

A RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF ANCIENT INDIA
(upto c. 1200 A.D.)

VOLUME ONE

PRE-VEDIC, VEDIC, JAINA
AND BUDDHIST RELIGIONS

About the Author

Dr. S. R. Goyal is the Head of the Department of History, Jodhpur University, Jodhpur (Rajasthan). Born in 1932, he has had an extremely illustrious educational career. He is an alumnus of Allahabad University, Allahabad, from where he graduated (1953) and then obtained Master's degree (1955) standing 'first class first' in Ancient History. He first taught at the C.M.P. College, Allahabad University, Allahabad (1955-58), and then at Gorakhpur University, Gorakhpur (1958-70), and is now at Jodhpur University, Jodhpur (since 1970). Dr. Goyal is the author of more than 55 research papers and over a dozen significant works which include *Viśva kī Prāchīna Sabhyatāyēn* (1963), *Prāchīna Bhārata kā Rājanītika Itihāsa*, Vol. III (1969), *Prāchīna Nepāla kā Rājanītika aurā Saṁskṛtika Itihāsa* (1974), and *Prāchīna Bhāratiya Abhilekha Saṁgraha* (1980). His doctoral thesis, *A History of the Imperial Guptas* (1967), has been acclaimed as 'the best analysis of the Gupta period which I have ever read' by Professor A. L. Basham (National Professor of Australia) and as 'imaginative', 'well-written' and 'a model of historiography' by Professor Eleanor Zelliot (Minnesota, U.S.A.). The various theories propounded in it, which have been the subject of numerous research papers, are described by Professor R. C. Majumdar, the doyen of Indian history, as 'deserving very careful consideration' and have obtained appreciation and recognition in learned works and journals, both Indian and foreign. His theory that the Brāhmī script was an invention of early Maurya period has also been described as 'penetrative, judicious and most acceptable'.

Dr. Goyal is the Chief Editor of a series of 32 volumes on the entire canvas of Indian History and Culture, two of which, namely, *Māgadha Sāmrajya kā Udaya* (1980) and *Mughal Sāmrajya kā Prārambhika Itihāsa* (1984), have already been published. Eminent professors and University teachers of the country are contributing to its various volumes.

Dr. Goyal has been a keen student of Philosophy, especially Philosophy of History. He topped in Philosophy at the B.A. Examination of Allahabad University in 1953 and was awarded M. N. Nandi Gold Medal for the same. As a true historian, however, he has a deep knowledge of the original source materials. He has studied in detail the various branches of ancient Indian literature. His two volumes on ancient Indian inscriptions and a forthcoming work on ancient Indian coinage (*The Coinage of Ancient India*) testify to his mastery over epigraphic and numismatic sources. Thus in him is found a rare combination of three branches of knowledge—history, philosophy and literature.

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Buddhist Religions

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Kusumanjali Prakashan, Meerut

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Dedicated to
the sacred memory of
my Brother-in-law (*Jījāji*)
Seth Shri Trilok Chand Chaudhry
who suddenly left for
his heavenly abode
- on 21.5.1984

OTHER WORKS BY DR. S. R. GOYAL

SOME OF THE PUBLISHED WORKS

Vīva kī Prāchīna Sahyatāyen

A History of the Imperial Guptas

Prāchīna Bhārata kā Rājanītika Itihāsa (Vol. III)

Prāchīna Nepāla kā Rājanītika aurā Sānskṛtika Itihāsa

Prāchīna Bhāratīya Abhilekha Saṅgraha

Māgadha Sāmrājya kā Udaya (ed. with Dr. S. K. Gupta)

Mughal Sāmrājya kā Prārambhika Itihāsa (ed. with Dr. S. K. Gupta)

Yuddhakalā (trans.)

FORTHCOMING BOOKS

A Religious History of Ancient India (Vol. II)

The Coinage of Ancient India

Guptakālina Abhilekha

An Economic History of Ancient India

A Political History of Ancient India

Preface

Religion is undoubtedly the most important aspect of Indian culture. In the ancient period of our country's history it dominated the lives and institutions of our ancestors, even if it is seemingly losing some hold in our own age. That is why right from the beginnings of the Indological studies in the eighteenth century it attracted the greatest attention of modern scholarship. Innumerable monographs, many of them by some of the greatest minds of our age, have appeared in India and abroad on the various aspects of ancient Indian religions—their origin, background, founders or main propagators, tenets, canons, other sacred texts, church history, rituals, sects, etc. Therefore it may, at the first sight, be regarded as an overweeningly audacious presumption on our part to make a fresh attempt on such a thoroughly discussed subject. But we have some justification to offer for our venture.

Firstly, it may be pointed out that despite the fact that a vast literature has been produced on the various facts of ancient Indian religions, it is also true that so far no comprehensive work has been written, even in English, which deals with, within reasonable details and authoritatively, all the religions of ancient India—those which took birth in this country as well as those which came from outside—in their various aspects at one place. Most of the works written on ancient Indian religions either discuss particular sects, schools or texts, or the religious condition of a region or period and such other topics. Our attempt to describe the entire ancient Indian religious history in one work, divided for the sake of convenience into two volumes, seeks to fulfil this *desideratum*.

Secondly, most of the books on ancient Indian religious history are written either without any particular approach in mind and seek to offer a bare outline of the chronological evolution of a particular religion or sect or attempt to establish the correctness of a particular historical viewpoint. In the present work, however, a wider approach has been adopted, for wherever possible we have discussed not only the role of the various factors—cultural, political, economic, etc.—operating in society behind the origin, nature

and evolution of every religion, but have also delineated the role of that religion as a factor of social change. We therefore feel that our work follows a new, something more than what is usually described as sociological, approach.

