstacle to this enlarging of one's sympathies is the sense of separateness that finds its extremest expression in *lobha*, greed and miserliness, which the *Īśāvāsya*[48] regards as the principal obstacle to Self-realisation, and which Manu[49] condemns as being far worse than all the evils arising from *kāma* and *krodha* in conjunction. His words in this context remind one of Shakespeare:[50]

> **This avarice**
> Sticks deeper, grows with more pernicious root
> Than summer-seeming lust, and it hath been
> The sword of our slain kings,

Dayā and *abhaya*, which the Lord enjoined on Kardama Prajāpati,[51] sum up the whole duty of man to his fellows. And *abhaya* is regarded pre-eminently as the indispensable attribute of the *sannyāsin*. That the *sannyāsin* may play a positive and beneficent role in society, is shown by the record of Śrī Śankara himself, of the sage Vidyāranya, and of many an other *jīvan-mukta* who has practised the ideal of *loka-sangraha* that Śrī Krishna taught by example and precept.

From a superficial reading of our epic and *purāṇic* literature, it is often concluded that Hindu ethics teach that, when a man feels that his salvation would be imperilled, he should not hesitate to save his soul by sacrificing another's welfare or happiness. Hopkins,[52] whose

48. Isāvāsya Up. 1.

49. Manu-Smṛti Ch. VII.49.

50. Macbeth: IV.iii. 84-7.

51. Śri Bhāgavata III. 21-31.

52. Hopkins : Ethics of India (P. 218)

approach is normally one of intelligent sympathy, is so thoroughly upset by what he regards as Śri Rama's callousness towards Sītā in repudiating her that he waxes extremely sarcastic. The criticism ignores the fact that Rama suffered no less than Sītā did when he acted thus. But Rama acted as he did because he was convinced that it was his duty to put the public interest before private feelings. Śri Rama was in the great Indian tradition in that he had no use for sentimentality. But the sensitive tenderness that goes with the fullest self-awareness, which is but another name for integrity, finds no more sublime expression in the whole range of literature, sacred or secular, than in the character of Śri Rama.

Having completed this brief survey of Indian ethics, we are now in a rather better position to clarify our ideas of *viveka* and *apramāda*. *Viveka*. as I said, is reason guided by intuition. Intuition is the combined result of *samskāra*, devoutness of spirit strengthened by the study of the scriptures, and meditation. In order to harness reason effectively in its service, it is not sufficient to train the intellect. Self-control must be taught, and it is not to be had without self-awareness. Growth in self-awareness is what the ethical programme conducive to *chitta-śuddhi* mainly aims at. And it requires, too, the constant exercise of *apramāda* or vigilance. A mind thus disciplined not only develops an active love of virtue, it grows in spiritual stature as the highest un-self-regarding ethical qualities become second nature to it. What began as an act of faith becomes self-realised truth, and the circle of experience is completed.

It is not for nothing that *Śruti*, in the calculus of *ānanda* that the *Taittirīya*[53] provides, equates the bliss of the *Śrotriya akāmahata* (the man who has studied the Veda and is free from desire) with every level of happiness ranging from that of man to that of Brahmā. The passionless serenity of the sage has a positiveness of content which can be measured by no measuring rod.

We have so far been discussing the ethical principles and rules of conduct that were evolved over the ages, and their image that we find in literature, law and institutions. What was their actual impact on society at large? How did they affect its quality and texture? That society was no doubt divided both horizontally and vertically. But there was no failure of communication between the different sections. Each lived its own life, had its special rights and responsibilities, and

53. Taittirīya Up. II.8. 1 to 4. Also see Br. Up. IV.3.33.

in its own sphere, enjoyed real autonomy. But they lived a common life too; and to that common life all sections made their contribution. If the privileges tapered down as we went down the social scale, so did the austerity of life and rigour of discipline diminish too. The rigidity of caste did not stand in the way of unregenerate human nature breaking in, as is testified to by the emergence of numerous mixed castes. And often sectarian affiliations cut across caste divisions.

Besides, the law-givers regulated only certain areas of men's conduct. As to custom, and usage based on regional and other differences, they were part of the folk tradition. Āpastamba, for example, says that these must be learnt from women and from the wise men of other varṇas too. Women were supposed to keep to the home, but custom was early invested with the force of law, and they could be seen in public on numerous social occasions, and partake in the festivity and merry-making without the least trace of constraint. Likewise, during fairs and festivals and pilgrimages, caste rigidities were considerably relaxed, as any one who has witnessed the car festivals in the great temples of South India will recall.

The temple, in particular, was consciously designed as a focus of the corporate life of the community at the highest level. There was an esoteric as well as an exoteric side to temple-worship, but they combined to radiate an atmosphere of holiness in which everybody irrespective of birth or status could bask, feeling that they were partaking in the great mystery. Music and the other arts, employed primarily in the service of the temple, derived their vitality from their popular appeal; music, for instance, did this by adopting folk-tunes, while the high standards that art as *sādhana* was bound to maintain, served to refine and elevate the popular taste. I shall deal in my next lecture with the great task of disseminating culture performed by the two epics, the *Purāṇas*, and the works in the local languages that they inspired. But it is worth noting that no other culture has exploited the *genius loci* with such virtuosity, the *sthala-purānas* and the *aitihyams* managing to invest every nook and corner with a sanctity of its own, which is not the less emotionally effective because legend does not stand the cold scrutiny of history. Rama and Krishna and Naṭarāja have for centuries been perpetually recreated for themselves by numerous congregations, and are so inseparably bound up with their hopes and fears and exaltations, that they have in a real sense taken their abode on earth.

This spiritual fraternity, which is the circumambient ether in which our diversities are reconciled, has been built up by the conscious

work of numerous gifted minds drawn from all strata. They were the transmitters of culture, but their work would have been of no avail if the mass was not of such a kind as to respond to the leaven. Some of the most abstruse philosophic ideas that the mind of man has thrown up, are in this country the common property of the masses, and what is more, they are not copy-book maxims, but felt truths that profoundly influence thought and conduct. This pervasive penetration of the popular psyche by abstract ideas is due to the national flair for living the inner life, constantly working over and mulling in the mind ideas that do not yield their secret at the first blush. The mind, energised by a great act of faith, can by incessant meditation and discrimination discover ever new facets of truth.

It is from this profound reflectiveness that the sober contentment of the common man derives. Those who speak of the devitalising effect of our religion and philosophy, with its supposed world-negation and pessimism, have simply not felt the infectious cheerfulness of the average holiday crowd. And they cannot understand whence it derives its habit of tolerance, its reliance on Providence, and its matter of fact devotion to the daily grind. The **Brāhmaṇa**, in the old order, was committed to a life of plain living and high thinking. Giddy pleasure was not for him. But he was not called to be a hermit either. Chapter IV of Manu[54] gives a picture of his day to day life, which may well provide a model to any self-respecting member of society. "Do not cater to ignoble tastes to earn a living. Remember that enough is as good as a feast, and cultivate contentment, the key to happiness, by restraining the tendency to accumulate. Devote yourself to the scriptures, and also prosecute such studies as would sharpen the intellect, bring you a sufficiency of the world's goods, or would be conducive to a healthy life; for it is constant study that brings clarity and sure knowledge and helps to fashion the mind as a fine and serviceable instrument. Don't give way to despondency if fortune should fail you: and don't give up. To the last day of life a man must be keen on prosperity. Speak what is true, speak what is pleasing, speak not the truth so as to offend. Say always, 'Life is good', even under difficulties. Do not needlessly antagonise others, avoid controversies. Above all, remember that dependence on others is misery, freedom from dependence happiness". There were other injunctions of a more strenuous kind for the special discipline of the **Brāhmaṇa**. But the verses I have rendered show how the life of all, gentle and simple alike, was oriented towards the same goal. This ideal of

54. Manusmṛti Ch. IV, see particularly verses 11, 12, 19, 137, 138, 139, 160.

simple and purposeful living derives from the Veda which, in uttering an injunction[55] to priest and sacrificer, was also uttering a benediction on an organic society that looked upon life as a grand co-operative enterprise:

[55]*Sam gacchadhvam sam vadadhvam sam vo manaṃsi jānatām.*
Samānī va ākūtih samānā hṛdayāni vah
Samānam-astu vo manō yathā vah su sahāsati.

55. R. V. X. 191 (2 and 4). "Get together, speak with one voice, express agreed sentiments; be united in your aims, in your hearts and minds, so that your union may be fruitful and pleasant."

The Atharva Veda has an equally striking sūkta (III.30) on the need for unity of the family, the linchpin of society.

LECTURE II

THE RHYTHM OF LIFE

In the first lecture, dealing with culture as manifested in our ethics and social life, I sought to show that the intuitions of the seers were mediated to the understanding, and became part of a man's spiritual possession, by a harmonious combination of mental and moral disciplines, the special aim of the latter being the achievement of self-control. But I also indicated that self-control was not to be gained by running away from the world or taking a negative view of man's responsibilities. In this lecture I hope to show that it was realised that, as the self-regarding impulses receded, there would come about simultaneously an expansion of the capacity for sympathy[1] and for imaginative identification with all life. Literature and the arts strengthened these generous impulses and voiced forth the aspirations they awakened; and in the practice of religion, culminating in the metaphysical quest, those aspirations found their rich fulfilment.

In literature intuition takes the particular form of creative imagination, while in the place of reason—the other constituent of *viveka* —we have the kind of reflectiveness that goes with deep sensibility. No poetry in the world has given more poignant expression to man's sensitive apprehension of beauty in all its forms. Indian man hungers for it, but his delight in that perfection which shadows forth the beauty that is at the heart of the universe, will not allow him to lay violent hands on it. Dusyanta[2] yearns for the flower on the bough,

1. Nīlakantha Dīksitha, who was a poet as well as a devotee, prayed that he might be given the gift of detachment, but if that was not to be, the capacity to comprehend all the world in his love; see his Vairāgya Sataka 77.

2. Śākuntalam II.10 and IV.9.

untouched by man's hands, the flawless gem, the non-pareil beauty of Śakuntalā. But Śakuntalā herself, with a woman's instinct for the holy, will not denude the trees of their tender shoots, though she loves to deck herself. The Ushas hymns of the Rg. Veda[3] are deservedly famous for the child-like purity of vision and the spontaneity of delight inspired in the Vedic poet by one of the loveliest sights in creation. I will render here a few Rks selected from seven hymns.

"Daughter of the sky, dawn shines bright, proclaiming her greatness by her splendour; she scatters our enemies and the unwelcome darkness, and lights up the paths".

"Be thou our benefactress, O friend of humanity."

"Her lovely, lucent rays, propitious to the discharge of our duty by the gods, flood the skies."

"She comes from afar, daughter of the day, protectress of all things that are, kindling the minds of men."

"She comes, spouse of the Sun, hymned by the seers, she who commands all the wealth of the worlds and cuts down the lives of men."

"She rides forth effulgent in her myriad-shaped chariot drawn by many-coloured horses, showering largesse on her devotees".

"She cleaves the darkness, and the kine go forth gladly."

"Thy rays herald the rising sun; thou art like the good woman who sticks faithfully to her wayward husband, not like the masterless gadabout".

"She stays by the sun, as a young woman beautifully adorned stands by her husband's side, inspiring all things to bestir themselves."

"She with her radiance, which is as the eye of the universe, leads forth the sun, filling him with splendour, to further the purposes of all created things."

"She rises in the east bringing forth sun and sacrifice and life, and dispelling the hateful darkness."

"We with hymns and offerings awake thee, O dawn, make the earth fruitful for us."

"We know thee by Thy light, O dawn, as we knew the bull by its bellowing."[4]

"This ever-youthful dawn, going forth before her spouse unashamed, like a froward woman, shows the way to the sun and sacrifice and fire."

"O goddess, who wardest off the darkness and makest all the world manifest and wakeful, may we be dear to thee as sons are dear to their mother."

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3. R. V. VII 75-1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7; 76:3; 77-1,3; 78-3,5.

R.—V. 79-4; 80-2; 81-4.

From the Vedic poet let us turn to Vālmīki. Having heard the dawn praised, let us hear him sing the night[5].

> "Having ushered in the blessed night, the sun has set. The birds that had ranged far and wide for food during the day are now ensconced in their nests, chattering before they fall sleep. The sages, having taken their bath, are returning in a body, their tree-bark wet, their water-pot full. From the fire into which oblations have been duly poured rises the dun smoke, of the colour of the pigeon's neck, and drifts before the wind. The trees, though almost bare, look like masses of darkness at this distance, as the light is gone. The creatures of the night are abroad, the pet deer of the *śramas* lie down by the side of the sacred altars. Night is come, my Sita, adorned by the stars. The moon rides in the sky covered with its shimmering mantle. Go to Rama, you have my blessing. I am pleased with your charming tale."

The speaker is Anasūyā, which shows how naturally poetry comes to the heart purified by *tapas*.

I have selected these passages, out of hundreds equally beautiful, in order to illustrate some of the distinctive characteristics of our poetry. To appreciate them properly, it is necessary to remember that the evanescence of life is no less constantly present to the mind of the poet than its loveliness. Thus Sri Rama observes, "Men rejoice when the sun rises, and when the sun sets; but they do not realise how life slips by. They delight in the perpetual renewal of the seasons with their freshness; but the revolution of the seasons also speed all creatures towards their doom."[6] The same thought as was uttered by the Vedic seer, who did not find the dawn less beautiful because she cuts down the lives of men.

Life waxes and wanes, says the Indian poet, but beauty abides. The wise man does not grieve over the inevitable. The ṛṣi Kavasha,[7] consoling the son of a dead king whom he had greatly loved, tells him, "If I had power over life and death, Mitrātithi should be living today. But no one, transcending the limits laid down by the gods, lives a hundred years. So give up grief, knowing there is no help". Almost in the same words the sage Vasiṣtha consoles Bharata and Śatrughna as they mourn their dead father. Not only is death a certainty; life is full of ups and downs. The simile, the wheel of fortune, favourite with the later poets, is already to be found in the Veda (R.V. X. 117.5.).

5. Ram. II. 119 (3 to 10).

6. Ram. II 105 (24, 25).

7. R.—V. X. 33 (8 and 9). "No one lives a hundred years, passing the limits fixed by the gods." (C. H. Wilson's translation).

But the poet is not plagued by charnel-house thoughts. Not that he prefers like the epicure to live in the moment. To him beauty is timeless; he sees the world in a grain of sand. A thing perfectly formed, be it a flower, the wings of a butterfly, or a polished verse, flashing back iridescent hues of truth from a thousand facets, redeems life, with all its limitations, for the *rasika*, giving him *rasāsvāda*, a foretaste of *Brahmāsvāda*. The dawn, for the Vedic poet, is the wife that remains faithful under every provocation, the glowing *sahadharmacāṛin.*, even the modern young woman—not so modern after all, apparently—who leads the way, while her spouse trails behind her obediently. But when Anasūyā speaks of the moon amid the stars trailing his mantle of light, she thinks instinctively, and we think with her, that the moon and the stars prefigure the harmony that holds Rama and Sītā together; and with infinite tact the poet makes Anasūyā simply say, "Go to Rama".

It is this sense of intimacy with nature in all her variability that has imbued the Indian consciousness with an innate feeling for the rhythm of life. Its attitude towards the external world was not one of possessiveness or domination. For all that life was not a bed of roses, it was a friendly universe that one lived in: "if one should only live a hundred years one can know happiness," as Sita said. And the self-forgetful *ānanda* that comes from aesthetic contemplation may be invoked by the skilful deployment of factors of experience which are not themselves normally regarded as having aesthetic associations; the list of *rasas* includes the horrible and the disgusting.

Beauty, like the *Átman* of which it is indeed a facet, is not created; it is discovered. The reader gets from poetry a joy that is in proportion to his capacity for enjoyment.[8] We cannot go into the technica-

8. An English writer observes that something like this is happening in modern artistic theory and practice in the West. "The reader is expected to co-operate with the artist at a high level before any artistic effect can be achieved. The artist, relieved of part of the burden of communication, can then aim at certain effects, not otherwise so easily achieved, if achieved at all — dramatic effects of symbolic suggestion, of the movement of thoughts and feelings, of bewilderment. In other words, the work of art may become process, not product. The work is less finished, because finish is not wanted; the work must go on in the reader's mind." See also William Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, p. 62, (Peregrine Books).