Thirdly, during the last three decades or so as a university teacher and researcher we have made some humble contributions to the study of ancient Indian religious history; some of them have been published in the form of research articles in learned journals. We have incorporated the results of these researches in this work so that they may be considered by a wider readership and it may be examined as to how far our suggestions change the generally accepted account of the religious evolution of ancient India. For example we have suggested, with some justification we hope, that in the Indus Civilization the Supreme God was regarded as husband and brother both of the Mother Goddess, that the Indus people worshipped *aśvattha* for procuring male progeny and victory over enemies, that Gautama Buddha was not such a great social revolutionary as he is generally made out to be, that in India Buddhism never assumed the form of a separate culture (Vol. I), that the concept of the divine Vāsudeva was originally distinct from and chronologically older than the concept of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, that the personality of Heracles as described by Megasthenes in connection with Mathurā is nearer to the personality of Vaivasvata Manu of the Vedas and Purāṇas rather than Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa, that the Indian Dionysus described by Megasthenes represented not one but several gods and legendary personages (Vol. II), etc. The exhaustive reconstruction of the non-Vedic ideologies of the early and middle Vedic age has perhaps been attempted for the first time in this work.

Lastly, the present work seeks to incorporate, critically examine and synthesize the results of the researches of other scholars in the field of ancient Indian religious history published upto the early part of 1984. An alert reader will note that while discussing the various topics we have made critical and detailed references to the recent-most books and research papers. If a sympathetic reader will feel that we have achieved these objectives, even if partially, we should think that our labour has been amply rewarded.

The system of transliteration adopted in the book will be apparent from the following examples: Chāṇḍāla, jñāna, Kṛṣṇa, saṁskāra, Īśvara, Śaṅkara, ṭhākura, pīṭha, Yaśaḥpāla. Modern proper

names of countries, places and individuals have generally been spelled in the usual way without the use of diacritical marks.

For the errors of omission and commission we seek the indulgence of sympathetic readers.

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April 13, 1984

S. R. GOYAL

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In the preparation of this work I was greatly encouraged and helped by a number of persons. My friends Professor S. K. Lal and Dr. D. C. Shukla and *amiya* Dr. S. K. Gupta were good enough to read and discuss with me some portions of this work. I thank them all.

I also thank M/s Kusumanjali Prakashan, Meerut, for bringing it out so promptly and enthusiastically. M s Urvashi Press, Meerut, took exceptional interest in its printing and Mr. Chandra Mohan of M/s Ramarts, Meerut, was kind enough to prepare a cover design according to my wishes. I sincerely thank them.

Mr. A. K. Gupta, my son-in-law, helped me in maintaining a liaison between me, the Publishers and the Press, and solved a number of practical problems on the spot which otherwise would have caused much delay. In the preparation of the Index, Bibliography, etc. I was greatly helped by my daughter Km. Vijayashri Goyal (M.A. Final, Philosophy). Both of them deserve my blessings and praise.

Above all, I take pleasure in acknowledging the help of my younger brother Shri R. P. Goyal (M.A., History), my wife Mrs. Kusum Goyal, her sister Mrs. Madhu Gupta and the latter's husband Shri Abhey Kumar Gupta, and also of Shri S. P. Bansal, my brother-in-law, and my friend Shri B. B. Gupta, all of whom contributed in their own way in making this venture a success.

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Abbreviations

<i>ABORI</i>	Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona
<i>AIK</i>	The Age of Imperial Kanauj, ed. by R. C. Majumdar and A. D. Pusalker
<i>Ait. Brā.</i>	Aitareya Brāhmaṇa
<i>Ait. Upa.</i>	Aitareya Upanishad
<i>AIU</i>	The Age of Imperial Unity, ed. by R. C. Majumdar and A. D. Pusalker
<i>AV</i>	Atharvaveda
<i>Bṛ. Upa.</i>	Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad
<i>CA</i>	The Classical Age, ed. by R. C. Majumdar and A. D. Pusalker
<i>CHI</i>	Cultural Heritage of India, 4 Vols
<i>Chh. Upa.</i>	Chhāndogya Upanishad
<i>Dh.</i>	Dhammapada
<i>DHI</i>	Development of Hindu Iconography, by J. N. Banerjea
<i>EI</i>	Epigraphia Indica, Delhi
<i>ERE</i>	Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics
<i>HIG</i>	A History of the Imperial Guptas, by S. R. Goyal
<i>HIL</i>	A History of Indian Literature, by M. Winternitz
<i>IHQ</i>	Indian Historical Quarterly, Calcutta
<i>JA</i>	Journal Asiatique, Paris
<i>JAHS</i>	Journal of the Andhra Historical Research Society, Rajamundry
<i>JAIH</i>	Journal of Ancient Indian History, Calcutta
<i>JAOS</i>	Journal of the American Oriental Society, New Haven
<i>JIH</i>	Journal of Indian History, Trivandrum
<i>JNSI</i>	Journal of Numismatic Society of India, Varanasi
<i>JOI</i>	Journal of Oriental Institute, Baroda
<i>JRAS</i>	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, London
<i>JRASB, L</i>	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal, Letters, Calcutta

<i>Kaush. Upa.</i>	Kaushītaki Upanishad
<i>Mbh.</i>	Mahābhārata
<i>MIC</i>	Mohenjodaro and the Indus Civilization, by John Marshall
<i>Origins</i>	Studies in the Origins of Buddhism, by G. C. Pande
<i>PIHC</i>	Proceedings of the Indian History Congress
<i>PJ</i>	Prāchī Jyoti, Kurukshetra
<i>POC</i>	Proceedings of the Oriental Conference
<i>PTS</i>	Pali Text Society
<i>Rāmā.</i>	Rāmāyaṇa
<i>RPIV</i>	Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas and Upaniṣads, 2 Vols., by A. B. Keith
<i>RV</i>	Ṛgveda
<i>ŚB</i>	Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa
<i>SBE</i>	Sacred Books of the East
<i>Studies</i>	Studies in Vedic and Indo-Iranian Religion and Literature, by K. C. Chattopadhyaya, 2 Vols., ed. by V. N. Mishra or Studies in the Buddhist Culture of India, by L. M. Joshi (2nd ed.), according to context
<i>TĀ</i>	Taittirīya Āraṇyaka
<i>TB</i>	Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa
<i>Upa.</i>	Upanishad
<i>YV</i>	Yajurveda

Prehistoric Origins of Indian Religions

Sanātanatā of Hinduism

The one vital point which differentiates Hinduism from other religions is its claim for being eternal (*sanātana*) in nature. It believes that though the divine knowledge was revealed by God to the *rshis* in the form of the Vedas, the knowledge itself existed before this revelation. From the historical point of view also, Hinduism claims no founder for itself; even Jainism, another Indian religion claiming great antiquity, cannot be regarded as beginningless, because it traces its emergence with Ṛshabhanātha, its first Tīrthaṅkara, whenever he flourished. Hinduism however claims no beginning for itself; it assumes that it just existed from the beginnings of time.