But there is a big difference between this trend detected in contemporary European writing, and the handling by the Samskrit poet of Rasa-Dhwani. The surface-meaning of great poetry in Samskrit is never obscure; and the thrill of the imaginative onset is immediate; it is then that the process of reflection caused by suggestion begins in the reader's mind.

lities of the Rasa Sāstra here. But the central theme of Indian aesthetics is that the joy that poetry gives is not something extraneous to us. It is lodged in the depths of our being, and only waits for the spark of poetic fire to kindle it. This delighted recognition of beauty was described by Kālidāsa in a memorable verse as a sweet unease, an intimation of immortality, a tantalising glimpse of former happy states in births long past (*Śāk.* V.2). The soul has in it all things beautiful and terrible. In this it partakes of the ineffable nature of the Divine, which Kālidāsa so finely suggested when he made the gods say to Vishnu, "Thou are unborn and yet dost take birth; Thou hast no desires, but Thou killest Thy foe; Thou sleepest and yet art wide awake; who can know the truth of Thee?" (*Raghu* X.24). But the poet's art can strike at will a deep and rich note out of its many-toned harmony. The apprehension of beauty is an instantaneous experience; the impact comes with a thrill, and sets up endless ripples of suggestion in the receptive and cultivated mind.

See how the carnage of the battlefield is invested with poetry in this sustained metaphor — a speciality of Vālmīki's. It pictures the terrible river of blood that flowed when Prahasta battled against the Vānara host. "That battle-ground covered with blood looked like the earth spread with *palāśa* flowers in spring. The great river of blood that swept past with its multitude of the killed, as freshes wash off eroded mud-banks, and with its load of broken weapons that looked like uprooted trees, hasted towards the ocean of death; it had liver and viscera for mud, fat for foam, and entrails for floating moss; it roared with the distraught cries of those in pain. That river, which men of no mettle could not hope to ford, the Vānaras and the Rākṣasas manfully breasted, as the lords of the elephant herd stampede through the lotus pool red with pollen."[9] See how the horror is redeemed by that cheering recollection amidst death of the glory of spring, and that brief tribute to the heroic in man.

The simile, in the hands of the masters, is not a decorative device. It lights up the thing compared from unsuspected angles, and in the process we learn something new about the object of comparison too. Look at this tremendous line:

Maivam bhūs-tyaja saṁtāpam kṛtaghna iva sauhṛdam.

"Abjure grieving as the ingrate repudiates all thought of friendship."[10] The impact of it on the reader's mind is all the more powerful because

9. Ram. VI.58.28 to 33.

10. Ram. VI.22.

the words come from Sugrīva, who tells Rama that he should not allow himself to be unmanned by grief for the lost Sītā when the hour calls for the hardening of his heart against the foe. What is called for, it is suggested, is a deliberate act ruthlessly setting aside thoughts that might weaken the will. And that, incidentally, throws a lurid light on ingratitude too. The ingrate sins, not by *pramāda*, but from cold calculation; and now you see why it has been said that there is expiation for all other sins but not for ingratitude.

Or consider this other simile:

"You ravish my heart, dear one, as the river in spate washes off the banks."[11]

It is Sītā, timorous and suspicious, who reluctantly admits to Hanumān that she is drawn to him despite herself, as the river-bank, hugged by the current, allows itself to be scoured off, because it cannot resist that warm friendliness. That poet, you may be sure, was both the bank and the swift current when he struck that spark which lights up the mysterious tie that binds man to nature.

I spoke of suggestion. Now suggestion, to be effective, must act on a sensitive, observant and well-stocked mind. Look again at the Vedic passages about the dawn, and Anasūyā's snapshot of the night. For the reader who knows both, the beauty of the epic description would be considerably enhanced by the recollection of the Vedic parallel. If the dawn is by turns a faithful wife, a comely matron, and a giddy young bride, so we recollect, with a shock of delight, is Sītā; did she not say she would stick to Rama, as the shadow to the sun, and that she would go happily before him removing sharp thorn and rank grass from the path;[12] and is she not being at this very moment invited by Anasūyā to adorn herself with the celestial *anga-rāga*, and being praised by her as the ideal *sahadharmiṇī*? If the Vedic seer and Valmiki both chose thus to dwell lovingly on the infinite variety and charm that a good woman can bring into a life-long loving partnership, it was not an accidental coincidence. It was the genius of the race speaking, as it spoke in Kālidāsa when he made Aja lament Indumatī, the lost companion of his life:

Gṛhiṇī sacivah sakhī mithah priya-śiṣyā lalite kalā-vidhau.

And talking of Kalidasa, how can one refrain from saying a word about his mastery of *rasa dhvani*? He could raise a ringing echo in the mind as simply and straightforwardly as in the appeal to

11. Ram. V.34.20.

12. Agratas-te gamiṣyāmi mṛdgatī kuśa-kantakān (Ram. II 27-6.)

the rain cloud that he chase as his messenger to carry a word of hope to his spouse:

"Thou art the refuge of the stricken, O cloud." (*Megha* I-7).

Or he could send ripple after ripple coursing through the reader's mind by such a *śloka* as this (*Śāk*-I-22), which Ānandavardhana praises for its opulence of delicate hints. It indeed opens out vista upon vista of suggestion, the figure of speech being strictly subordinated to the *rasa*. Duṣyanta seeing the bee hovering about the frightened Śakuntalā, humming, as it were, in her ears, and drinking at her lips, envies its freedom from the inhibitions that beset civilised man. "We are bemused by our endless debating of pros and cons, but you, who know what you want and take it without further ado, are indeed fortunate!" It not only conveys to us directly the conflict in his own mind between his longing for Śakuntalā and his respect for the proprieties, but also suggests many other things of a wider import — the barren preoccupation of the worldling with earning and spending while life slips by, the endless speculations "about it and about" of bookish philosophers, contrasted with the achievement at a bound of God-consciousness by the *bhakta* or the mystic.

It is this retrospective habit of mind, this quality of reflectiveness, this imaginative chewing of the cud, that gives Samskrit literature its special *cachet*. It explains too the national penchant for the *Subhāṣita*, a field of literature in which Samskrit has few equals. Apart from the *muktakas*, the single self-contained aphoristic or epigrammatic verses, of which we have such a prolific crop, a poet like Kālidāsa sows his work thick with epigrams which are so natural in their context that they do not savour of didacticism, and, what is more, are natural to his habit of mind.

Western critics are repelled by certain features of Samskrit poetry, which can be traced as far back as the epics, and which seem to them to detract from its artistic value, especially when these vast compositions are compared with the Homeric epics, for example. Winternitz thus complains that "similes are heaped on similes, and descriptions, especially of nature, are spun out interminably with ever new metaphors and comparisons." But those who derive their norms from the Greek models, which are like trim, well-planned gardens, forget that the Indian epics picture not only the exuberant opulence of nature in the tropics, but also attempt to convey something of the spaciousness of the Indian ethos. I am not denying that occasionally the thing might be overdone, but it is the outcome of an immense vitality.

Consider the description of Hanumān's first sight of Sita in the *Sundara Kānda*,[13] or the less well-known but equally haunting description[14] of the desolate appearance that Ayodhyā wears in Bharata's eyes, when he returns from the forest after his unsuccessful attempt to persuade Rama to return. In both cases, what you have is much more than one individual reporting the vivid impression on his sensitive mind made by another individual or by a scene. Hanumān, a whole universe in himself, finds in Sītā a new order of reality, an overwhelming vision of divine loveliness obscured by grief. It is like the meeting of two galaxies. And Hanumān reveals himself as much as he reveals Sītā to us.
over a year.

In the other example of 'piled up simile' that I have chosen, you find yourself gazing not only on the harrowed soul of Bharata, but also on a whole culture arrested at a moment of time—the glory that was Ayodhyā, and that seems to have departed as irretrievably as "the many dawns that have been", that the Vedic poet mourned, because the light that was at the heart of it has gone; with Rama gone, Ayodhyā is like life defeated, humbled and without purpose. It is, says the poet, to pick out two or three of the similes, "like a mountain-brook in summer, its waters tossed about by the wind, its birds distraught with the heat, its fish big and small, and its crocodiles, hiding at the bottom"; "it is like the queen of the herd, standing in the cowpen grieving, its new grass untouched, abandoned by the bull, and filled with longing;" it is "like a forest creeper, that was covered with flowers, and filled with the hum of the intoxicated bees, now, towards the end of summer, ravaged by a quick forest fire, and wilting;" it is "like a mare that has been rough-ridden by a horseman skilled in war, and discarded because of its weakness, with the saddle still on its back." It is not Ayodhyā merely that we see here, but all blasted cities.

The frequent digressions and repetitions in the epics have also provoked adverse comment. Winternitz quotes the German poet Ruckert's charge that the Ramayana is cluttered up with "formless fermenting verbiage", though he cannot praise enough its depth of ideas. These seeming excesses, again, are often prompted by a profound characteristic of the Indian mind, its philosophic temper that enables it, even in moments of crisis or overwhelming emotion, to retain a certain balance and to take note of the flow of life in the larger world without, and turn for assurance to the abiding sanity of

13. Ram. V.15.

14. Ram. II.114.

things. The raving Purūravas of the *Vikramorvaś ya*[15] can still take heart of grace from the trumpeting of the elephant, which he regards as happy augury of the successful issue of his quest. And, his heart swelling with gratitude, he blesses him saying, "As there is much in common between us, I love you; may not your fate be like mine." And Nala, when at last his sufferings end, and he ousts the unnatural brother, the cause of all his woe, not only forgives him, saying that he is not to blame, but Kali; he loads him with gifts, assures him that he has forgotten the past, and that he loves him still and will love him always. "You are my brother, Puṣkara: may you live happily a hundred years."[16]

The Indian epic poet's mind goes back and forth, like that of the modern psychological novelist, in his attempt to present us with three-dimensional pictures of an event or a personality. I must content myself with drawing your attention to the two versions of Sītā's wedding, and the three versions that Hanumān gives of his doings in Lankā.[17] In both cases, you get, besides, glimpses of aspects of the narrator's character that you would not have otherwise.

Again, there are incidents brought in which seem totally irrelevant to the main plot. The Western critic charitably assumes that these were all later interpolations. I am not ruling out that possibility altogether. But there are quite a number of episodes which are demonstrably of artistic value. Take the slick and bizarre feast provided by Bharadwāja for Bharata's host,[18] and the dream-like interlude of Hanumān and his companions in the *Ṛkṣabila*,[19] with its sequel. Surely the first intensifies our conception of the devotion of Bharata by contrasting it with the equable and easy-going disposition of his fighting men, who are like the average crowd anywhere and at any time, which may work itself up into a delirium of enthusiasm for a moment, but as quickly subsides into its own placid self. And equally vivid in its psychological truth is the picture of the Vānaras in search of Sītā, who remembering their short felicity as Swayamprabhā's guests, and appalled by the hopelessness of their renewed quest and the fear of Sugrīva's wrath, find that it is no easy

15. Vik. IV.47.

16. Mbh. III-78·22 to 25

17. Chapters 72 and 73 of Ram. I, and Chs. 117-18 of Ram. II for former, and the last chapters of Ram. IV for latter.

18. Ram. II.91.

19. Ram. IV.50 to 52.

thing to sustain the heroic Ulysses attitude of ever seeking, never resting; they would prefer to relax like the unstrung bow, but Hanumān's diplomacy keys them up again to heroic endeavour. The Indian epos is not a drawing in outline, but an elaborate chiaroscuro.

In great poetry the theme is as important as the imagery and the expression. The *Nalōpākhyāna*,[20] one of the supremely great poems of all time, is as good an example as any other, of that sublimity in poetry which is achieved when the poet "rises to the height of his great argument." In it is to be found a perfect expression of the timeless beauty that I have spoken of, in its picture of human dignity and poise against which the tides of destiny break in vain. More sorrows deluge Nala than Job was ever called upon to face; he receives more buffets than even battered Ulysses; and he is the victim of a far direr conspiracy of circumstances than Hector or Achilles had to contend against. But he does not rant, he does not even raise his voice. The gods compete with him for Damayantī's hand and ask him for a favour — that he should take their message of love to her. He had promised to do their wish before he knew what he was committing himself to; the gods must be respected. And if they hold him to it, he will stick to his word. But he frankly tells them that as he is himself a suitor, it would not be fair for them thus to handicap him.

But they hold him to his promise. He not only delivers his message with a good grace, he pleads for them with Damayantī skilfully and without reserve. But she loves him as much as he does her; heart had spoken to heart long before they met. And Damayantī flatly tells him that she will wed none but him. He says, "How can I, having come in another's interest, further my own?" But she, inspired by the wisdom of love, tells him, "Tell the gods that it is but fair that they should allow you too to compete with them on equal terms. And in their presence I shall choose you." The gods agree, but being gods they, all the four of them, outwit the mortal and appear at the *svayamvara* looking exactly like Nala. Damayantī, baffled in her attempts to find the true Nala, throws herself on their mercy. "Heaven decreed Nala for my spouse, and as I love him, heart and soul, may the gods be kind to me and show him to me." They could not resist this dauntless love or the appeal to their magnanimity. And then — here you have one of the superb touches of the poet's genius — Nala stood revealed, not by any inferiority in beauty, but by his mortal limitations, the eyes that winked, the feet

20. Mbh. III. Chs. 52 to 79.

that rested on earth, the sweat, and the slightly faded flowers. And mortal preferred mortal — for like to like is the law of affection, as Sītā reminded Ravana — and Nala's integrity and Damayanti's love win the first round against fate.

This is one of the very few Indian legends in which the gods throw their weight about, as they constantly do in Greek myth, making pawns of men. It was a slight breach of *āchāra*, we are told, that gave Kali the opportunity he sought, moved by sheer spite. Nala, like Yudhiṣṭira, had a weakness for gambling, and a similar lack of skill. He does not go so far as the Mahābhārata hero does, for he refuses to play for his wife. But the game becomes such an obsession with him that for months on end it goes on, and all that time Nala is like one possessed — as Kaikeyi seemed to be for that fatal twenty-four hours which sent Rama into exile. And Nala is so little conscious of the latent impulse that drove him, that he blames it all on Kali. And, please note, here we have an almost perfect example of *prārabdha* issuing in *pramāda*.

But when fate has done its worst, Nala remains as he was, the soul of honour and chivalry. When they are at last reunited and Damayanti gently upbraids him for deserting her, he points out that he was not responsible for his own actions. "Kali did it, but he was ousted by the combined force of our curse, my own efforts, the suffering we underwent, and destiny. Let us hope we have seen the end of the suffering." Thus, the poet would have you think that both 'Daivam' and 'Puruṣakāram' to use the words of Sītā, are needed for salvation.

A poem is not a moral tractate. The poet's moral fervour provides the climate in which the characters live their lives, but it is their staunchness and gentleness and quiet dignity that sweep the reader off his feet. See how the little misunderstandings are cleared up. Nala is as restrained in questioning Damayantī about the 'svayamvara' as she was in asking him how he could desert a defenceless woman. She, poor fawn, caught in the trap of fate, had shown a loyalty and courage to which only Sita affords a parallel. The marvellous tale comes to a close on a note that does not question the moral governance of the universe.

It is the fundamental affirmation that Dharma must prevail, because life is an expression of positive purpose, that is the core of the Ramayana, in which was achieved for the first and last time on epic scale the miraculous fusion of great poetry with a perfect ethic.

Rāvaṇa is pride incarnate. His grand-uncle Mālyavān[21] pointed out the fatal flaw in his make-up when he said that it was the formidable combination of *pramāda* and *adharma* that was destroying Rāvaṇa and through him the Rākṣasas. He forgot — as the gods had done, and had to be reminded of the truth by the great Yakṣa in the *Kenopaniṣad* — that there was a Power from which came whatever strength he had. Rāvaṇa has nothing in common with Milton's Satan; evil, according to the Indian conception, is rooted in ignorance. Rāvaṇa had fallen from his high estate, but did not know it. Sītā tells him that he may yet be saved if he will but confess and make atonement. If he does not, it is because his accumulated sins goad him on, but before his end he recognises his master. Rāvaṇa is *anṛta*, and Truth must prevail. *Ātmavān*, on the other hand, is the poet's favourite adjective for Rama; and the Gita equates it with *apramatta* (see Śankara on B.G. II-45). Rama is Dharma incarnate, because he is securely established in the Self.

But poets as a rule do not soar into the heaven of metaphysical truth; their concern is with the luminous shadow of it that is the world of aesthetic delight. And Kālidāsa is their perfect representative as well as their supreme exemplar. I have dealt elsewhere[22] at some length with the way he handles moral problems, treating morality as the ground of beauty. With your permission I will read a short extract from that essay, as it compendiously expresses the point I have been trying to make:

> The central theme of every one of Kalidasa's works is 'Peace on earth and good will among men.' It is this overflowing sympathy that reduces the universe to a harmonious pattern expressive of the Divine benevolence, which the poet traces in the relations, not merely of men, but of man and nature . . . Love for him was but one aspect of *maitrī*, that universal bond of mutual attraction and sympathy which manifests itself in innumerable

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21. Adharmah pragṛhītasca tenāsmad-balinah pare
Sa pramādād- vivṛddhaste'dharmo'hir-grasate hi nah. (Ram. VI.35.16.).

The Rakshasas in their daily life and innocent pleasures, are described in words that almost echo the description of the citizens of Ayodhyā. Human nature in the mass, the poet suggests, is very much the same almost everywhere, if you make allowances for the difference in traditions. But the great can set a bad example and ruin the people. Rāvaṇa was unscrupulous and opportunistic, and demoralised his subjects. But Rama would not adopt wrong means to gain just ends. He would have nothing to do with Vāli.

22. Brief report of a lecture, published in *Swarājya* in 1960.

relationships. Duṣyanta repudiating Śakuntalā seems perilously like a cad to the post-scientific generations, whether in India or elsewhere, who believe neither in sages nor in curses. But when Kālidāsa showed a curse as operating, and it occurs in everyone of his works, it was only a compendious way of suggesting that it was Daivam (fate), not as an extraneous power, but as one's own inherited and ineluctable tendencies (*vāsanās*) that was at work. In this he was true to the inspiration that had moved Vālmīki and Vyāsa. We sin, say the old moralists, not so much by wilful violation of the law and the prophets, as by *pramāda*—that fatal lack of recollectedness which is the lion in the path of spiritual progress.

After tracing the way the curse operated in the case of Śakuntalā, whose innocent but heedless succumbing to the tumult of passion was the cause of all her woe, the essay from which I am quoting went on to point out that when her travails are over, she and Duṣyanta are reunited in a love that is the highest *maitrī* that our human kind may know, the serene acceptance of each other that a perfect marriage connotes. In other words, in Śakuntalā love has itself become *sādhana*.

A criticism commonly heard about Samskrit drama is that it lacks strength, because it does not know tragedy. That is only a half-truth. "The notion of God as a whimsical tyrant, or of man striving for a purpose contrary to the Divine will," is, as I observe in the essay above quoted, not to be expected in a culture so securely anchored in faith as the Indian. But there is a great deal of sadness in Indian literature nevertheless. And that sadness was the inspiration of the first poet:[23] "Sadness has been transmuted into poetry." The impending sense of doom that one senses at the very beginning of the *Ayodhyā Kānda* and the dramatic intensity of the scenes that lead up to Rama's exile find few parallels in the world's dramatic poetry. As for sadness, is not Duṣyanta's heart wrung thinking of Śakuntalā repudiated and forlorn?[24] Sri Rama[25] suffers likewise, grieving over Sītā's anguish in separation. (And Śrī Krishna too says, "While life

23. Śokah ślokatvam āgatah *Ram.* I. 2.40

24. Itah. pratyādeśāt svajanam-anugantum vyavasitā
Muhustiṣthetyuccair-vadati guruśiṣye gurusame
Punardṛṣtim bāṣpaprasarakaluṣāmarpitavatī
Mayi krūre yat-tat-saviṣamiva śalyam dahati mām (*Śāk.* VI. 9)

25. Tan-me dahati gātrāṇi viṣam-pītam-ivāsaye
Hā nātheti priyā sā mām hriyamāṇā yadābravīt. [Ram. VI. 5·7]

lasts, I cannot forget that Draupadī uttered a despairing cry for help and I could not fly to her side.") In these and in a hundred other similar instances, what is felt as tragedy is the desolate groping for human sympathy and companionship in loneliness, the analogue in the world of human emotions of what, in the realm of spirit, the great mystics have described as the Dark Night of the Soul.

To the Indian, as I said, the universe is a friendly place. That is because it is lit up by the Divine seated in its heart no less than in his. If the light of that Supernal Sun should be blotted out even for a moment, as it often is by the onset of a great grief, then the world looks forbidding and alien; it is like a cadaver decked with jewels. But the light of the *Ātman* cannot be hidden for long. The mind recovers its balance, suffering has mellowed the heart and enriched the understanding. Death does not yield its spoils, but the springs of life are renewed.

The difference in the attitude of the old Indian and the old Greek to such things may be made clear by an example. Take Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, the tragedy of a man of whom, at the moment of his birth, a divine voice had proclaimed that he would kill his father and marry his mother. He takes every precaution to avoid his fate, but cannot escape it. He kills his father, not knowing it is he, in a sudden fit of anger and under great provocation; he marries his mother, having not the least suspicion that he is doing the very thing that he had desperately run away to avoid. But by his own *hubris* he adds to the grief and suffering that overwhelm him when the truth is revealed at least. It was his arrogant self-righteousness, which had made him decree a Draconian punishment in advance for the murder of the king, and his self-confidence, that betrayed him. *Oedipus Rex* is a great tragedy, but it sears the heart. Sophocles devoted two more plays to the theme, but I doubt whatever the reader who completes the trilogy feels that purging and uplifting of the heart which Aristotle said was the end of tragedy.

A somewhat analogous theme is expounded in the Purāṇas in the legend of the killing of Vasiṣtha's son Śakti[26] by Kalmāṣapāda, a king who, under the influence of anger against the father, his guru, insulted the son, was cursed by him to become a Rākṣasa, and was then egged on by Vasiṣtha's enemy Visvāmitra to kill Sakti. The king suffered for his initial lapse, while the sage died at his hands because

26. The tale of the killing of Śakti is given above as it appears in the Mahābhārata. In the Vishnu Purāna and the Linga Purāna it appears with significant variations.

he was so fated. His son Parāśara, who vowed to make an end of all Raksasas, was dissuaded from a course that would punish the innocent for one man's crime. And when Kalmāṣapāda regained his human status, his curse having run out, he begged Vasiṣtha to beget a son on his wife—the practice of *Niyoga* was permitted in those times—because he himself was unable to do so owing to another curse, and he did not wish to incur sin by allowing his line to become extinct. And Vasiṣtha, letting bygones be bygones, did what he wanted. This way of ending an old feud—the characteristic Indian way—seems to be better than the Greek. This is not to underrate the splendour of Greek tragedy, but merely to emphasise that it takes all sorts to make a world. Every people have their own notions of artistic excellence.

We have so far dealt with theme and manner in great literature. Something must now be said about the myth or image in which the creative imagination enshrined a great ideal. Many have remarked on the fact that the Indian poet has not fallen for originality at all costs—a peculiarly modern failing. For plot and incident he has been largely content to exploit the old legends and myths that have often come down from hoary antiquity. I propose to discuss in some detail the sources in the Veda of Kālidāsa's *Vikramorvaśīya* as it seems to present an almost perfect type of the kind of thing that happened in Indian poetry and drama.

The Urvaśi-Purūrava legend goes back to the Rg. Veda. A hymn[27] records a poignant colloquy between the lovers when their brief happiness is past. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* provides the setting to this dialogue and supplies the missing links. Quite a number of Purāṇas take up the tale and ring numerous changes on it. It is from the latter that Kālidāsa has mainly drawn his material. But, as I hope to show, he has taken pregnant hints from all his predecessors beginning with the Vedic poet, and he has added his own embellishments. The end-product is something very different from the first beginnings of the myth, but the inspiration remains constant, though Kālidāsa disentangles but one theme from the skein of ideas that the Veda provides.

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27. R.V. X.95. I am indebted to Prof. H. D. Velankar's Introduction to his Sahitya Akademi edition of the drama for the outline of the evolution of the plot. But I do not agree with his interpretation of the hymn or of the Brāhmaṇa version of it or of the use Kālidāsa has made of his predecessors' work.

The *Brāhmaṇa*[28] story, told in spare and elliptical prose, may be thus retold. "Urvaśī the *apsaras* loved Purūravas, the son of Ida. Having obtained him for spouse, she said to him that he should give her physical satisfaction, but should not coerce her when she was not willing, and that she should not see him naked; "for this is how we women should be cherished". Here I may parenthetically observe that these were the only three conditions that the Vedic Urvaśi laid down. Her pet lambs, and the drops of ghee on which she would subsist, are mentioned in the dialogue hymn, but there is no suggestion that they were elevated to the status of rigorous conditions, on the observance of which the continuance of their friendship would depend.

Urvaśi lives with Purūravas happily for long years, (four, as the hymn has it). Meanwhile the Gandharvas, missing her greatly, hit upon a ruse to get her back. They kidnap at night one of the lambs tied up with their mother near Urvaśi's bed. She cries, "Alas, they are taking away my child, and I am helpless. No valiant man comes to my help". Purūravas, being unclad, and remembering the pact, lies still. Then the Gandharvas walk away with the other lamb too, and Urvaśi renews her lament. Purūravas is stung by the implied taunt that he is no hero and no prop to a weak woman. He tells himself, "There is no time to clothe myself," and he goes, naked, to rescue the lambs. At that moment the Gandharvas light up the scene with a flash of lightning. Urvaśi sees him naked, and flounces off in a temper. Purūravas's assumption that his breach of the pact would not come to light was the form his *pramāda* look.

Urvaśi does not return. Purūravas is mad with longing, and wanders everywhere, as in Kālidāsa's play, looking for her. She, with other *apsarases*, is engaged in water sports, taking the form of *āti* birds, when the distracted Purūravas comes there. She points him out to her companions, saying, "That is the man with whom I lived". They tell her, "Let us show ourselves to him". And when they do, Purūravas remonstrates passionately with Urvaśi for deserting him. And the *Śatapatha-Brāhmana* at this point introduces extracts from the Vedic hymn, which reports the conversation between the parted lovers, with a running commentary of its own.

We may now give the salient features of the Sūkta, as it appears in the Rg. Veda. Purūravas tell her, "Stay, dear wife, let us converse and unburden ourselves of our secrets, which otherwise will cause anguish in the days to come." She replies pettishly, "What do I care

28. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa XI.5.1.

for talk with you, who broke your word?" Purūravas describes his agony at their separation. He says he has lost all zest for battle and the display of prowess. Urvaśi in reply nostalgically recalls her domestic life with Purūravas and the diligence with which she served his father whenever the lovers were not together. She acknowledges gratefully that she had, while their happineśs lasted, reigned undisputed queen over his heart and had not had to share his favours with rivals. And she takes pride in his valour, which made even the gods seek his help; all these hints, incidentally, are fully used by Kālidāsa. Purūravas in his turn recalls the joy her lightning-like beauty gave him and says that by bearing him a son she would confer on him immortality. She then tells him, "I do already bear your son in my womb, and he will be a comfort to you." (There is no suggestion in the hymn, it will be noted, that it had been part of the pact that Urvaśi should live with him only till she bore him a son). Urvaśi then goes on, "Knowing what should be done in the future, I told you what you should do. But you did not do as I said." And then, irritated by his importunity she tells him, "Go home, you stupid man, you will not get me." Thereupon Purūravas in a paroxysm of grief says, "If that must be so, let your playmate be struck dead by lightning, and let wolves devour him, as he lies helpless on earth."

At this Urvaśi is greatly moved. She tells him sadly, "Purūravas, do not die. There is no friendship in women; they have the hearts of wolves." And then, with grateful tenderness she adds, "When, fallen from my high state (literally, 'disfigured'—*virūpitā*), I lived four happy years among men, I sustained myself on a drop of ghee taken once a day (the ghee that Purūravas gave her.) Now, even as a goddess again, I feel happy thinking of that drop of ghee."[29] Thus

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29. This passage was incorrectly interpreted by Geldner, who said that Urvasī spoke sarcastically when she referred to her 'satisfaction' with the ghee she had taken for four years, suggesting that she had had enough of it and would not, for the world, come back to live on earth and eat more ghee. And he has been followed by some other translators. Thus A. L. Basham in *The Wonder that was India* (p. 406) renders it in verse thus :

> "I ate a little ghee once a day
> And now I have had quite enough!"

But Eggeling, who renders the passage correctly if rather flatly thus, "I ate a little ghee once a day and even now feel satisfied therewith", adds in a footnote, that *tāṛpāṇā carāmi* literally means, "I walk (or go on, keep) being satisfied therewith." He points out that Geldner however takes it in an ironical sense; though it is clear from his own rendering that he is not satisfied with Geldner's interpretation.

Sāyaṇa's commentary, which is fuller on the ṛk as it appears in the *Brāhmaṇa*, than where it occurs in the Rg-Veda, runs as follows; (It will be seen that it fully brings out the emotion behind the laconic words) : tādevedam idānīm deve devatve' pi sati tān tasmādeva ghṛtastokāt tāṛpāṇā carāmi. *Carāmi* clearly does not mean "I depart", but has the sense that Eggeling rightly gives it.

the immortal not only confesses that she had been happy with a mortal, and living as a mortal, but that she is still bound to him by the silken tie of gratitude. Here in the Vedic hymn is to be found the seed of a great ethical idea; while in this tale of a consuming passion is implicit that long odyssey of the human heart for companionship, which all the later poets were to sing.

A European critic in fact goes so far as to say that, but for this lovely legend, nobody would suspect that the Vedic poets knew anything of love. And he is properly contemptuous of "the desert of theological speculation" in the *Brāhmaṇas*, in which such oases come as a great relief. What such criticism overlooks is the fact that it is the *Brāhmaṇa* setting that fully brings out the poignancy of the love. And, even more important, to the aesthetic and ethical content of the hymn the *Brāhmaṇa* adds a symbolic element, which lifts it into the realm of metaphysic.

Urvaśī make up her mind that, as she cannot become a mortal, her lover should become an immortal. Having at the first encounter told him to meet her again after a year for a night's joy, when she would deliver to him his son, she tells him at the second meeting that he will meet the Gandharvas the next day and that he could ask a favour of them. "I do not know what to ask for; you must tell me", replies Purūravas. Note, incidentally, the profound insight here, that the Bhakti doctrine was later to elaborate — that we know not what is good for us, and it is best to leave our life and aspiration in the hands of the higher Powers. Urvaśī tells her lover, "Tell the Gandharvas that you would like to become one of them." He does so. They give him fire in a container, and teach him an elaborate fire-rite by means of which he would be translated to the world of the gods. But on his way home doubt assails him, and he leaves the fire-pot in the forest. When he is back in his own home, however, he feels he has been hasty in discarding the fire that was to be his salvation. He goes back, only to find that the fire has become an *aswattha* (peepul) tree and the pot, a *śami* (mimosa) plant.

He goes to the Gandharvas with his tale of woe. They debate in their own minds as to what were best done. The *Brāhmaṇa* reports this interior dialogue. First they think of advising him to perform a rite using the twigs of both the trees. But then, they

argue, "That would not be the direct way" (*Parokṣamiva vā etat*).[30] And they tell him, "Make of the peepul the upper *araṇi* and of the mimosa the lower *araṇi* (fire-stick)". But they are still not satisfied, for they say, "That again would be parokṣa." So they think again and tell him, "Make both the upper and the lower *araṇi* of the peepul tree. That would preserve the fire in its purity and integrity." Purūravas does as he is bid, and becomes a Gandharva. And in the *Agni-manthana* rite, the upper *araṇi* comes to be described as *Purūravas* and the lower as Urvaśī. Thus in the determination to achieve the *aparokṣa* the seers of the *Brāhmaṇa* indirectly give symbolic expression to the doctrine that man and wife are an inseparable unity.[31]

I have traced the old story at this length, in order to show that here are present, in a nutshell as it were, many of the principal insights of the race and of its basic ethical, aesthetic and metaphysical ideas. The claim of the Vedas to be the fountain-head of our culture is borne out by the fact that even our moods and attitudes, our fears and hopes are prefigured in them.