However it does not mean that Hinduism is an unchanging religion. There are two kinds of *sanātana* or *nitya* substances: (1) *Kūṭastha nitya* or unchanging eternal, and (2) *Pravāhī nitya* or changing eternal. *Sanātana* or Hindu religion is eternal in the latter sense, for in the course of time it has undergone considerable modifications¹. Its roots may be traced back to prehistoric period. It is true that the earliest stratum of its oldest available literature, that is the Vedas, which is also perhaps the oldest existing literature of the world, can hardly be regarded as very much older than c. 2,000 B.C., and the remains of the Indus Civilization (the religion of which was certainly a prototype of Hinduism) carry us back to only c. 2,500 B.C., but it is also a fact that in the last fifty years or so many scholars including Jean Przyluski, S. Lévi, Jules Bloch, S. K. Chatterji, P. C. Bagchi, etc. (who have successfully tried to reconstruct through what may be called linguistic palaeontology

¹Chattopadhyaya, K. C., *Studies in Vedic and Indo-Iranian Religion and Literature*, I, p. 84.

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some aspects of the life of the prehistoric races of India) have found that many elements of Indian religions, specially Hinduism—ideas, concept of divinities, rituals, etc.—owe their origin to the contribution made by the non-Aryan races which peopled this country before the advent of the Indo-Aryans.

Prehistoric Races of India

Racial anthropology, the branch of knowledge which deals with the physical features of a people, has sought to analyse the various elements which have contributed to the formation of the population of India. Various opinions have been advanced by different anthropologists about the racial elements in Indian population. The most authoritative view is that of Dr. B. S. Guha¹ according to whom the people of India comprise of 'six main races', namely, 1. the Negrito, 2. the Proto-Australoid, 3. the Mongoloid, 4. the Mediterranean, 5. the Western Brachycephals, and 6. the Nordic. The Indian population is the product of an intimate miscegenation of these races in their various ramifications some of them preserving their separate language and the culture connected with it. These peoples all came from outside and their cultural background, which they had developed outside India, naturally differed from each other. It is not necessary at this place to go into a detailed analysis of these racial types or to identify their present-day descendants or to bring out their characteristics. Their contribution to the material and religious culture of India and mental make-up of the Indian people has been discussed in detail with his usual insight by Dr. S. K. Chatterji in *The Vedic Age*, Ch. VIII and *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. I, Ch. 5². The present writer cannot do better than following him in most of his conclusions regarding their role in the evolution of Indian religious ideas and practices.

Here a few words are necessary on the method employed by anthropologists for the study of prehistoric religions. Firstly, as pointed out by Chatterji, it has not yet been established that a particular racial type, by the mere fact of some pronounced or subdued racial characteristics which it possesses, must necessarily or inevitably have its mental and emotional outlook or attitude pre-decided. In other words, it cannot be asserted that there must be an

¹Chatterji, S. K., *The Vedic Age*, pp. 144-5.

²See also his *Bhāratīya Ārya Bhāṣhā aur Hindī*, 1957.

ineradicable racial character¹. But on the other hand the economic *milieu* and the conditioning of the mind and emotions in society create a framework of ordered life which commonly finds expression in the language of that body of men. Therefore it will be more appropriate to speak of language-cultures than of racial-cultures. Secondly, we should remember that from the beginning of history racial intermixture is going on continuously leading to profound modifications in every racial-type. So far as India is concerned the present situation is that the six main races mentioned above with their various ramifications, which have gone to the formation of the people of India, are now included within one or the other of four distinct speech-families: namely, the Austric (Nishāda, Kol or Muṇḍā), the Tibeto-Chinese (Kirāta), the Dravidian and the Indo-European or Aryan².

Contribution of Negritos

However the oldest people who came to India as a distinct entity were the Negroids. Now their traces are not commonly found, except among the Mongoloid Nāgas in Assam, while a handful of Negroids are found in South Indian jungles, now speaking Dravidian dialects. The German anthropologist E. von Eickstedt agrees with Guha on this point but D. N. Majumdar and S. S. Sarkar deny any Negrito strains in South India³. It is only in the Andaman Islands that full-blooded Negroids are found. Their influence on Indian languages is also very negligible. Many anthropologists believe that the cult of the ficus tree, associated with fertility and souls of the dead, which has been quite popular in India, may have been an inheritance from the Negroids. Certain totemistic notions connected with fishes, animals and plants may also have originally belonged to the Negroids who might have handed them over to the people who supplanted them.

Austric or Nishāda Contribution

The Austrics of India are represented by mainly the Kol or Muṇḍā people—the Nishādas, Śabarās and Pulindas of ancient times and the Kol and the Bhilla people of 1,500 years ago. The kinsmen

¹*The Vedic Age*, p. 147.

²*Ibid.*

³Fuchs, Stephen, *The Aboriginal Tribes of India*, p. 27.

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of the Indian Austriacs outside India, particularly in Polynesia, have the idea of *mana* or the divine essence which permeates individual objects and beings of the universe. The later Hindu conception of the Brahman pervading the universe was possibly derived from this idea of *mana* which can be reasonably expected to have been current among the primitive Austriacs of India. There is a strange agreement between Indian theory of creation as given in the Nāsadiya sūkta of the *R̥gveda* and that of the Polynesians, Maoris, and others, which describe the evolution of the material world from the unformed primeval basis of darkness and non-existence¹. The conception of the universe as a gigantic egg (*Brahmāṇḍa*), the theory of incarnation (*avatāra*) of the Supreme Being in animal bodies (fish, tortoise and boar), certain mythological and romantic tales such as that of Satyavati who had a fishy body-odour (*matsyagandhā*) and the computation of days and months by the phases of the moon (*tithis*) also have their analogues among the Polynesian Austriacs². The Sanskrit words for the full moon (*rākā*) and the new moon (*kuhū*) have corresponding words of similar sound in the Polynesian Austric languages. It is also quite possible that the Austric ideas about the soul of man after death furnished one of the main bases in the conception of *saṁsāra* or transmigration, to which moral and philosophical accretions were later added in Hinduism.