To follow the Urvaśi story in its later development briefly. The *Mahābhārata* makes but a brief and unsympathetic reference to Purūravas, who is dismissed as a greedy king who oppressed the Brahmanas and was destroyed by them. Vyāsa's purpose in the great epic being predominantly ethical, Purūravas's hedonistic longing for the Gandharva heaven did not apparently appeal to him.

The Vedic story does not account for Urvaśi's initial sojourn on earth. (I am not considering here the *Bṛhad-Devatā* or the Sarvānukramani versions of the story). In the *Vāyu Purāṇa* and some others it is said to have been due to Brahmā's curse; while the

30. Sāyaṇa interprets Parokṣa as vyavahita, which bears among others the meaning 'hidden', 'not immediately connected'. To render the word as 'recondite' (esoteric) (Eggeling) or 'difficult' (Basham, p. 407) would not, it seems to me, bring out fully the consideration that weighed with the Gandharvas, who wanted to recreate by this sacrament the identical fire that had been changed into the peepul tree. The use for this purpose of any means other than, or in addition to, the peepul tree, would not, they evidently argued, recapture the quiddity of that fire. If simplicity or ease of performance was what they were after, the simplest and easiest course would have been the first that had suggested itself to them. Striking sparks from tinder-sticks is no simple matter!

31. Śruti says that the wife is the inseparable half of the husband. And Manu (Ch. IX.8) says, Jāyāyāstaddhi jāyātvam yadasyām jāyate punah.

Vishnu Purāṇa [32] says the curse was by Mitrā-Varuna. The *Padma Purāṇa* takes this a step further and makes out that the curse itself was the outcome of Urvaśi's love for Purūravas and her mind being preoccupied with thoughts of him. This hint is utilised by Kālidāsa (if, that is, the Purāṇa was not composed, as some scholars hold, after the poet's time). The Purāṇas differ again, in that some utilise the conditions laid down by Urvaśi, while others don't mention them at all; nor does Kālidāsa. The *Padma Purāṇa* introduces the curse, but as one pronounced by the sage Bharata, and Kālidāsa adopts this tip. He has taken some hints from the *Vishnu Dharmottara* too.

What Kālidāsa learnt from the Vedic version is perhaps even more significant than what he took or rejected from the Veda or from the later sources. At the very beginning of the play he introduces the motive of gratitude in Urvaśi's mind which shades off imperceptibly into love. And he gives an unmistakable hint that he is going to treat Urvaśi not as a goddess at all, whereas in the Vedic story she remains very much the goddess. Kālidāsa prefers to bring his goddess down to earth. Her love and anguish, as shown in her silent suffering in the Fourth Act, becomes thus more natural. And so too does her jealousy, as well as the forgetfulness induced by his passion that makes Purūravas violate the interdict against entering the Kumāra Vana. And with this mention of the failings of the two lovers, the particular forms *their pramāda* took, we return to our main theme. As regards the play, it is only necessary to add that Kālidāsa, in deciding not to send Purūravas to the forest any more than to Indra's heaven, implicitly passes judgment on the limitations of the hedonistic life, while in the Fourth Act he utilises the king's expertise in those fields of art in which Urvaśi is nonpareil, to wrinse every drop of emotion out of the enjoyment of sensuous beauty.

In the Indian tradition art fulfils its highest function by transcending itself. It is a commonplace that art is not for ornament but for use. It aims at establishing a harmony in the soul that negates the pettiness of the self. It is inspired by the contemplation *(dhyāna)* of ideal forms, and it is severely intellectual in its ope-

32. It is the Vishnu Purāṇa that with beautiful simplicity indicates the absolute and self-forgetful absorption of the lovers in each other, which found its metaphysical symbol in the *Brāhmana* legend, with its search for absolute integrity: Ubhayamapi tan-manaskam ananya-dṛṣti parityakta-samastānyaprayojanam-abhūt.

ration. A distinguished European composer who paid a visit to India some years ago made an enlightening remark about Western music. He said it was the result of a fundamental tension. The offspring of Christianity, which originated as the religion of a persecuted minority, it voiced their emotional protest. Whereas Greek music was melodic, modern contrapuntal music represented a striking psychological reaction. Christianity, said the speaker, "served as a kind of emotional catalyst which unbound the deep-rooted affective energies of Western man." The combativeness of the European mentality has found an appropriate vehicle in contrapuntal music; but Indian music, the child of the Indian spirit, has aimed at comprehension and reconciliation, *Śānti* in a word, not domination or self-assertion. Likewise our plastic arts are non-representational; their horizon is not bounded by anthropomorphic preoccupations. Like Vālmīki in the Ramayana, the iconographer has aimed at expressing the inexpressible. No wonder that the West, accustomed to the douce perfection and the concreteness of Hellenic art, has dubbed our epics, with their demons and monkeys, bizarre and our sculptures barbaric. Latterly, so far as the plastic arts are concerned, there has been a growth in understanding in the Western mind, but the metaphysical basis of an art that aims at suggesting supra-mental conceptions is still far from being grasped.

That is the reason why, of all our vast literature, the Purāṇas present the greatest difficulty to the Western mind. With them we move from the realm of poetry into religion, though they contain some excellent poetry too. And the religion they propagate is, so far as the attitudes popularised and the emotional overtones suggested are concerned, but the old Vedic religion, though the popular gods have to some extent changed functions as they have changed names. And *viveka*, in the realm of religion, appears as growth in comprehension of great mystical truths through the practice of loving devotion.

As the Purāṇas propagate a theology which is not very different from that of the Veda, I shall briefly trace the lineaments of the Vedic religion. But before doing so, a word is necessary about the important place the Purāṇas have occupied in the diffusion of the ethics whose lines were firmly set even in the Upaniṣadic times, as I have sought to show. Some of the Purāṇas may have been swollen in the course of centuries by interpolations made from various motives, and by a certain amount of padding introduced by oral expounders. But you may be sure that it is not due to accident or laziness that many of the well-known legends are to be found in

more than one Purāṇa: I cannot at the moment recall any which has not been thus repeated, except the *Nala Upākhyāna* which I discussed earlier; and even that is matched by the story of Yudhiṣṭira's gambling, as if the author of the epic wanted to try out a few small but significant variations on the theme. At any rate, few of the tales appear in identical versions in the Purāṇās; there are always modifications which seem aimed at revealing a new moral truth or bringing out more of the inexhaustible wealth of suggestion implicit in the germinal idea. Thus the story of Parīkṣit's death is told very differently in the *Bhāgavata*. There the king has made up his mind that he must expiate his sin with his life, and gives up the brief time that remains to him to imbibing the wisdom of Śuka. This fecundity of ideas in the Purāṇas was evidently stimulated by the realisation that the masses, to whom the Purāṇas mediated the profound thoughts of the scriptures, contained every kind of *adhikāri*. and the teaching had to be adapted to the needs of every one of them.

Closely allied to the concept of *adhikāri-bheda* is that of *ruchi-bheda*. It explains why some Purāṇas exalt Śiva, others Viṣnu, one or two Brahmā. The same Purāṇas often alternately praise one or the other. Behind the superficial observation that man makes God in his own image is the truth that he has, in all ages, been moved by a profound need to love and reverence a Power outside himself which, he feels it in his bones, makes for righteousness. This is evident as much in the Veda as in the Purāṇas. The gods, who are unwinkingly vigilant, says a Rg. Vedic hymn,[33] have attained plenary immortality, so that men might praise them and serve them. That seems to suggest that there must be gods to satisfy man's need to praise them. The Vedic hymns represent attempts to enter imaginatively into every kind of relationship that can be conceived between two different orders of being, of whom one looks to the other to cherish it, to nourish it, to chide it when it goes wrong, and to guide it so to order its life as to achieve the highest good. Men are mortal, but the gods are *amaraṇa-dharmāṇaḥ*. The gods are sin-

33. R.V. X. 63 (4)—C. H. Wilson's translation runs as follows: "The gods, the never-slumbering beholders of mankind, and entitled (to their adoration), have obtained great immortality; conveyed in chariots of light, possessed of unsurpassable wisdom, devoid of sin, they inhabit the exalted station of heaven for the well-being of the world". But Sāyaṇa explains the word *arhaṇā* thus: *Lokasya paricaraṇārtham stotavyatvāya.*

The following are the other passages bearing on Indra, referred to here: R.V. VI 32(3); 34(3); 34(1); 47(18); 18(17); 35 (1 and 2); 24(5); 47(15).

less and true; men are too often the reverse. But the former keep a vigilant eye on them. They punish them if they go astray, disobeying the laws that the gods have laid down, but they are pleased with the humble and the contrite and they vouchsafe their grace to those who are pure of heart and are capable of gratitude.

The formidable Indra is so pleased with his hymnists, the Āngirases, that he not only recovers their cows for them, which the Asuras had purloined; in his desire to be friends with them he becomes himself a seer, and he destroys their enemies' cities. His bounty is infinite, and however much you praise him, it will still fall far short of his due. It is not merely material possessions that he gives; those who praise him have their understanding strengthened, and their inspiration grows. He is all-the-gods and, according to the need of the devotee, stands forth as each different god, and he can take many forms and appear before his worshippers simultaneously. He can bring about the impossible, killing a lion by a sheep.

The worshipper feels so intimate with him that he is often impatient with his tardiness in response, or even taunts him, as a privileged child might his parent. The hymnist is sometimes puzzled by his unaccountable actions. He feels that he does not abide our question. Prayer and praise and worship cannot deflect him from his purpose. By virtue of his own *prajñā* he makes the first (of praisers) last and the last first, "just as a man walking puts one foot foremost and then another". That striking simile, one must pause to remark, shows how completely the Vedic seer identified himself with Indra, who is equated in these hymns with the supreme deity (see particularly Sāyaṇa's comment on R.V. VI—47.18), as in others Varuṇa and Sūrya and Agni are, and expresses his firm faith that if the god does what he will with his worshippers it is because he not only does not make any difference between them, but even more because he does not consider them as alien to himself. If he uses them as he thinks best, he can mean no more harm to them than a man can do to his own feet.

Varuṇa[34] is regarded as specially the protector of Ṛta, the moral order. He is the stern overseer of men's morals; swift is his eye to detect transgressions, and sharp the punishment. But he can be kind and understanding too. Vasiṣṭha recalls nostalgically the days when Varuṇa, with loving kindness, took him into his own boat and they delighted going up and down, as in a swing, borne by the dancing waves. Varuṇa, touched by this recollection, restores him to his favour.

34. For the Vāruṇa hymns cited see R.V.VI.86 to 89.

The worshipper confidingly pleads with him, pointing out that no man will knowingly or deliberately sin. His destiny is fixed for him at the moment of his birth, and it is this that makes him do what he does. What form does this compelling power take? It operates, says the Vedic seer, sometimes as the irresponsibility induced by drink, sometimes as the temptation exercised by dice, sometimes as ignorance (*acitti*) issuing in lack of discrimination. And the hymnist goes on to say, "There is a power stronger than the individual, who sits by him and constrains him to do these things. Why, even in dream a man commits many sins; what need then to speak of the waking state? Considering that I am not a free agent, you must forgive me. Tell me where I have gone astray and disobeyed your laws, and I will strive to correct myself."

It is noteworthy that in this as in a number of other hymns the lack of awareness which is termed *acitti* (our *pramāda*) is described as one of the causes of man's backsliding. Destiny, it is recognised, is your own character; often it is too powerful for you, and in any case *Daivam* is an inscrutable force, but man may be redeemed by the descent of grace. In one of the most striking[35] hymns in the Tenth Mandala, Vāk, the Brahma-vidushi, praises her own *ātman* and speaks in a state of supra-mundane consciousness in which she has achieved complete identification with the Self, reminding us of the experience of Vāmadeva. And she says, "I myself reveal this Brahman, Which is sought by gods and good men. He whom I wish to protect I exalt over others." It is the Divine Grace that speaks through her when she says, "O friend, listen, I will teach you the Brahman, Who can be obtained by *śraddhā*".

That reference to *śraddhā* is worth thinking about. *Śraddhā* is defined as faith that the fruits promised for the due performance of the *karmas* that the Veda enjoins will be actually won. A whole hymn (X. 151) is devoted to *śraddhā* in the Rg. Veda, and this has led some scholars to make the suggestion that apparently scepticism was abroad and it had to be counteracted! We need not take such whimsical speculations seriously. The significant thing is that *śraddhā* is said not only to ensure the fruit of sacrifices like the Jyothishtoma, but also to procure the knowledge of Brahman, as obviously Brahman-realization is as much the end of the Veda as other lesser gains.

35. R.V.X.125.

The Vedic hymns have been represented or misrepresented as covering every variety of polytheism, though it is conceded that sometimes a monotheistic outlook is glimpsed, while rarely (very rarely indeed, so we are assured) as in the *Nāsadīya Sūkta* there is a hint of Monism. Such terms as 'henotheism' and 'katenotheism' have been invented to account for the facts that in different places in the Veda different gods are identified as the supreme power, and that in the *Purāṇas* sometimes one god, sometimes another is spoken of as that Power. Actually a number of hymns speak of the one existent, *Ekam sat, Ekam santam.* If Sūrya, Indra or Varuṇa is identified with that One, it is in order that It may be described — not as It really is, because It is unknowable, but obliquely, so that the worshipper can, subject to the limitations of the intellect, make guesses as to Its nature, seeking to apprehend It by the categories of power and benevolence which It seems to manifest in relation to man and the world. Thus Sūrya is specially praised for his[36] *samatva.* He shows himself equally to all, and sheds his beneficence impartially on all alike. Indra represents another aspect of the Godhead, power. Varuṇa stands for righteousness.

Such speculations, based on linguistic and literary considerations, as that Varuṇa first reigned supreme and then gave place to Indra, who in his turn was superseded by Prajāpati, seem to me to place a faith in the sufficiency of the linguistic approach which is not justified. The hymns are the record of inspired vision, according to tradition. They represent but a fraction of the old corpus. The legendary Vyāsa who collected or selected and classified them, evidently thought that all the insights preserved in the hymns, however heterogeneous they might seem, were equally valuable, because they were equally authentic. They represent truth as mediated by many minds, functioning no doubt in an exalted state of consciousness, but also conditioned by variety of temperament and intellectual approach.

We may assume this with the greater confidence because we find in later literature something of the same kind happening. If the Vedic *ṛṣis* praised Indra, Varuṇa and Agni and numerous other gods impartially and often in the same breath, so, likewise, are Śiva and Viṣṇu praised in the Purāṇas. If in the Veda now one, now another is identified as the Supreme, the same thing happens in the Purāṇas too.

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36. R.V.X.63.3 and 4.

This continuity of tradition is equally evident in the mode of approach and the attitude towards the gods, which is predominantly one of loving trustfulness and devotion. The passage in the *Bhāgavata* in which Vṛttra expresses his yearning for the Lord is justly famous. "I long for Thee, O Lotus-eyed, as unfledged chicks for the mother bird, as hungry calves for the cow, as the faithful wife for her spouse." A Rg. Vedic hymn[37] expresses the reciprocal attitude with a startlingly similar imagery. "May the Sun, the welcome sustainer of life, come to us quick, as the cows return to the village from the forest, as the warrior eager for the fray seeks out his horse to ride forth to battle, as the cow, with its udders full, seeks, lowing, its calf, as the husband hastens to his wife." And another hymn[38] says, "O father heaven, O friendly mother earth, O brother fire, O gods all, give us joy', in terms of familial piety which at once recall to mind Bhartṛhari's famous *śloka* in the *Vairāgya śataka*. The seer of another mymn[39] says, "Let alone the greatness of the gods (*māhātmyam*), even a prostration (*namaskāra*) made to them can work wonders." And in the Seventh Mandala occur the verses[40] addressed to Viṣnu, praising the potency of His name, from which the fomulators of the Nāma Siddhānta doctrine trace the inspiration for the idea.

Not only do Karma and Bhakti figure in the Vedas, knowledge is prized no less. "The sons of Aditi are capable of inducing, even in the ignorant man, knowledge of proper rites that would help to lead him to his goal."[41] Another hymnist[42] humbly says that his praise comes from the heart, though it lacks art, unlike those of the ungodly, who sing the songs of the people; "but our songs do not lead to ignorance." And in a striking Sūkta[43] in the Tenth Mandala, Bṛhaspati praises a young boy who knows the meaning of the Vedic hymns, and speaks slightingly of those who have merely got the words by rote.

Thus the dominant note of the Vedas is the belief that life lived zestfully and purposefully will help one to grow in devotion and knowledge. The aspiration for liberation is also voiced, however

37. R.V.X.150.4. The corresponding Bhāgavata verse is Bh. VI.11.26.
38. R.V.VI.41.5.
39. R.V.VI.51.8.
40. R.V.VII.100.5.
41. R.V.VII.60(6).
42. R.V.VII.61(5).
43. R.V.X.71.

variously the content thereof may have been conceived. A hymn,[44] while praying, "O Gods, may we not commit great sin in the cave of the heart against you," makes a pointed request that the singer may not be doomed "to take the form of untruth," which Sāyaṇa interprets as meaning, "May we not have to take a human body again."

And again and again the mystery at the heart of creation is wonderingly posed.[45] And the longing for union with That which is the All is heard. The note of *Nivṛtti*, though muffled, is not to be missed. But it is regarded as the consummation of ripeness — *Urvārukamiva-bandhanāt*, — to go back to the striking simile I quoted in the first lecture. It was in this mental climate that the truths that found their plenary expression in the Upaniṣhads were matured, the leading lines of thought being more fully developed and the interconnections carefully explored. Even in the modern world the phenomenon is not totally unknown of a change in perspective coming with the years, to a man of sensitive mind who has not lived merely on the surface. Wordsworth[46] bitterly cried:

> The world is too much with us; late and soon,
> Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
> Little we see in nature that is ours:

And he said he would rather be

> A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
> So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
> Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;

That sense of forlornness in the midst of life, that oppressive feeling of a great emptiness and a great longing, was what the sages called *vairāgya*. It is of the men who experience this revulsion of mind that the *Bṛhad-Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad*[47] says that "they rise up and go forth renouncing everything, to live on alms." They may be possessed by an all-consuming love like that of the Gopis pictured in the *Bhramara Gita*, [48] or they may be driven by that urge to immolate the self, which is the logical consummation of the long discipline of self-naughting that they have undergone.

But it is also recognised that there are other kinds of temperament that feel drawn to a different route by which the same goal may be reached, though more circuitously. At the commencement

44. R.V.X. 100(7).
45. The following Sūktas of R.V. *passim:* VI.9, X.64, X.120, X.121, X.129.
46. *The world is too much with us* (Sonnet).
47. Br. Up. IV.4.2.
48. Bhāg. X.47.12 to 21.

of his *Gītā Bhāshya* Śri Śankara points out that the *Gītā* teaches both *Pravṛtti* and *Nivṛtti*. The former is in line with the thinking of the Dharma Sūtras which derive from the Karma Kānda Thus Āpastamba[49] stoutly maintains that the householder's life lived in accordance with the Veda is to be preferred to that of the *sannyāsin*, "because it makes for happiness here and hereafter." This was the way chosen by Janaka whom the *Gītā* speaks of as having attained *samsiddhi* through *karma* alone, and by Khāndikya[50] in the *Viṣnu Purāṇa* who, even after he had attained realisation of the Brahman, not only continued to rule his kingdom but also to conform to the Kshatriya code of rights and duties. The other strain is represented by Yājñavalkya, Śuka and the other sages who found that the pursuit of the vision of the Infinite was a full-time job, and what was more, they had no desire for any other. The Karma-Yoga taught in the *Gītā* is regarded by some as a golden mean between the *Pravṛtti* and *Nivṛtti* ideals, but by others like Śankara as but a preliminary, though for all but the elect an indispensable preparation for the final leap — if at all they can take it.

In this latter view, the training of the spiritual athlete itself calls for an attitude of *Pravṛtti* — the *Pravrtti*[51], as Śri Śankara explains, being in the direction of seeking the highest good. The *Yoga Vāsiṣhta* says, "Whatever you pursue wholeheartedly and without relaxing, you are bound to achieve. That human effort which is directed and controlled by Śāstra will win the goal and none other. Therefore, by main effort a man first practises *viveka* — (discrimination between the Self and Not-Self)". And when the preliminary training is successfully completed and the seeker enters on the last lap, with *śravana*, *manana*, and the other prescribed disciplines, then too the need for the active exercise of the discriminating intellect cannot be dispensed with. In *manana* the student has continually to reflect on the revealed truth, and examine it against all possible doubts and objections that might be raised, till intellectual conviction is established. And then comes the last stage, say the Upaniṣads, when thought itself is superseded and the goal of all seeking is reached. In the metaphysical quest, *viveka* begins with the exercise of the capacity for pure thought, which comes with *citta-śuddhi*, and by the grace of Īswara. And it is consummated in the vision of the Infinite and secure establishment in the Self. Not till then can vigilance against *pramāda*, or the positive discrimination that at every step helps the seeker to prefer *śreyas* to *preyas*

49. A.D.II.23.9 and 10.
50. V.P.VI.6.
51. See com. on Br. Sutra III.4.26.

as the Kathopaniṣad puts it, be relaxed. And when he is securely established in the Self, there is, as I observed earlier, nothing to prevent the *jīvan-mukta's* partaking in the world's work in the interests of *lokasangraha*. The theistic systems, though they have no place for the *jīvanmukta*, likewise insist on *kaiṅkaryam* to God and service to man in the spirit of loving-kindness.

These abstruse speculations on the destiny of man, and the problems of "fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute" may seem at the first blush far from the concerns of the common man. But that was not what our forefathers taught. While every one might not be a philosopher, and more than a small minority could not at any time hope to brace itself for the arduous ascent to the summits of the Self, they felt that the fundamental ideals of the race must and could be made part of the popular culture, the mental climate in which all men, even the humblest, lived and laboured. The vast range of *purāṇic* literature, which was designed to meet this need, shows infinite resource in tackling it. Though the Ātman cannot be described, the chroniclers were moved by the desire to bring home to the mind of the reader, by all possible devices, a sense of Its inscrutability, Its infinity, Its comprehending within itself, without incongruity, ideal notions that on the plane of the discursive intellect are totally irreconcilable, as well as the truth, beauty and bliss that are of Its essence. Moral ideals are proclaimed with such uncompromising rigour, as in the tale of Harischandra for instance, that they might be dismissed as impracticable but for the art with which it is suggested that in truth there is no dualism of Good and Evil, that however great the travail, the Power that puts the pressure also provides the support against it. Every one will not, by reading the tale, become a Harischandra, but all according to their measure benefit by the loosing of "the knot of the heart", the relaxing of the mind's preoccupations with the petty concerns of every day; the result is that they not only gain something more than an intellectual appreciation of the single virtue of truth, but also a generous emotion that helps to raise their moral tone. Those who are repelled by the notion that the *Brahmavit* rises above good and evil might usefully ponder on the bold doctrine, repeatedly illustrated in the *Purāṇas*, that intensity is all, that even if a man seem to hate God, if his passion be thorough-going enough God finds lodgment in his heart, though he does not suspect it, and ousts his little self. Suffer-

ing comes to him as release from limitation. Śuka said to Parikṣit, "The Gopis gained the Lord by love, Kamsa by fear, the King of Cedi and others by hatred, the Vṛiṣnis by kinship, you by friendship, we by devotion." 'Rasa', as I have pointed out, may be derived by the exploiting of every emotion including those of fear and anger; and the Upaniṣad declares:

Raso vai sah / Rasam hyevāyam labdhvā ānandībhavati[52]

52. *Taitt. Up.* II 7.

LECTURE III

INDIA'S IMAGE IN THE WEST

In the first two lectures, an attempt was made to provide a synoptic view of Indian culture from inside the tradition, and to show that intuition and reason have both played a part in determining its nature and aims, and that these qualities are vivified and strengthened by a discipline of mind and character that aims at growth in self-awareness. To-day I propose to discuss briefly the reactions of the outside world to that culture and to point out the reasons for some of the misunderstandings to be found in these external assessments. I shall not waste your time, dealing with the tirades of the William Archers and the Miss Mayos who started with the determination to see nothing but evil in a way of life of which they were too contemptuous to make a genuine attempt to understand it. I will confine myself to a consideration of the difficulties felt by earnest and thoughtful men who believe that East and West can learn from each other by mutual criticism, and of such institutions as caste which are peculiar to Hinduism.

Indian ethics, next to our religions, have attracted the greatest amount of serious attention. Thanks to such careful studies as E. W. Hopkins' *Ethics of India*, even the average Christian missionary writing today is not as self-opinionated and brash as was Prof. McKenzie, for instance, who (as quoted by Hopkins, p. x) found the ethics of India "defective, illogical and anti-social, lacking any philosophical foundation, nullified by abhorrent ideas of asceticism and ritual, and altogether inferior to the higher spirituality of Europe." But Western critics, brought up in the Christian tradition, are not wholly able to rid themselves of their preconceptions. Albert

Schweitzer, in his work on *Indian Thought and its Development* (first published in 1935) has sought to find a set of general principles by reference to which the excellences and deficiencies, not only of Indian but also of European culture, could be explained.[1] India's defective ethics, in his view, are the inevitable corollary of her "world negation," and of the fact that "the Upaniṣads attribute no ethical qualities to the suprasensuous Primal Cause of the universe."

As this latter charge is repeated parrot-like by many other critics it is necessary to say something about it. This superficial conclusion is arrived at by ignoring such explicit Upaniṣadic statements as these — that the Brahman is of the nature of "Knowledge and Bliss" (Br. Up. III. 9.28: Śankara explains that this implies beneficence and serenity); that It is "Peace and Goodness" (Māndūkya Up. 7); that It is "taintless, subtler than the subtlest, birthless, infinite and constant" (Br. Up. IV. 4.20) Thus even the impersonal Absolute of the Advaitin is not, from the human point of view, to be treated as amoral or negative. Sat, the only Reality, is also Satya, Truth. It is *apahata-pāpmā*, untouched by evil (Ch. Up. VIII: 1.5).

The man who would realise this Supreme Self as identical with his own must first qualify, by achieving purity of mind through "the study of the Veda, the performance of prescribed rites, charity and austerity," (Br. Up. IV. 4.22). In other words, he should have led a pure and moral life, discharging his obligations to society before he could achieve that *vairāgya* which sends a man on the ultimate quest, renouncing the world. This is well brought out by Śankara's explanation that "sacrifices" refers only to rites that are enjoined, and not optional rites for gaining material ends; that charity destroys one's sins and increases one's merits; that 'austerity' (*tapasā anāśakena*) means not total self-denial or starvation,[2] "which will only lead to death, not self-knowledge," but dispassionate and restrained enjoyment of sense-objects.

Hopkins has perceptively pointed out (p. 195), "The effect of morality is to sustain that spiritual serenity without which insight and illumination are not forthcoming, so that even in the school of the idealists ethics has a real content." The Upaniṣads again and again

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[1] p. 43.

[2] As Śankara is an uncompromising upholder of the doctrine that *sannyāsa* is indispensable for *mokṣa*, his view that Self-mortification will not bring *Brahma-jñāna*, should dispose of the silly libel that Indian asceticism is masochistic.

emphasise the importance of the ethical life as an indispensable prerequisite of Self-realisation. The *Kaṭhopaniṣad*[3] says, "One who has not desisted from evil courses, whose senses are not under control, and whose mind is not one-pointed and serene, cannot attain the Self through knowledge"; and eleswhere[4] it affirms that he "whose intellect cannot discriminate, whose mind is uncontrolled, is ever impure", and he cannot hope for the knowledge that liberates. The *Cāndogya*[5] stresses that austerities, charity, straightforwardness, non-injury and truth-speaking are the characteristics of the life lived in accordance with Dharma.

As for Īsvara (God) the Primal Cause, Who is regarded in the theistic schools as the Ultimate Truth and as the sole and sufficient object of loving devotion, and Whose Grace the Advaitin too regards as indispensable for the realisation of the identity of the *jīva* with the Brahman, the Upaniṣads speak of Him as the Abode of all auspicious attributes and the highest ethical qualities. The *Chāndōgya*[6] says, "His aims are sure and true, He is the Creator of all, His desires are ever auspicious, He contains in Himself all pure flavours and fragrances, He permeates all that is." (Śrī Śankara observes that unpleasant 'flavours' and 'smells' find no place in Him, since He is untouched by sin, and according to another *Chāndōgya* text, the world that knows sin experiences both).

It is the *jīva* in bondage of which it is said that "by doing good it becomes good, and by doing evil it becomes evil."[7] On the contrary the man who has acquired Vedic knowledge, whose mind is untainted by sin or desire is said, in the *Taittirīya* and the *Bṛhad-Āraṇyaka*, to savour to the full the Bliss of *Brahman*.[8]

It is against this background that such texts as Taitt. II-9-1 and Br. U. IV. 4.22, which confuse European critics like Schweitzer, should be understood. They refer, not to the man who is striving for Self-realisation, but to him who has achieved it and for whom truly nothing else exists but the Self. Such a man is not troubled by remorse for what he may have omitted to do that was good, or what he may have done that was evil. Such remorse comes to the good and con-

[3] *Kaṭha. Up.*, I. 2. 24.
[4] *Katha. Up.*, I. 3. 7.
[5] *Ch. Up.*, III. 17. 4.
[6] *Ch. Up.*, III. 14. 2.
[7] *Br. Up.*, IV. 4. 5.
[8] *Taitt.*, II. 8. 1 to 4 and *Br. Up.*, IV. 3. 33.

scientious man who has not realised the Self, says Śankara, when he is at the point of death and reviews the events of his life. But, for the *jñāni* both virtue and vice have been stripped of their individual distinctions, they have become identified with that Self which is the only Reality; his assurance in the Self is only strengthened by them. He is one who has simply abstracted himself from the time-process, though he might go about the world to all outward seeming like any other man. This truth, which seems a recondite paradox, is beautifully illustrated in the Ramayana where Visvāmitra, the Brahma-jñāni, is shown as listening with serene indifference to Śatānanda's tale of the many vicissitudes and lapses from virtue that beset him in the days when he strove hard to attain Self-realisation.

Because the Advaitin postulates an impersonal Godhead without attributes, Western critics, obsessed by their Christian prepossessions, persuade themselves that not only must such a God be unmoral, but also (as Hopkins quotes McKenzie as saying), "should be incapable of inspiring anybody with a logical desire to practise ethical behaviour." The Upaniṣadic teaching is neither anti-ethical nor amoral. It prescribes a strictly ethical training for the aspirant to the highest knowledge. And with the man who has realised the Self virtue is spontaneous.

Schweitzer preaches the gospel of "reverence for all life." He gives credit to old India for widening the scope of *ahimsā* to cover not merely men but all living beings. But in his opinion its ethical value was considerably diminished, because "the *ahimsā* commandment had its origin, not in a feeling of pity, but in the idea of keeping pure from the world, and it was only later that *ahimsā* adopted the motive of compassion" (p. viii). This criticism is coloured by the general bias which makes Europeans imagine that Indian ethics are a matter of taboos, of *śāstraic* "Do's and Dont's", and do not derive from the willed action of a conscious and free moral agent. His categorical declaration that "the most ancient Indian thought hardly knows any sympathy with the animal creation" (p. 80) will hardly be accepted by any one who reads the Rg. Vedic hymns with care. He will not miss there the note of deep sympathy and understanding for the animal kingdom which all pastoral peoples develop. They call blessings again and again on "the bipeds and the quadrupeds, (*śam dvipade śam catushpade*) as well as on the stranger within the gates. The story of *Śaramā*, the celestial dog, and the vivid descriptions of the playfulness of young colts, the beauty of horses and the motherliness of cows, all go to show how much the loving care of animals entered into the life of the Aryan Indian.