According to Jean Przyluski certain other non-Aryan non-Dravidian religious elements were the contribution of Austriacs or Nishādas. Among them are included the use of the betel vine in life and ritual, the use of turmeric and vermilion in religious ritual and social life, the belief in the Nāgas as spirits of the waters and the under-world and certain magico-religious rituals (e.g. the removal of the evil eye by the rite known in Northern India as *nichhāvāra*). The idea of taboo would seem to be another trait derived by the Aryans from the mentality of the Nishādas for, according to A. Weber, Barth and Sylvain Lévi, the Atharvavedic word *tābuva* is connected with the Polynesian word *tapu* or *tabu*. Zoomorphic deities also appear to be survivals from Austric or Proto-Australoid totemism which was later re-inforced by the Dravidian cults possessing a similar character (e.g. the *Nāgas* or snake deities,

¹*Cultural Heritage of India*, I, pp. 79-80.

²*Ibid.*

the tortoise, the *makara* or crocodile, the monkey-god, Gaṇeśa with his elephant-head, etc.).

The Dravidian Contribution

The next language-culture group which arrived on the Indian scene was the Dravidian. The Dravidians represented a developed form of the Mediterraneans. *Draviḍa* or *Dramiḍa*, as we find it in Sanskrit, is only a modification of a national, racial or tribal name of this people for itself.¹ The Dravidian tongues now form a solid bloc in the Deccan. But at one time the Dravidian speech was fairly widespread in North, West and East India. In Baluchistan we have the bloc of the Brāhui speech of Dravidian family which appears to be a surviving fragment of a very widespread Dravidian tract.

The Dravidian-speaking peoples appear to have been known to the Aryans at first by two names, *Dāsa* and *Dasyu*. In Iran these names changed into *Dāha* and *Dahyu*. According to Chatterji and many others they were the authors of the Indus Civilization. According to K. C. Chattopadhyaya, however, the *Dāsas* and *Dasyus* of the *Ṛgveda* were semi-divine beings, and not real tribes.² Some of the fundamental practices in Brahmanical Hinduism not found in the Vedic religion, like the worship of Śiva and Umā, Viṣṇu and Śrī, and the ideas and practices of Yoga philosophy as well as mysticism, appear to have been derived from the Dravidians. The Dravidian sense of the mystic found its expression in their ritual, their discipline of Yoga as a path for union with the divinity and their desire to keep in constant touch with the dead by means of ceremonial, on which is based the later Hindu practice of *śrādhā*³.

The attitude of the *Ṛgvedic* Aryans to the unseen forces behind life was simple. Their gods were only partly humanized retaining a

¹In the Dravidian speech as current in the Deccan during the first half of the first millennium B.C., its form was '*Dramiza*'. Subsequently, from this word we had in Old Tamil '*Tamiz*' which is the present '*Tamil*'. The Cretans, a Mediterranean people, called themselves *Termilai* (according to Herodotus, the Greek historian of the fifth century B.C.), and the Lycians of Lycia described themselves as *Trmmli* in their inscriptions (which belong to the same epoch). The word '*Dramiza*' became, round about the time of Christ, '*Damiza*' and this was transformed by the Sinhalese into '*Damila*' and by the Greeks into '*Damir*' (as in '*Damirike*', to mean the Tamil country). See *CHI*, I, p. 80.

²Chattopadhyaya, K. C., *Studies*, I, p. 206 ff.

³*CHI*, I, p. 81.

good deal of their original aspect as forces of nature. As yet they had no tangible images and symbols. The Aryans offered them foodgrains, milk and butter, barley-bread (*puroḍāś*), and *soma* drink through the agency of fire. In return gods gave the worshipper what he wanted, such as wealth, sons, long life, victory over enemies, etc. This was the Aryan ritual of *homa* or fire-worship. The rite of *pūjā*, which is now the characteristic Hindu ritual of worship and is probably of Dravidian origin, is fundamentally different. It involves invoking into an image or symbol the spirit of god; then the image or symbol is treated like a deity and water, flowers, leaves of certain plants, fruits, grain, etc. are offered to it. It is even regaled with music and dancing. The individual worshipper can also come into a sort of deep personal spiritual relationship with the divinity through this symbol. In later Hinduism, these two rituals—*homa* and *pūjā*—were combined.

The word *pūjā* has been derived from the Dravidian *pū-cey* (meaning *pushpa karma*) as opposed to the Vedic *homa* which involved *paśu karma* (ritual with animals). Another derivation proposed of the word '*pūjā*' is from the Dravidian word *pūsu*, to smear. This derivation suggests that it was a ritual in which sandal paste or vermilion, representing blood, was smeared upon the symbol. Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva, who was later identified with Viṣṇu as His *avatāra*, gave his support to the *pūjā* ritual. In the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (IX.26), he says :

“Whosoever with devotion offers Me a leaf, a flower, a fruit or water, that I accept—the devout gift of the pure-minded.”