From the days of the Samhitās onwards, the doctrine of *ahimsā* went on gathering strength and clarity. *Mā-himsyāt sarvā-bhūtāni* is a Vedic injunction. While the *Maitrāyani Samhita* (III-9-3)) of the Yajur-veda regards the offering of animals and plants in sacrifice as not *himsā*, in the Rg. Veda itself one finds a growing repugnance to killing animals even for the propitiation of the higher powers. There are injunctions which declare that "the devout offering of praise or a fuel-stick or of cooked food" is as efficacious as animal sacrifice.[9]

In the Krishna Yajur-veda Samhita (II-5-4) the *yajamāna* of a particular sacrifice is required to refrain from "telling lies, eating meat, having connection with women, or scenting his clothes" so long as he is engaged in the sacrificial ceremony. And the reason given is worth noting. "For it is well known that the Devas do not do these things." This obviously derived from the conviction that spiritual advancement would not be possible for one who had not restrained his crude appetites or developed kindliness and sympathy towards all creatures.

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[9] The offhand explanation of traditional ethics as a system of primitive taboos deserves a closer look. The Christian decalogue, I suppose, derives its authority as much from the fact that it is regarded as a divine commandment as from its appeal to the moral instinct. In the Veda man is called upon to be ever active in the pursuit of the good, because he is in essence one with God and must imitate Him. (*Atharva Veda*, X. 7. 40 and 8. 44, and *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, XI. 5. 7, quoted by Hopkins).

As regards the operation of the moral instincts, two facts have to be recognised. On the one hand all moral codes may be regarded as conventional, seeing that some things which are looked upon as grossly immoral in one society are held to be not only blameless but praiseworthy in another contemporary society. The marriage of first cousins may be mentioned as an example. But if that is regarded as irrelevant on the view that it is a mere 'tabu', how are we to account for the general aversion to incest, which is shared by most societies, ancient or modern, but not all (as shown by the practice among the old Burmese Kings)? It would be more in accord with the facts, therefore, to recognise that any practice, however it originated, which has for ages been regarded by a society as immoral *is* immoral for that society, because it is profoundly repugnant to deep-seated emotions, even if these had originated as prejudices. And if that society happens to be also a religious one, it inevitably believes that the practice in question is unacceptable to God and He must punish one who transgresses His will in this matter. A vivid example of this attitude is to be found in the famous Rg. Vedic *sūkta* (X. 10) reporting the dialogue between Yama and Yami, the former repulsing the amorous advances of the latter on the ground that incest was forbidden by the gods, that it was profoundly repugnant to his (Yama's) feelings and that, however secret the sin, it would be found out by the all-knowing gods.

The age of the *Brāhmaṇas*, which attached so much importance to sacrifice, also saw the growth of a general aversion to meat-eating (as it was held to be wicked, like lying), and to the causing of injury to living creatures. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* propounds the doctrine that the eater of meat is eaten in the next birth by the animal that had been killed for his food. This belief was to grow in strength with the belief in *karma* and reincarnation.

In the Upaniṣads *dayā* and *ahimsā* are equally exalted. Schweitzer, who refers in a footnote to the *Chāndogya* passages praising *ahimsā*, unaccountably fails to mention the even better known legend in the *Bṛhad-Āraṇyaka*[10] in which Brahmā bracketed compassion with self-control and charity as cardinal virtues. There is nothing in that passage to suggest that compassion was to be shown only to human beings. Śankara in his commentary points out that Brahmā intended that all the three virtues he enjoined should be practised by men, and not merely charity, "because men are lacking in self-control and are greedy and cruel." It was this strain of cruelty, found in unregenerate human nature, that was sought to be countered from the beginning, not only by the preaching of compassion, but also of the complementary virtue of *ahimsā*.

Schweitzer, having got this all wrong, does not improve matters by declaring that the Upaniṣadic seers, "while theoretically convinced of the homogeneousness of all created things, incomprehensibly neglected to draw from that the conclusion that "man must have sympathy with the animal creation as with his own kind" (p 80). But he has a queer understanding of the *Tat tvam asi* formula, which he twits us for failing to live up to. He draws the strange conclusion, (p. 130) that "the Upaniṣads explain all love as self-love," from Yājñavalkya's statement, *Ātmanastu kāmāya sarvam priyam bhavati* (Br. Up. II. 4.5.) His comment on this is: "That is to say, because the same Brahman dwells in others as in ourselves, what seems to us to be love for others is merely self-love of the Brahman. So because of the impossibility of distinguishing between the I and the Thou, it is determined in that Upaniṣad that all love to one's neighbour is only the the profoundest self-love." It is a travesty of the fundamentals of the upaniṣadic teaching to attribute any motive to the impersonal Absolute, much less that self-love which even in imperfect man is hardly a lovely virtue.

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10 *Br. Up.*, IV. 2. 1.

The Brahman is not Spinoza's Deity, which can love only itself. To avoid the ambiguity involved in the term 'ātman', it is best to translate the passage as Swāmi Mādhavānanda has translated it. "It is not for the sake of all, my dear, that all is loved, but for one's own sake that it is loved." The Upaniṣad points out, what is a matter of universal experience, that you develop love for what brings you joy or gives you satisfaction. Thus Sītā said, "Father, brother and son give one but a measure of joy. It is the husband that is the giver of unlimited joy. Who will not cleave to him?"[11] Having thus drawn pointed attention to a fact of common experience, Yājñavalkya goes on to show that this individual self, which is in each of us and which (to quote Śankara on Br. Up. II. .1.20) "is familiar to us as being dear", is none other than the Supreme Self and it is That that is to be realised "through hearing, reflection and meditation." We love all things only because the Ātman gives them significance.[12]

Schweitzer complains that ethics are reduced to nothing by the explanation given by Yājñavalkya. In his view, "true ethics presume the absolute difference of one's own ego and those of others and accentuate it." To him and those of his way of thinking the *ego* is an ultimate, though he has to confess that "the difference between one man's ego and another's is not a plain matter of course but an enigma." Advaita does not look upon the ego as un ultimate but as a simulacrum which veils the *jīvā's* consciousness of its true nature and which is destroyed the moment knowledge of the Self dawns on the latter, Advaita does not quarrel with the view that ethics are relevant so long as the sense of difference persists; in fact it holds that only by a truly ethical life can one acquire that knowledge which saves by removing the ignorance that produces the sense of difference. But to hug that sense of difference because it gives you an opportunity to

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[11] *Ram.*, II. 39. 30 & 31.

[12] As another example of the rather cavalier way Schweitzer has with the scriptures that he sets out to expound, attention may be drawn to his observations (pp. 49-50) on "the teaching of the Brahmins" that "all individual souls after their existence in the world of the senses are without further ado reabsorbed into the universal soul. Every cessation of bodily existence is equivalent to a final return of the soul concerned to the universal soul . . . Every soul in the corporeal world is new to it, visits it but once and automatically participates in reunion into the universal Soul without any knowledge or achievement on its own part being required of it." Perhaps as an after-thought, he providently adds in small type that "there are passages in the Upanisads which read as if union and immortality were only attained through knowledge etc. But the real meaning of the doctrines is not laid open to question by such inexact statements"! The upanisadic sages must stand abashed before such omniscience.

exercise your moral faculties, would be to sin against the light of that truth without which there can be no real morality. To by-pass truth, saying that it is all "an enigma", is to practise not morality but self-deception.

To return to the topic of *ahimsā*. The Cāndogya[18], repeating the Vedic injunction almost word for word, exhorts the spiritual aspirant to refrain from avoidable injury to "any living creature". The reservation embodied in the words *anyatra tīrthebhyah* is not to be interpreted narrowly as meaning "except in sacrifices", as commentators have pointed out; *tīrthāni* actually stands for "all duties enjoined by the scriptures on the different *āśramas*." The exception is necessitated by the fact that every *karma* inevitably involves some injury to some thing or other; so for that matter must the life of every man (whether he performs Vedic *karmas* or not) who lives on this planet. Śankara is, however, careful to point out that, subject to this one exception, the obligation not to injure extends to the 'non-living' (*sthāvarāni*), that is trees, plants etc., as well as to the living. And this obligation is laid qually on all the four *āśramas*.

The Dharma Sūtras are unequivocal in exhorting all men to practice positive virtues like generosity and compassion as well as *ahimsā*. Thus Āpastamba, who permits the eating of certain classes of meat under strict conditions, imposes severe penalties for injuring or killing rats, frogs and many an other frail creature, both vertebrate and non-vertebrate; and the *Vaiśvadeva* rite is described as making all creatures participants in the householder's bounty, because it provides food for them.

Schweitzer, apparently not being too sure that he can prove that *ahimsā* was not founded in compassion, employs the other arm of his Morton's fork argument—that *ahimsā* is a barren doctrine because it is impracticable. I do not know whether this is to be regarded as exculpating the ethics of those religions which hold that "active love" for animals is perfectly compatible with killing them for food or exploiting them in any way we choose, because they are supposed to have been created by Providence for the use of man. But *ahimsā*, as India has always understood it, is not so naive a doctrine as Schweitzer assumes it to be, when he dismisses it as impracticable. The provident exception made in the *Chāndogya*, which I have already discussed, showed a realisation that some limitation of its scope was

[18] *Ch. Up.*, VIII. 15. 1. The Vaisvadeva rite is intended partly as expiation for the 'five killings' *(pancha-sūnā)* which every householder is inevitably involved in.

inescapable. And in the story of the Dharma-Vyādha[14] in the Mahabharata, and the discussion between Jājali and the Tulādhāra in the same epic, the implications of the doctrine are discussed with a moral subtlety which seems far beyond the comprehension of those who preach the gospel of "active love." The conclusion is emphasised that what would really make for personal integrity and for the peace and welfare of all things living, is the cultivation on the part of men of an attitude of equable friendship for all beings, *amaitvam-sarva-bhūteshu.*

But nuances of ethical theory apart, the sovereign quality of compassion, which includes forgiving those who injure you, was never more passionately expounded than in the beautiful words of Sita, spoken centuries before Christ was born, that it is the duty of the noble (the 'Ārya') to forgive and show pity, since "there can be no man who never offends against the right."[15] In the language of Dharma *maitrī* always goes with *karuṇā.* And Śrī Rama, who is described as "one who had compassion for all creatures" and "was ever intent on the good of all," cites what he describes[16] as the ancient *gāthā* of Kandu, as well as the example of a dove that fed with its own body the enemy who was in distress. These 'gāthās' were probably hoary legends even at the time the Ramayana was composed. Schweitzer and other Western critics, however, assume that the epics were late compositions, which makes it easy to deny the authority of antiquity to the ethical precepts found in them. But it would not be so easy to deny that their teaching of non-violence and compas-

[14] *Mbh.*, III, chs. 207 to 216 & XII. 262 to 264.

[15] *Ram.*, VI. 116. 44.

[16] *Ram.*, VI, ch. 18. 24 to 31.

sion has impressed itself on the lives of the Indian people in a manner for which there is no parallel in the world.[17]

The trouble with philosophers like Schweitzer is that they would have their cake and eat it too. Any other-regarding emotion, like the theist's love of God or of his fellow-creatures as the children of God, is possible only so long as there is dualism (see pp. 257-65). Schweitzer admits that the dualistic world-view "does not correspond with reality, for it comprises doctrines about the universe which cannot be made to square with the facts." He argues that 'mysticism', — by which he means the aim to attain "spiritual unity with Infinite Being," the mysterious Will which governs the universe — avoids the mistake of "assuming two principles in the history of events starting from the very origins of Being, one 'an ethical personality who guarantees that what happens in the universe has an ethical goal', the other, "the natural force dwelling within the Universe and operative in a course of events governed by natural laws." But, while conceding that, unlike dualism, "mysticism is in its nature the perfected kind of world-view," Schweitzer does not find it satisfying, because "it denies the world and life, and has no ethical content."

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[17] In his book *My Life and Thought*, Schweitzer writes that "to the man who is truly ethical all lives are sacred." But occasions arise when he has to decide "which of two lives he must sacrifice in order to preserve the other. But all through this series of decisions he is conscious of acting on subjective grounds and arbitrarily, and knows that he bears the responsibility for the life he has sacrificed." How arbitrary such decisions may be becomes clear enough from two cases he cites from his own experience. As a doctor he has to sacrifice the germs of sleeping sickness in order to save their victims. But when he found that a young fish eagle had got into the "cruel hands" of the natives at Lamberene, he rescued it from them and then had to decide either to let it starve or to kill a number of small fish every day in order to feed it. Clearly the two cases were not on all fours. If he decided to sacrifice the fish on the ground that relatively to the eagle they were inferior creatures, not only might the same reasoning be held to justify the enormous slaughter of animals that goes on all over the world to fill man's insatiable maw; it might even be contended with a measure of plausibility that the perfecting of the physical efficiency of the human species — so obviously part of the Divine purpose, according to Schweitzer's way of thinking — actually demanded it. Even the gentle St. Francis of Assisi objected to a brother cutting off the trotters of a live pig not on the ground that it involved cruelty but that it diminished the value of somebody's property.

It is not irrelevant to this discussion to point out that when the second World War broke out Schweitzer wrote from Africa to his friends that he feared that the holocaust might impair "the ethical and religious authority of the white man among these children of nature (the native Africans.)"

"Neither in the history of the universe nor in the first origins of Being can we discover any ethical principles. Nor can ethics be brought into harmony with what we know of the universe."

Schweitzer holds that self-devotion to the world in ethical activity, which is the deep-rooted urge in man, cannot be squared with the conception of spiritual union with infinite Being, since the latter involves world-negation. And he contends that we must stick to ethical activity and the world-affirmation which goes with it, though this necessarily involves repudiation of the desire to realise, or be one with infinite Being. By this repudiation, he argues, we shall be only putting ourselves more in tune with reality, because it is unwarrantable presumption for man to think he can understand the universe. We must "keep within the bounds set to our power of perception." We cannot hope to understand the ways of 'the World Spirit', because "it runs its course in creation and in devastation, in bringing forth and in destroying life." So what happens in nature cannot enable us "to deduce the principle for an activity" by which we can step out of existence for ourselves alone, in order to influence the world in the sense of the World Spirit." And what is this but dualism?

And yet Schweitzer has persuaded himself that by ethical activity we become "one with the Spirit of the universe," the Spirit, mind you, whose nature and ways must ever remain dark and even (in its destructive aspects) repellant to us. How is this miracle to be achieved? It is to be done, it seems, by adopting the world-view of 'ethical mysticism', that is, by comprehending within the range of our sympathy, not merely our fellowmen, but all created beings. It might be best to set out his position in his own words:

> All that is ethical goes back to a single principle of morality, namely the maintenance of life at its highest level and the furtherance of life. The maintenance of one's own life at the highest level by becoming more and more perfect in spirit, and the maintenance at the highest level of other life by sympathetic, helpful self-devotion to it — that is ethics. What we call love is only reverence for life. All material and spiritual values are values only in so far as they serve the maintenance of life at its highest level and the furtherance of life. (p. 260).

To define ethics as "responsibility towards all that lives", is not against the Indian teaching, provided it is clearly understood that that sense of responsibility is manifested in self-awareness and self-control, guarding us against the ever-present temptation to expolit others for our ends. And Indian ethics recognise too that every man has an obligation to exercise those positive virtues that make for better human relations. But they most certainly would not counte-

nance the assumption that ignorant man, even if he be armed with all the knowledge that science can place at his disposal — which knowledge Schweitzer has vast respect for and calls real knowledge — may play Deputy Providence towards his fellow-creatures, and in fact may hope thereby "to achieve active union with the eternal Being."

How one can assume that, by "self-devotion to life with a view to furthering it," we can achieve union with a Being that we can never hope to understand, passes one's comprehension. Schweitzer would infer, from the physiological fact that "our life has sprung from other life and allows other life to proceed from it," that the fostering of life is the supreme purpose of infinite Being, and he thinks that by furthering that purpose we shall achieve unity with that Being. But the notion that the supreme purpose of infinite Being is to foster life, is contradicted by the admission he makes, that devastation is as much a reality of the phenomenal universe as creation and that life lives upon life. Schweitzer's naive attempt to get round this difficulty by saying that we complete "the union by ethical activity with infinite Being" "by union in thought, which consists in resignation to what happens in the universe," merely begs the question. For the counselling of resignation makes a hash of the confident presumption that we must assume 'responsibility towards all that lives."

The simple truth is that there can be no worth-while ethics which are not grounded in metaphysic. If the dualistic world-view is unsustainable, it does not follow that one should be content to pay lip-service to spirituality and busy oneself with 'ethical' activity, which in effect might prove to be ignorant bungling prompted by self-love, though one might not be conscious of it. Advaita holds that the *Brahman* is unknowable. But it does not hold that It cannot be experienced. Nor does it hold that ethical activity is incompatible with the spiritual quest, though for him who has realised the Self, duality, and the ethics that go with duality, cease to be meaningful. The self-sufficient ethical activity that consists in perfecting one's own self and in perfecting life, is satisfying neither as world-view nor as true ethics. Schweitzer's plea for a world-view based on ethical world affirmation boils down to approval of Progress, Science and Uplift, leavened by a sentimental-romantic humanitarianism which, in being active, feels good and concludes that it must therefore be doing good.

The traditional Orientalist bias against 'Brahmanism' is reinforced in Schweitzer by his pet theory that the development of ethics in India was a slow, painful and uncertain process, as it had to contend against the Brahmanic world-view, with its world-negation and life-denial. To Jainism he would give the credit for making *ahimsā* universal in scope; to the Buddha for originating the ethic of compassion, and teaching that evil should be overcome with good; and to the *Kural* for propagating the ethic of active love. The *Kural*, which he praises as immeasurably superior to Manu in this respect, actually embodies a millennial teaching. I would invite your attention in proof to the Vedic hymn in praise of charity that I quoted in the first lecture. And while Schweitzer gives grudging praise to Sri Rāmānuja on the ground that, with him, "divine love is already something warmer and more heart-felt than in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*," the great Ācharya would have incontinently repudiated the suggestion that he had improved on the *Gītā* or introduced a note of loving devotion that was not to be found in the oldest of the Purāṇas, the *Viṣnu Purāṇa*, which is anterior to the *Kural*, and which is regarded with reverence by all schools of Vedānta.

Schweitzer's failure of understanding is nowhere more pronounced than in his remarks on the *Gītā*. That scripture so sharply contradicts his thesis that Indian philosophy preaches passivity, that he is led to minimise the importance of the *Gītā* gospel of disinterested action. He says of Sri Kṛṣna, "When he speaks of action, he never means more than the exercise of the activity dictated by caste, not subjective action proceeding from the impulses of the heart, and self-chosen responsibilities." What the *Gītā* recognises is that the impulses of the untutored heart can be destructive: and 'self-chosen responsibilities', if they are '*para-dharma*', might be equally destructive. Schweitzer acknowledges that, in emphasising duty without hankering after the fruits thereof, the *Gītā* proclaimed the Categorical Imperative long before Kant did. But, unlike Kant, who declared that the thing-in-itself cannot be known, Sri Kṛṣna not only declares that the Self can be realised but the supreme duty of man is to attain it.

Schweitzer refers to the Lord's teaching that all work should be done in loving self-surrender to God. If a man works, but not for selfish ends, then that resolve to work is an assertion of free will; that the resolve is made in the spirit of self-surrender does not make the freedom any less real. No doubt the Lord told Arjuna that he would

be merely the apparent cause (*nimittam*),[18] (which in the context it would be wrong to translate as 'tool', as Schweitzer does). But if Arjuna was regarded by Sri Krishna as an automaton that was bound to carry out His will, there was no need for Him to have resorted to exhortation at all. The Lord was not asking him to do any particular thing, on the doing of which He had decided for His own purposes. He was asking him to do his duty (*Svadharma*) in the situation in which he found himself as the result of his own past. The *Gītā* is in accord with the Upaniṣadic teaching in fully recognising the freedom of the will. A reading of the *Bṛhad-Āranyaka* Upaniṣad IV-4-5, with verses 33 to 43 of Ch. III of the *Gītā*, will show that it was realised that denial of freedom of the will would amount to denying validity to the scriptures that enjoin the practice of *dharma*, and that *samsāra* results, not from every kind of action, but only from action that is self-regarding. Schweitzer is therefore wholly wide of the mark when he commiseratingly remarks that "Krishna dares to confess the simple truth that if the freedom of the will be denied, there can be no question of guilt."

If old India was not as keen on what Schweitzer means by "active love", that is, organised social service and uplift, it was because the old *ṛṣis* were better psychologists. They sensed that the itch for interfering with and ordering other peoples' lives might be due to egotistic self-assertiveness and the will to dominate. And they knew that while action inspired by such motives could not, being impure, much benefit those for whose sake it was engaged in, it might definitely harm the philanthropists themselves. That is the moral of the story of Jada Bharata (*Bhāg*: Sk. V. Ch. 1 to 7) who rescued a fawn just born, from imminent death by drowning: which was an act of pure and noble compassion. But the way he began to cling to the fawn and to identify his life with its, and to show towards it a possessiveness that was as far removed from altruism as the tyranny of the possessive female, of which we hear so much from contemporary moralists, merely resulted in his getting deeper and deeper into the

18. 'Efficient cause', in philosophical parlance, may be ancillary, but it is not involuntary. Ānandagiri in his gloss on Sankara's comment on this verse interprets the Lord as saying, "When the enemy are going to be destroyed because I have willed it, your refraining from action is not going to make any difference to the issue." Madhusūdana Sarasvati in his commentary brings out the same in a different way, representing the Lord as saying, "I, as all-consuming Time have killed them already. If they are still seated in their chariots it is because I would like you to get the credit for killing them when after your action I throw them down from their seats." The Madhva commentator Raghavendra says: *Pascādapitvayi stitvā ahameva haniṣyāmīti bhāvah.*

toils of self-love. Many impartial European critics have testified to the havoc done in the modern world by the will to power masquerading as "active love."

Schweitzer's naive faith in progress is not shared by all Europeans. Count Hermann Keyserling wrote in his *Travel Diary of a Philosopher* that progress and spiritualisation belong to different dimensions. Spiritualisation signifies self-realisation, it means "the ensouling of the former from the utmost living depths, no matter whether one call it Ātman, God, Principle of life, and so on. No one unpossessed of the most exceptional vitality can develop simultaneously in two different directions. This explains why the Westerner, so enamoured of progress, is the most unspiritual being in the world."[19] But, naturally, being a Westerner himself, he does not draw the conclusion, "Let us have spiritualisation then and let progress go hang." So he rather tamely concludes, "If Progress is unavoidable, what are we to accept as the exponent of spirituality? Perfection. The degree of perfection, and it alone, is the true gauge of spiritualisation." Now 'perfection' is a vague word; if it means rising to the height of one's potentialities, that would hardly be possible unless self-perfection as an essential goal were grounded in metaphysic. Playing the tin-whistle to perfection would be hardly regarded as a substitute for spirituality. It would be something if at least the master of that humble instrument played it for the greater glory of the Lord. But perfectionists who believe in lifting themselves up by their own boot-straps have no use for God.

There are other believers in Progress, who are more modest, less sentimental. There is Prof. Morris Ginsberg,[20] for instance. He holds that the higher religions have contributed to moral progress. "They all set up an ideal of life going far beyond the traditional or conventional morality and beyond the occasional intuitions reported from earlier phases." In illustration of the theory that there is such a thing as moral progress, he cites the enunciation of the golden rule in the Mahābhārata,[21] as well as in the Chinese, Hebrew and Christian scriptures. I have in these lectures given reasons for the view that this and other ethical truths were not a late development

19. That was what Rene Guenon meant when he spoke of "the reign of quantity" in the modern world; for progress in practice seems to mean multiplication.

20. *The Idea of Progress*: By Morris Ginsberg.

21. See *Mbh.* XII. 260. 22 and XIII. 113. 8.

in India It seems to me that the instances Prof. Ginsberg quotes do not suffice to establish a theory of moral progress. It is difficult to believe that the modern world has improved on the moral insights that you find in the Rāmāyana, in the Buddha, or in Jesus.

Be that as it may, Prof. Ginsberg does not believe in leaving morals to religion. "The principles formulated by the ancient religions and philosophies," he says, "were conceived in terms of personal goodness, and took little account of social relations. Though they single out elements essential to all morality, they are clearly inadequate when applied to the conditions prevailing in large-scale complex society. In complex societies the problem is to find the way to curb power and to reduce the conflicts that arise from inequalities of power". In other words, he would bring morals within the province of politics. He wants that a clear distinction should be made between law and morals. But if we remember that in every modern polity law is a function of power and 'justice' is an elastic term, we shall be better able to appraise his claim that "in many societies there has been real progress in this sense in recent times, that successful attempts have been made to examine existing institutions in the light of moral principles and to discover the criteria of just law." Moral principles, he goes on, have to be tested "not only by their inner consistency but by their relevance to particular situations and their power to solve definite problems." In other words, principles will have to be ascertained empirically, as we go on trying out various solutions for the ills of society. If, as he suggests, the State cannot shirk its responsibility for thus promoting moral progress, the (principles)it formulates will inevitably bear the impress of the prejudices and preconceptions of those who wield political power.

Discounting such criticism, Prof. Ginsberg manfully argues that there are no grounds for fearing that 'justice' would come to mean (as Alice might put it) "what I say." He would like us to think that, though the world is now divided into two hostile power groups, "the Communists and their opponents do not differ in the conception they have of the ultimate ends of social life." He observes that, in theory at least, the Communists do not deny the value of individual personality, but their fanaticism for taking the heaven of socialism by storm seems to them to justify the adoption of any means that they consider necessary; "with the result", as Prof. Ginsberg candidly admits, "that the substance of morality is destroyed in the supposed service of an apocalyptic good, and the barriers against arbitrary power broken down in the name of freedom." But if you concede that personal morality is not enough and that the State must be not

only empowered to remedy large-scale inequalities and injustices but also practise social engineering in the light of the vision of the good life that the wielders of State power have, how can we then exclude the possibility of the world being given over more and more to such organised fanaticism as collectivism inevitably engenders?

Besides, Prof. Ginsberg forgets that Western communists and and democrats do not between them cover every possible ethical outlook. Dharma comprehends elements which do not come within the purview of secular ethics. The attitude of the old Indian lawgivers towards the State was also strikingly different from that of modern reformers. They did not set themselves against the State exercising a correcting and stabilising influence. But it is a travesty of truth to say that the maxim *Rājā Kālāsya Kāraṇam*[22] was a charter of royal absolutism. The King could not make Dharma, he could only administer it. It had to be ascertained by men who were qualified to do so by knowledge, character and disinterested zeal for the public welfare. Dharma, as I have tried to show, could not be discovered by rule of thumb methods. The recognition in the Smritis of such concepts as *yuga dharma, deśa dharma, kula dharma,* and so on, the fact that in regard to their scope there was often difference of opinion among the authorities, and the development of a subtle science of exegetics to reconcile such differences, all go to show that the need for a public morality was not ignored. and that there were certain fundamental obligations which every self-sufficient community had to undertake. Thus Āpastamba[23] declares that it was the responsibility of the King to see that no subject of his suffered from hunger, disease, or exposure to cold or heat or rain, for lack of means; if he did, the blame would be the King's. But except in brief periods when a highly centralised administration sought to regulate every element in the State, as shown in Kautilya's *Artha Sāstra,* employing to this end statecraft which in vital respects was repugnant to the Law of Dharma, Indian tradition has favoured the rule of minimum government, and reliance on the active goodwill of the individual, whose *dhārmic* instincts had been properly trained, to ensure that social purposes were not lost sight of. Old India did not place much faith in the assumption, which Prof. Ginsberg makes — joining issue with F. A. Hayek for dismissing it as 'scientism' — that "man can by taking thought direct in some measure the course of his future development".

22. *Mbh.* XII. 69. 79.

23. *A.D.* II. 25. 11.

This was reflected in its attitude to history. Hinduism, with its doctrine of Karma and its theory of *Yuga* cycles, could not subscribe to the idea of progress as a world purpose to be realised in time, though it did, as I have tried to show, value life in this world, not as a preparation for life in the hereafter, but as a means of self-improvement and self-realisation for the individual human being. It held that the natural tendency of all things to deteriorate with the passage of time must have its repercussions in the moral sphere. Whenever this imbalance became so serious as to threaten to short-circuit the cosmic process or prevent its working itself out, there was a descent of the Divine Grace to set matters right. Thus incarnation was regarded as the ark of the Dharma. Hinduism, unlike Christianity or any other revealed religion, speaks of incarnations, not *the* incarnation. "Numberless are Hari's incarnations." Looking upon the phenomenal universe as a beginningless and endless process, it cannot possibly accept the theory of a unique and perfect revelation at a particular point of time. Infinite and infinitely varied are time-events and the confluences that the endless story of man witnesses, though it follows a broadly repetitive design. The salient features of this story, and its major periods or cosmic eras, each with its incarnation, or incarnations, are the theme of the Purāṇas; they may, from this point of view, be described as outlining the permanent psychological history of mankind in terms of myth and symbol.

The Purāṇic cosmogony fits in with the idea of *Karma* which, to the Hindu mind at any rate, offers the most satisfying solution of many problems, including that of evil and pain. European philosophy dismisses the theory of recurrent creation as fanciful; it would, in its opinion, reduce it to a meaningless act of repetition. The Western view of Progress is based on the contrary assumption that the world, though very old, judging by our human standards, is still at the threshold of its career. Though astronomers try to make our flesh creep with tales of the ultimate destiny of life on this planet — which, according to some of them, is that we shall be burnt to cinders, according to others, that we shall be frozen out — we are also comforted with the assurance that it is all very far away indeed, and that for all practical purposes we may assume that the world is everlasting. But there seems to be no more objective justification for assuming this than for assuming the truth of the Hindu theory. Though it may be reasonably argued that down the ages social organisation has increased in complexity and range of purpose, the individual human being, regarded as the member of a species, has not changed much. In all ages highly evolved souls are found side by side with the most primitive. While moving in the midst of a crowd, and

inevitably following some sort of rough rule of the road, our heads are full of our own dreams; we each live in a private universe. Even if all oddities and eccentricities could be ironed out, and a standard pattern of the reasonable man after the formula of Bentham and Mill or any of the latter-day reformers could be fixed, it is difficult to see how that could make any difference to man's ultimate destiny. While the possibility of the hydrogen bomb or future improvements on it sending us all to glory at the same moment of time is not to be excluded, the destruction of the earth may not terminate the *samsāric* cycle for him.

The dazzling conquests of science, by enabling man to knead his environment as he will and wrest many of its secrets from Nature, has bred an intoxication of power which is reacting disastrously on human freedom. The rise of totalitarianism on a scale unimagined in earlier ages has been made possible by ambitions roused by these victories of science, and furthered by the instruments which science placed at the disposal of unscrupulous men.

Science itself is an ethically neutral activity. But in the contest for world supremacy, which is being waged with no holds barred, scientists have been as automatic in toeing the line of the wielders of power as was Alladin's slave of the lamp. The fascination of the quest for the kind of truth that is available to the conceptualising mind is not to be denied. But a hundred times as much money is being spent on perfecting the bombs, and on the conquest of space, as on research that has no such spectacular ends in view. And if a close time for new inventions and discoveries with a commercial value were declared tomorrow, as the result of an international pact, one wonders how many pure scientists would persevere in their quest for scientific truth with sealing wax and string.

So much for Progress and Science. As regards the social uplift which Schweitzer regards as the supreme purpose of ethics, he seems to be unaware of the basic dichotomy in his thinking. His methodical mind revolts against the untidiness that enables the Indian to lodge, as he believes, the world-negating and the world-affirming ideals together in his mind without any sense of incongruity. He admits that Jesus too, under the impression that the end of the world was about to come, looked for the perfect life elsewhere; and he thinks it was a fortunate thing for Christian Europe that, by a mistaken reading of what Jesus taught, it jettisoned his ideal of world-negation and threw itself with all its heart and soul into the task of bettering this world. Then by a further feat of mental agility; Schweitzer persuades him-

self that, despite his mistaken world-negation, Jesus, unlike the Indian sages, taught an ethic of active love. But how could he have done that if he believed that ethics were valid only in the context of a philosophy of world-affirmation?