According to Chatterji this verse is of tremendous significance in the history of Hindu religion. It gave official sanction, so to say, to a non-Vedic-non-Aryan ritual when Hindu society was being given its permanent shape by the leaders of the mixed society of the Aryans and non-Aryans of the Madhyadeśa or Upper Gaṅgā Valley.¹

With the acceptance of a pre-Aryan Dravidian ritual the Dravidian conception of divinity and the mythological figures of their gods and goddesses also became a part of Hindu religion. In modern Hinduism certain divinities such as Śiva and Umā, Viṣṇu (specially in his incarnations of Rāma and Kṛṣṇa) and Śrī are regarded as supreme; at least they are more popular than other deities. Some other gods

and goddesses like Hanumant, Gaṇeśa and Śītalā are also quite popular. On the other hand the popular gods of the Vedic Aryans—Indra, Agni, Varuṇa, Soma, Sūrya, Ushā, Pūshan, Parjanya etc.—have by now receded into the background. The Dravidians had a conception of a great Mother-Goddess and her male counterpart, a Father-God. They appear to have brought it to India from their original homeland. Ma or Kubele (Cybele) and Athis, or Hepit and Teshub, the great Asianic Mother-Goddess and Father-God, the former having as her symbol or vehicle the lion and the latter the bull, form undoubtedly one of the bases on which the Śīva-Umā cult of Hindu India grew up¹. Śīva and Umā are in all likelihood also of Dravidian origin, and as such, are the Indian modification—and philosophic sublimation—of the great Mother-Goddess and her consort of the Mediterranean people.²

The name Śīva has been explained as being at least partly of Dravidian origin. In Tamil *Śivan* (*Chivan*) means red, and the god was known to the early Aryans as Nīla-lohita, “the Red One with Blue (Throat)”.³ Śambhu, another epithet of Śīva, has been compared with the Tamil *chempu* or *sembu* meaning ‘copper’, i.e. ‘the red metal’. The name Umā recalls Mā, the Great Mother of the Asianic and East Mediterranean people. One of the common epithets of Umā is Durgā. It can be compared with Trqqas, a deity mentioned in the Lycian inscriptions of Asia Minor. Vishṇu is partly Aryan, a form of the Sun-God, and partly at least Dravidian, a sky-god whose colour was sky-blue (cf. Tamil *viṇ*, ‘sky’). Śrī was originally an Aryan divinity. She is connected with the harvest or corn and with wealth, beauty and well-being. But in her association with Vishṇu, as Gajalakshmi for instance, she is pre-Aryan. Kṛshṇa (in Prakrit Kaṇha, in Tamil Kaṇṇa) in the *Ṛgveda* is the name of a demon opposed to Indra. According to P. T. Srinivasa Aiyangar he, at least partially, represents a Dravidian god of youth. Murukun, another Dravidian god of youthful powers, bravery and war, became in the Purāṇas Kumāra or Skanda, the son of Śīva. Gaṇeśa, the elephant-headed demon who was to be appeased in

¹*The Vedic Age*, p. 161. Goyal, S. R., *Viśva kī Prāchīna Sabhyatāyen*, p. 202 ff; ‘Paśchimī Eśiā men Śivopāsana’, *Bāsantī*, 1961, pp. 63–7.

²*Ibid.*

³It refers to the legend, found in the Purāṇas and mentioned in *Ṛgveda*, of Śīva having drunk up the world poison and preserved it in his throat which became marked with blue for this.

the beginning of any function to avert supernatural hindrances, retained his original form in the Mahāyāna Buddhism, but within the Brahmanical religion he was transformed into a benign god who removes obstacles (*vighnas*). The very character of the god as having an elephant-head proves his indigenous pre-Aryan origin. The phallic symbol of Śiva, the *liṅga*, appears to be, both in its form and name, of Austric or Proto-Australoid origin.¹ As Jean Przyluski has shown, the words *liṅga*, *lakuṣa*, *laguḍa* and *lāṅgula* are of Austric origin. But the conception of Śiva as the great Yogī seated in Yogic meditation, as Virūpāksha or 'the Terrible One', as Paśupati or 'the Lord of Animals', and as Ūrdhvaliṅga or 'the One with the Erect Creative Force' appear to have been known to the authors of the Indus Valley Civilization. And if the Indus Valley people were Dravidians, this would further prove that the idea of Śiva and Śiva legends were partly of Dravidian origin².

As we will see in the chapter on the Ṛgvedic religion zoomorphic divinities or lower animals typifying the forces of nature, were known to the Aryans only to a limited extent. Therefore the emergence of zoomorphic deities into prominence in Puranic Hinduism must have come from non-Aryan sources. The worship of the Nāgas appears to have come from the Proto-Australoids. Garuḍa as the vehicle-bird of Viṣṇu is partly a divine eagle—Suparṇa—of the Aryans and partly of Dravidian origin; at least its name appears to be of Dravidian origin³.

One of the greatest zoomorphic deities of India is Hanumant or Hanumāna, the monkey-god. According to Pargiter there was a great monkey-god who was worshipped by the Dravidians whose Dravidian name Aṅ-manti was Sanskritized into Hanumant.

Many Austric and Dravidian myths and legends of gods and heroes survived the Aryan impact in 'improved' versions. The Rāma legend appears to be a blend of three distinct stories put together at different times (the Ayodhyā intrigue and the banishment of Rāma, the abduction of Sītā and her recovery by Rāma, and the episode of the monkey-princes), and re-edited as a national poem. The *Mahābhārata* story also appears to embody a good deal of the legends, traditions and history of the Aryans as well as of the non-

¹*The Vedic Age*, p. 165

²*Ibid.*

³Cf. Tamil 'kazu' = 'eagle'.

Aryans.¹

When the hypothesis of an Aryan invasion and occupation of India was first proposed it was believed that the arrival of the Aryans in this country was the arrival of a white-skinned, blue-eyed and golden-haired people into a land of the black-skinned non-Aryans on whom the Aryans imposed their superior religion, culture and language. It was also believed that all the better elements of Hindu culture and religion—in fact everything which is great and good and noble in it—came from the Aryans and whatever is dark, lowly and superstitious in Hindu religion and civilization represents only an expression of the suppressed non-Aryan mentality.² This view is now being gradually abandoned.³ It is now generally admitted, particularly after a study of the bases of Dravidian and Aryan cultures through language and institutions, that the Dravidians contributed a great many elements of paramount importance to the evolution of Hindu civilization.⁴

The Aryan Contribution

However, the acceptance of the contribution of the non-Aryans to the evolution of Indian religious ideas does not at all mean that the contribution of the Aryans is less significant. It goes without saying that the various phases of Hindu religion are the creation primarily of the Aryans. The Aryans no doubt were influenced by the non-Aryans but whatever they took from others was 'Aryanised'. The Aryans had a powerful language in Sanskrit which spread almost throughout the country and the vocabulary of which has enriched the languages of the present day non-Aryan languages also. It was and is accepted as the religious language of the Hindus, even by the non-Aryans. Further, the Aryans gave philosophical bases to the religious ideas and rituals of the non-Aryans which were in many cases quite primitive and crude before they were sublimated under the impact of the Aryan religious thinkers. As the history of Indian religious thought is basically 'Aryan', it is useless to enumerate the contribution of the Aryans to the religious evolution of this country. Here we can only stress that the Aryans laid greater emphasis on intellect and the non-Aryans (Draviḍas, Nishādas and Kirātas) on emotions.