I hope what has been said in these lectures will suffice to make it clear that the claim to a superior validity for the Christian ethic is without justification. After all the proof of the pudding is in the eating. There is no doubt that the ethic taught by Christianity has to some extent helped to sublimate the European instinct for self-assertion and domination. But in trying to accommodate itself to the nature and temperament of Western man, the Eastern teaching — for after all Jesus was an Easterner — has been cut off from the sources of its inspiration. Religion is in retreat everywhere, but not so precipitately elsewhere as in those lands where the sufficiency of active ethics has been preached. Schweitzer, being a religious man, is pained by the phenomenon, incomprehensible to him, that men are these days content to concern themselves solely with problems bearing on man and society. But in applauding the Renaissance, the Eighteenth Century, and the Victorian Era, for their triumphant world-affirmation, and pointing out that those were the periods in the world's history in which mankind was emancipated from many social evils, and in blaming the Middle Ages for their world-negation, he overlooks the fact that it was precisely in the ages that he praises that the forces were incubated, which have found their logical fulfilment not only in modern irreligion but also in the universal decay of morals.

Schweitzer rather condescendingly remarks of the seers of the Upaniṣads, that "their doctrine of Soul-in-all-Things is much less living than that of the Renaissance, although here and there it reminds us of that." He goes on to pronounce the verdict that "the conception of force is not yet fully formed among them, and this impedes the development of the doctrine of Soul-in-all-Things." Anent this it would be enlightening to hear what Jacob Burckhardt,[24] the famous historian of the Italian Renaissance, has to say on the baneful effect on morals of "the consciousness of individual force," which Schweitzer so prizes. "When highly developed people of the Renaissance tell us that their principle is 'Repent nothing,' this contempt for repentance must automatically extend to the sphere of morals, *because its origin, namely, the consciousness of individual force, is universal*" (italics mine). Elsewhere Burckhardt points out that "the worldliness, through

24. *History of the Italian Renaissance*: By Jacob Burckhardt.

which the Renaissance seems to offer so striking a contrast to the Middle Ages, owed its first origin to the flood of new thoughts." Though he philosophically reconciles himself to this worldliness with the thought that "it is a lofty necessity of the modern spirit that this attitude (of worldliness) once gained can never be lost," his rather fatalistic conclusion about its repercussion on religion seems to contrast strangely with Schweitzer's breezy optimism. Burckhardt writes, "How soon and by what paths this search leads back to God, and in what ways the religious temper of the individual will be affected by it, are questions that cannot be resolved by any general answer." It is a century since Burckhardt wrote, and Western man seems very far from finding his way back to God.

As for the Age of Enlightenment[25] and the England of the glorious days of Victoria, for whose "splendid spirituality" Schweitzer is all admiration, it is only necessary to remark that while Voltaire made infidelism fashionable, and Rousseau elevated the undisciplined human heart into a law unto itself, and neither of them led a morally exemplary life, the political absolutism that Hobbes taught, and the prudential ethics by which Locke sought to take the edge off it, resulted on the one hand in the unabashed cult of power of which we have not yet seen the consummation, and on the other, in the ostentatious philanthropy that was thrown as a cloak over the exploitation in the name of progress that the Industrial Revolution inaugurated; the victims of exploitation being the lower classes in the imperialist countries as well as the helpless people of the colonies. And while we are about it, we may as well say that "world-affirmation" has, in economic terms, meant not only exploitation of weaker peoples, but also extravagant depletion of the world's scanty natural resources.

If the subjectivism of Fichte and Hegel and the Will to Power of Nietzche have been largely responsible for breeding the philoso-

25. In *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, J. Huizinga, while revealing himself as a social optimist in the following remarks, does not, it will be noticed, attempt to make out a theoretical case for progress; at least he does not idealise the Renaissance or even the Eighteenth Century so excessively as to make it unrecognizable, which is what Schweitzer does: "If in all that regards the things of this world there is no hope of improvement and a progress, however slow, those who love the world too much to give up its delights, and who nevertheless cannot help aspiring to a better order of things, see nothing before them but a gulf. We will have to wait till the eighteenth century — for even the Renaissance did not truly bring the idea of Progress—before men resolutely enter the path of social optimism; only then the perfectibility of men and society is raised to the rank of a central dogma, and the next century will only lose the naivete of this belief but not the courage and optimism it inspired." But the next century also brought "the Satanic mills of Lancashire" against which Ruskin thundered.

phical climate in which the cult of Power flourishes, the antidote is not to be found in resolving into a all philosophy verbal trick, or in a refined hedonism in ethics. That programme may possibly suffice to support austere intellectuals through the maze of life. But the gospel of Progress as translated into political slogans by the vote-catchers, means for the multitude more cars, more refrigerators, more contraceptives *et hoc*. Their god is the standard of living, their nemesis the increase in geometrical proportion of divorces, suicides, and neuroses of every description.

In regard to the mounting tale of suicides, Prof. Carstairs[26] thinks it can only be explained by "our loss of conviction in any supra-personal system of values which would lend significance both to the existence of our species and to our individual selves." The atomised society of the industrially advanced countries suffers from a great spiritual loneliness which drives it to seek endless distractions. Prof. Carstairs says that in Britain it is "among the young and middle-aged married women, whose children were growing up and whose household duties were no longer demanding, that the syndrome that has been called 'suburban-neurosis' was most noticeable," while it is elderly men, whether married or single, who contribute most to the annual total of suicides.

But is this not directly traceable to the fact that modern men and women have lost the art of growing old gracefully? Manu[27] impressed on the Brahmana the need to comport himself at all stages of life in a manner that would be seemly and befitting. This simple wisdom is one for which women of seventy, who wish to persuade the world to believe that they are debutantes in their teens, have no use. It is not society women alone that stand in need of wisdom. There are men who do not realise that there is a time for work, a time for play, and above all a time to face the eternal verities. The Ramayana[28] speaks of the *muni* who has conquered the self, whose attachments are rooted nowhere, whose home is where the sun sets; it says that that country alone is well governed where such men are to be found roaming freely through its populous cities. But the sage who has inviolate peace in his heart and can live unspoilt amidst the crowd, has gone though the strenuous life of austerity and penance far away from the haunts of men, and thus gained that self-mastery that made

26. In his Reith Lectures of 1962-63.
27. *Manu Smrti*, Ch. IV. 18.
28. *Ram.* II. 67. 23.

him free. The *Vānaprastha āṣhrama* fell into desuetude long ago; *sannyāsa* is fast following in its wake. The need for wisdom to ventilate our dust-laden city souls has, however, not diminished. And every man, to the measure of his capacity, can learn the art of spiritual listening-in, if he would but realise that freedom from the distractions of hope, ambition and frustration is an indispensable preliminary.

That, among other things, was what the much-maligned caste system did for the old-time Hindu. Mr. T. S. Eliot, who pleads for the class system as the guarantor of culture, thinks that what is wrong with caste is that in it class has become petrified. But there is no getting away from the fact that if there are to be castes, they must be hereditary. When the Lord said in the *Gītā* that He created the castes according to *guṇa* and *karma*, what He meant was that men precipitate their future by the sum of their actions and failings, their impulses and innate tendencies, and that He merely allots to each man the fruit of his own *karma* as well as the psycho-physical organism which he has himself helped to fashion, and with which he can have one more go at life and make what he can of it. The Lord's role in creation, as Śri Śankara[29] points out in the *Sūtra-bhāṣya*. is the general role of the cloud that brings the rain which helps seeds take root and sprout, whereas the distinctive character and quality of every tree has been there in the seed all the time, and the cloud has not planted it there.

It is as profitless to enquire into the origin of caste as into the origin of the universe. You may dismiss the *Puruṣa-sūkta* as a Brahmana invention. But it would be more to the point to see dispassionately whether there is justification for seeking to order society on a functional basis. Not only were such societies the rule in the pre-industrial world, though they were never so fully developed on a basis of theory as in Hinduism. Functionalism is a fact of Nature. As to the hereditary principle, it is justified by the fact that by and large it works; as one writer puts it, "The concept, here as elsewhere, contributes to the realisation of the thing itself." We become what we believe.

29. Commentary on *Br. Sūtr.* II. 1. 34.
30. *R.V.* XC.

The distinguished German scholar Helmuth-von-Glassenap points out the practical advantages accruing even from the ramification of the last *varṇa* into numerous sub-castes.

> Caste (he says) "makes their work as light, easy, pleasant and honourable as possible, cuts out competition properly so called, distributes the given volume of work among the largest possible number of available persons, looks after them in case of unemployment, and defends their interests by the most various means. On the other hand the fact that a profession is transmitted from father to son ensures in many respects the quality of the work; through heredity a man reaches an almost organic qualification for a particular activity in a manner that would otherwise be hardly realisable; at the same time technical secrets are transmitted, which allow the craftsman to produce masterpieces by the use of the most primitive means. Lastly, the caste system has largely contributed to the stabilisation of Hindu society and the preserving of civilisation.

To the above remarks of Glassenap I would add that Hindu civilization, unlike most others in the past or in the contemporary world, has drawn its vitality from a culture which was widely diffused through the instrumentality of the caste organisation and the sacramental view of life on which it rested. The sculptor's son not only learnt the technique at his father's bench; he learnt to worship his tools in a spirit of devoutness that made him grasp their genius and use them with a dexterity which seemed to make them an extension of his hand. And he learnt the art of Dhyāna, too, without which no craftsman would feel he had won the freedome of the craft.

The adventurer and the charlatan could not proliferate in such a society, as they do in every walk of life today. Men took a pride in their calling — it was a calling really, not a job for wages. Of Sri Rama Vālmīki says that he prized his station in life and duties as a Kshatriya because it was a heritage, and he felt that by living that life conscientiously, he could get from it that true fame which was more than all the gifts of heaven.[31]

The contentment that the caste system bred was not that of the sot. No man was so unsure of himself that he must needs look down upon another in order to shore up his own self-esteem. English history speaks of the sturdiness of the old-time yeoman who paid the baron the respect that was due to his rank, but for all that knew his own worth. Likewise did every craftsman and artisan in India. Masters of their owu trade or calling, and entertaining no foolish ambition to be a jack of all trades, they were the more ready to recognise excellence in other fields.

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31. *Ram.* II. 1. 16.

Sentimentalists have said that such a system was bound to repress talent, restrict opportunities and make for stagnation. History does not bear this out. The "mute inglorious Miltons" are figments of the poetic fancy. Talent, like murder, will out. And the gifted freak, the man of genius, was nowhere resognised sooner, though only after rigorous tests, or more wholeheartedly. Many, from Chandragupta the Maurya to Shivaji the Mahratta, became kings who had no Kshtriya blood in their veins. The mystery that surrounds their birth did not prevent Nammālvār and Tirumūlar attracting the homage of the proudest Brahmanas almost from the very beginning of their ministry. Nandanār and Tiruppāṇālwar are among the best-loved names in the calendar of saints.

Unlike our reformers in a hurry, sober students of social history and development recognise that caste accounts for the fact that, of all societies of comparable antiquity, Hinduism alone remains a live force today. We shall be told that it is fast disintegrating under the combined pressure of industrialism and of the unprecedented ferment that the egalitarian yeast has set up in traditional societies. But if legitimate caste goes, illegitimate castes, be sure, will usurp its place. South Africa has set up a pseudo-varṇa Dharma; though the United Nations Organisation registers a decorous protest from time to time, neither the land of Apartheid nor its democratic critics take the protest seriously. Every organised pressure group — with the ruling class on top which, under the most diverse political systems, is hardening into a privileged elite — is motivated by an anxious groping for security, a resentment against the impersonal forces that hem men in; and this finds vent in scapegoat-hunting and a pathological craving for a larger and larger share of the dividend, which outpaces the ability of science to satisfy it.

The remedy is not to be found in more materialism, whether you call it "ethical world-affirmation", or by some other fancy name, but in a more truly scientific assessment which takes into account all the facts, the unseen but not on that account unreal, as well as the seen. Graceful and resigned acceptance of the limitations of sense perception, which Schweitzer counsels, will not take us far. As the sages

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32. The most venerated of the Vaishnava Ālvārs; he was not a Brahmana.

33. Author of *Tirumandiram*, a great Saivite saint, who, again, was not a Brahmana.

34. A famous Saivitesaint, one of the 'sixty-three', who was a Panchama.

35. Vaishnavite saint and player on the musical instrument, the 'Pāṇ', an untouchable.

of the *Brāhmaṇas*, asked themselves, when they set themselves the task of devising a satisfactory *araṇi*, the man who seeks Truth must ask himself, when presented with its counterfeit presentment, *Parōkṣam Iva Vā Etat* (Is this not a substitute, and therefore unsatisfactory?) [36]

'Parokṣa' also means 'hearsay'. The age-long dedication of India has been to *Aparōkṣa-jñāna* — direct experience of the Self. When good people like Schweitzer say that you cannot know the Supreme but can nevertheless co-operate in Its purposes by pursuing an active ethics, they are talking a language that Yājñavalkya and Maitreyi would not have understood.[37] Not that they did not prize activity; but it was activity of a different sort. The man who had come to terms with Reality could mobilise a power over the minds and concerns of men by simply being what he was, which was like Niagara to the noisy brook that is the modern gospel of active ethics. The mystic tradition cuts across national and racial boundaries; and it has thrown up spiritual geniuses in all periods of history. Mystics like Śrī Śankara and Śrī Ramānuja in India and St. Theresa in Europe were perfect tornados of activity. But they did not think that ethics were sufficient, or that they could be divorced from metaphysics without losing their vitality; as must 'inevitably'activity without direction and an end steadily kept in view.

Schweitzer seems to derive an obscure satisfaction from the thought that most European mystics were rather different from those of India and that they did not deny the Divine personality or completely repudiate their creaturely state. Neither did the mystics of the theistic schools in India do that. But whether they declared, "I and my Father are one," or they made the affirmation, "Aham Brahmāsmi," they all recognised the truth that God comes first; with them the world came a long way after, and it claimed their love because it was God's handiwork.

If the living religion of the Indian people is not to become a fossil, and if the priceless culture which it has evolved is not to wither, we must face the truth that like causes have like effects. We must make up our minds that metaphysical truth is not for barter. We must examine our institutions, keeping this major purpose in mind. We

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36. Quoted from the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* in the second lecture.

37. See *Br. Up.* V. 2: Maitreyi said she had no use for wealth, as she wanted only *Brahmana-jñāna* "What should I do with that which would not give me immortality?"

must not jettison caste because Europe declares it is bad form. As I said earlier, the best way to judge a social system is by its fruits. Caste and the Hindu joint family have served not only as great social insurance schemes, but have been responsible for fostering the national virtues of kindliness, hospitality and tolerance. There are highly spiritual people who are convinced that if caste goes, Hinduism goes. It is true enough that caste, ritual, sacrament, have all felt to a greater or less extent the eroding effect of time. But that is no reason why we should think it our duty to destroy it, as the humanitarian thinks it his duty to destroy an animal in pain.

Likewise, with regard to the *āśrama* Dharma, which though maimed has still vitality. Even the most sophisticated of men still feel the lure of the Unseen. If a time comes in a man's life when the world loses its hold on him, there is no use your asking him still to go on as if that was all that mattered. If the traditional Hindu has been more successful than the average non-Hindu in keeping on even keel amidst the bewildering problems of the universe, it is because in the traditional training reason goes hand in hand with wary self-knowledge in pursuing the goal that intuition posits. When intuition broadens into vision, the life-long and fruitful tension produced by the polarisation of consciousness is at an end. He can say with Nārada, "I saw no second (other), O sage."[38] Peace and Goodwill, *Śānti* and *Maitri*, the message of the Āraṇyakas, can alone save the world from the law of the jungle.

[39]*Bhadram karṇebhih śṛṇuyāma devāh*
bhadram paśyemākṣabhir-yajatrāh
Sthirair-angaistuṣṭuvāmsas-tanūbhir-
vyaśema devahitam yadāyuh.

[40]*Pūrṇamadah pūrṇamidam pūrṇāt pūrṇamudacyate*
Pūrṇasya pūrṇamādāya pūrṇameyāvaśiṣyate

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38. *Bhāg.* 6-1-18.

39. "O gods, may we hear what is good; while offering sacrifice may we see what is auspicious; may we, with tranquil bodies and tranquil minds, praise the gods and find happiness in a life devoted to their service." (*Isa Up*)

40. That is Infinite, and this is Infinite.
The infinite comes from the Infinite;
Taking the infinite of the Infinite
It remains the Infinite.