¹*The Vedic Age*, p. 168

²*Ibid*, p. 160

³Pande, G. C., *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism*, p. 251

⁴*The Vedic Age*, p. 160

“Reason and emotion, however, are both given equality of status in the achievement of man’s spiritual realization ; *jñāna* and *bhakti* are the two pivots in man’s spiritual life. But the ideal which is aimed at by the general mass of Hindus under Brāhmaṇa inspiration, is that of a harmonious combination of the two - *jñāna-īśrā bhakti*.”¹ In this, more than in anything else, we see the harmonization of diverse racial and cultural ideals.

Role of the Kirātas

The role played by the Mongoloid peoples or the Kirātas in Indian history was confined largely to the north-eastern frontiers of India, central and eastern Nepal, North Bihar, North and East Bengal and Assam. These are rather somewhat away from the hub of Indian civilization and culture. Further, the Mongoloids were rather late arrivals on the Indian scene. They came probably later even than the Aryans. Therefore, their contribution to Indian religions does not fall with the prehistoric period. However, for convenience sake here some words may be said about it.

The Mongoloids could not penetrate far into the interior of India, as the Austriacs, the Dravidians and the Aryans did. They were already established in the southern Himalayan slopes and in eastern India by about 1000 B.C., for there is mention of the Kirāta people in the *Yajurveda* and the *Atharvaveda*.

According to S. K. Chatterji the Mongoloid peoples were great transmitters of culture which they received from the Hindus of the plains. The Newars of Nepal passed on the art of the Pāla dynasty to Tibet and beyond. The Bodos of East Bengal were the intermediaries in the transmission, by land routes, of Brahmanical and Buddhist culture into Burma and beyond, from about A.D. 1,000 to 1,500.² The Tāntrika form of later Hinduisms appears to have taken its final shape from the character of the Mongoloid cults, which it replaced. Certain aspects of *vāmācāra* Tantricism have their bases evidently in this side of Indo-Mongoloid life and ways.³ The worship of the Great-Mother in Assam and East Bengal, particularly at Kāmākhyā near Gauhati, is looked upon as being originally Kirāta or Tibeto-Burman.

¹CHI, I, p. 85.

²*Ibid.*, p. 89.

³*Ibid.*, p. 90.

We cannot do better than conclude this chapter by echoing the sentiments of Prof S. K. Chatterji on whose works we have drawn so heavily. Hindu religion, he states, is “a variegated fabric of many-coloured threads . . . Mother India is the repository of a composite culture, of which the vehicle of expression is the Aryan language, but the contributions brought by the Niṣādas, the Kirātas, and the Draviḍas are as important as those of the Aryans. This composite culture is the ocean in which several rivers have mingled their waters”.¹

The Religion of the Indus Civilization

Prehistoric Antecedents

Like linguistic palaeontology archaeology can tell us but only a little about the religious ideas of prehistoric societies. In the Indian sub-continent the earliest traces of human activity go back to the Second Inter-Glacial Period between 400,000 and 200,000 B.C. But the remains of the earlier stages of the Stone Age are too meagre to yield any information. However it can easily be imagined that in those days, when man's life depended upon hunting, if man at all thought of any supernatural power he must have conceived it in association with his hunting activities. That is why it is believed that the worship of a Father-God as the lord of animals originated much earlier than the worship of Mother-Goddess, the embodiment of fertility, which became popular probably after man started to cultivate crops and domesticate animals both of which are based on the phenomenon of fertility.

Thus in the prehistoric period there originated the concepts of Father-God (associated with hunting) and Mother-Goddess (associated with fertility). Even today throughout India there are found at the folk level rites and festivals which are associated with various agricultural activities and the breeding of cattle. There is also a whole plethora of local gods and goddesses some of whom have remained unassimilated into the great hierarchy of classical Indian gods and goddesses. "There can be no doubt that a very large part of this modern folk religion is extremely ancient and contains traits which originated during the earliest periods of Neolithic-Chalcolithic settlement and expansion."¹ But it is almost impossible to separate these ancient elements from later accretions.

The Indus Civilization

In the second half of the third millennium B.C. the slow cultural

¹Allchin, Bridget and Raymond, *The Birth of Indian Civilization*, p. 309.

evolution in India suddenly flowered into the magnificent Indus Valley Civilization, also called the Harappa Culture. The antecedents of the Indus Civilization were the village sites of the Baluchistan hills—the Nal culture—and of the Makran coast to west of the Indus delta—the Kulli culture—and some rural communities along the rivers in Rajasthan and the Punjab. The village sites of Baluchistan and Sindh have yielded a large number of terracotta female figurines which are generally seen as representations of goddesses.¹ The Indus Civilization, which succeeded these rural cultures, included within its sphere of influence not only the Punjab and Sindh plains watered by the Indus but also northern Rajasthan and the region of Kathiawar. Its total area enclosed by a line joining its outmost sites is only slightly less than half a million square miles.² It was an urban culture though its great cities subsisted on their vast rural hinterland. Its two great cities, both in Pakistan, are now known as Harappa and Mohenjodaro. Harappa was excavated first by M. S. Vats (between 1920 and 1934) and later by M. Wheeler (1946) and Mohenjodaro was excavated first by Marshall and later by Mackay (between 1922 and 1931) and after the partition by M. Wheeler (1947) and George Dales. Among the major sites of the Indus civilization located in the Indian Union are Rangpur and the port-town of Lothal (both in Gujarat), Kalibanga (in Rajasthan) and Rupar (in the Punjab). However, Mohenjodaro and Harappa are yet the most important of the known Indus cities and are generally regarded to have been the twin capitals of the Indus people, though actually there is no proof for such a belief.

The Indus Civilization was marked by extraordinary cultural uniformity, both in time and space. Its cities which show uniform but highly advanced town-planning were maintained from the surplus produce of the country. Each big city was divided into a central area, where basic institutions of civic and religious life were located, and an urban residential area.

The authors of the Indus Civilization are not yet identified in terms of race and their language is not known. As pointed out by Allchins there would appear to be a broad agreement that it was authored, however improbably by the people of Indo-European or Indo-Iranian family or that it is the creation of a Dravidian

¹Piggot, S., *Prehistoric India*, Ch. III.

²Allchins, p. 127.

³*Ibid.*, p. 157.

However as Pt. K. C. Chattopadhyaya¹ and Prof. G. C. Pande² have maintained, in the present state of our knowledge it is surely fantastic to ascribe its authorship to the Vedic Aryans or to regard it as later than the Vedic age³. That the Vedic culture saw its culmination in the age of the Buddha is beyond doubt⁴ and the period of the Indus civilization has now been conclusively fixed some centuries before and after the beginning of the second millennium B.C.⁵. The physical features of the Vedic Aryans mentioned in literature do not match the ethnic type of the Indus people as known from their images. The *R̥gveda* shows that cow played an important part in the life of the Vedic Aryans while they had made acquaintance with elephant only recently (they called him by the curious name *mygahastin*). On the other hand, the Indus people do not depict cow at all but elephant quite lovingly on their seals⁶. Further, while several features of the Vedic culture such as the horse and iron were unknown to the Indus people, the urban way of life and iconic form of worship of the Indus civilization were conspicuous by their absence in the Vedic age. Even if horse was known to the Indus people their knowledge of the domestication of this animal could not have been a matter of social possession; it could have hardly exceeded the knowledge of the contemporary Babylonians who knew this animal not intimately but only as 'mountain-ass'. Similarly, if the Vedic people knew image worship, they did not practise it on any large scale; at least it could not have been a basic feature of their religion as certainly was the case with the religion of the Indus people. To us the cultural *milieu* of the Vedic Aryans appears to be totally different from that of the Indus Civilization. Even if the Indus people as a whole or in some regions (such as Lothal, where the stone *lingas* and images of mother-goddess are conspicuous by their absence) belonged to the Indo-European

¹Chattopadhyaya, *Studies*, II, p. 41 ff.

²Pande, G. C., *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism*, p. 252.

³Cf. also Pusalker, *The Vedic Age*, pp. 197-8; L. Sarup, *IC*, IV.

⁴It was in the age of the Buddha that the last phase of the composition of the early or 'Vedic' Upanishads was over and shortly afterwards Mahāpadma Nanda is known to have ended the political supremacy of the Vedic tribal monarchies.

⁵Allchin, Bridget and Raymond, *The Birth of Indian Civilization*, 1968, pp. 139-40.

⁶Vats, M. S., in *CHI*, I, pp. 127-8.

stock¹, they must have been different from the Vedic people just as the Mycenaeans, the authors of the Mycenaean civilization, were different from the Dorians who overthrew the former though both of them belonged to the same race. Sir Mortimer Wheeler² and Stuart Piggot³ hypothesized that the Indus Civilization was pre- and non-Vedic and that the walled-cities attacked by the Aryan invaders were the walled-cities of the Harappans. Their conclusion has still not been at all negated, for as pointed out by Fairservis, there seems to be little question that the long duration of such cities as Harappa and Mohenjodaro places them in a chronological position which makes their last phase contemporary with the beginning of the Aryan invasion⁴.

As regards the duration of the Indus Civilization Marshall's estimate on the basis of general concordance with Mesopotamia was from 3250 to 2750 B.C. Many other views were propounded later by other scholars. But now the radio-carbon method has almost conclusively proved that the total time-span of the culture should be placed between 2300 B.C. and 1750 B.C.⁵.

Indus Religion : Limitations of Our Sources

The discovery of the Indus Civilization has revolutionised our perspective of the religious history of India because now it is certain that some fundamental ideas of Hinduism as well as some primitive beliefs and observances still current in India may be traced back to this pre-Aryan pre-Vedic culture. But before discussing the religious ideas of the Indus people it is necessary to remind ourselves of the limitations of our sources. Firstly, we should remember that our knowledge of the Indus religion is based mostly on the study of scenes depicted on seals and sealings, icons and terracotta figurines and other material remains. It is a serious handicap, for by nature a religion is connected with ideas and very few ideas can be known from material objects. For a proper study of a religion we need its written documents. But the 'documents' of the

¹This possibility was suggested by us as early as 1963 (Goyal, S. R., *Viśva kī Prāchīna Sabhyatāyen*, 1963, p. 534).

²Wheeler, M., *The Indus Civilization*, 1953, p. 90.

³Piggot, S., *Prehistoric India*, 1952, pp. 262-263.

⁴Fairservis, Walter, A., *The Roots of Ancient India*, 1971.

⁵Allchins, p. 140 ; see also Dilip K. Chakravarty, 'Harappan Chronology', *JAIH*, I, p. 78 ff.

Indus people, nearly all seals or amulet tablets, over 2,500 in number, have not been deciphered as yet. Many claims of their decipherment have been made and the acceptance of any one of them may give a new picture of the Indus religion. For example, Father Heras claimed that these seals are written in a Proto-Dravidian language while recently S. R. Rao has claimed that they are written in Proto-Vedic Sanskrit. Accordingly they find in them elements respectively of Proto-Dravidian or Proto-Vedic religion. But so far none of these attempts have found general acceptance¹.

Secondly, we should remember that the Indus religion must have had somewhat different forms in different regions and among different social groups—as is the case with any other religion. Further, it must have evolved in the course of time. But only a few glimpses (for example at Lothal and Kalibanga) are available of the differences in the religious beliefs of the various peoples of the various regions of the Indus Civilization and of its evolution.

However, in spite of these limitations there is still a considerable body of information concerning the religion of the Indus Civilization. A number of buildings both on the citadel and in the lower town at Mohenjodaro have tentatively been identified as temples². It is from these that some of the stone sculptures, almost certainly all the cult icons, were obtained. But our information goes far beyond this, for from the seals, seal impressions, amulets and copper tablets, clay figurines, paintings on pottery, etc. we may deduce a series of ideas which must have belonged to the religion of the Indus people.

Worship of Goddesses

That the people of the Indus Civilization were polytheistic, had reached the stage of anthropomorphism and worshipped their gods both in anthropomorphic and aniconic forms cannot be doubted. It is however highly controversial whether their pantheon was male-dominated or female-dominated. According to Marshall it was

¹Rao, S. R., *Lothal and the Indus Civilization*, 1973, p. 127 ff., Heras, *Studies in the Proto-Indo-Mediterranean Culture*, 1953; Parpola, A., *The Indus Script Decipherment*, Madras, 1970. Parpola brothers seek to decipher the Indus script on the hypothesis of the use of a Proto-Dravidian language and claim to have discovered an ancient astral religion in the Indus Civilization.

²Allchins, *op. cit.*, p. 311

female-dominated¹, while according to K. N. Shastri² it was dominated by gods. The worship of the mother goddesses in the Indus Civilization is proved by the terracotta female figurines which are found at its various sites (except Lothal). These are different from the female figurines found in the chalcolithic village cultures of Baluchistan in that the latter are not full length images while the former appear as standing, almost nude but usually wearing a girdle or band, an elaborate head-dress, collar and necklace³. Some of them were found in smoke-stained condition⁴. In this connection Marshall has drawn attention to the fact that such images are found in the wide belt from the Indus to the Nile⁵. He is sure that they are the effigies of the great Mother Goddess or one of her local manifestations⁶. According to Piggot they were worshipped in household shrines⁷.

Further light on the worship of mother goddesses in the Indus Civilization is thrown by seals. An oblong terracotta seal found at Harappa, for example, shows on the right side of its obverse a nude female figure upside down with legs wide apart and a plant issuing from her womb. Her arms are shown resting on knees. At her left side are shown a pair of tigers or two genii standing facing each other. The left side of the reverse contains two human figures, one standing male and the other seated female, the former with probably a shield and 'sword' and the latter with her hands raised in supplication. Marshall rightly believes that the scene is intended to portray a human sacrifice to the goddess shown on the obverse⁸. On another seal probably a tree-goddess is depicted. The tree, an *āsvattha*, is recognizable from its leaves. It is springing from a circle on the ground. Between the two branches stands a nude deity, according to Marshall and Mackay a goddess, with three-pronged head-dress and armlets. In front of the tree appears a half kneeling worshipper behind whom stands a goat with human face.

¹Marshall, *MIC*, I, p. 48 ff.

²Shastri, K. N., *Sindhu Sabhyatā kā Ādikendra—Harappā*, p. 73

³Marshall, *op. cit.*, p. 265.

⁴*The Vedic Age*, p. 189.

⁵On this point see also Bhattacharya, N., *The Indian Mother Goddess*, p. 148 ff.

⁶Marshall, *loc. cit.*, p. 48 f.

⁷Piggot, S., *Prehistoric India*, p. 203.

⁸According to K. N. Shastri the scene depicts the tortures of hell.

In the lower part are shown seven female figures¹. The worshipper and each of the seven figures are wearing a horned head-dress with plume or foliage and a pig-tail. The seven figures have been variously identified with *sapta mātṛkās*, *sapta ṛshis*, the seven rivers of the Punjab, etc. by various scholars. The scene is repeated on another seal but here the seven human figures and some details like head-dress and pig tail are missing. On a circular seal a deity without head-dress is shown within the tree. On one square seal the goat, without human face, is shown standing between the kneeling worshipper and the deity and five (not seven) human figures are shown above, and not below, the scene. According to Marshall the composite human-headed animal figure is a protecting local divinity of a minor type who is shown accompanying the suppliant into the presence of the tree-goddess. It is also possible that here the scene of goat sacrifice has been portrayed. We however suggest that it is a scene depicting a post-funeral rite. In northern India, specially in western U.P., it is believed that after the death of a person his or her spirit dwells for some time on a *pīpal* tree where it is propitiated on the eleventh day (*ekādaśā*). Therefore it is just possible that the spirit shown in the *pīpal* tree on this seal is not the tree spirit but the spirit of the deceased relation of the sacrificer and the spirit of the dead is being propitiated with a goat sacrifice.

A large number of ring-stones ranging from half an inch to nearly four feet in diameter have been found at Mohenjodaro and Harappa. The larger ones are of ordinary stone; the smaller ones of semi-precious material. According to some scholars the larger ones served as architectural members while the smaller ones served as stone-money. But Marshall has rightly suggested that these may be regarded as the representations of *yoni*, the female organ of generation symbolizing motherhood and fertility. When they are juxtaposed with the phalli (which, according to Banerjea, are so realistic that they cannot be explained in any other way²) discovered from the same sites, the suggestion of Marshall becomes difficult to be rejected though it must be remembered that in the Indus religion the phalli and *yoni* appear to have served the purpose of cult objects separately as was the case in the historical period also.

¹According to K. N. Shastri all the human figures on this seal are male (*op. cit.*, p. 88).

²DHI, p. 169.

It was only at a very late date that the pedestal of Śivaliṅgas was regarded as the symbol of *yoni* or *arghyū*¹. Marshall compared these ring-stones with the stone discs discovered at Taxila and Kosam, and afterwards at Rajghat, Mathura, Patna, etc. which, because of the decorative motifs engraved on them, are certainly cult objects of the Śāktas.²

‘Paśupati’ : The Supreme God

Marshall postulated the presence of a great male god in the Indus religion whom he rightly regarded as the prototype of later Śiva. Allchins are also of the opinion that the stone cult icons, and therefore probably temples also, were dedicated to the same deity³. His most significant representations are found on a series of seals. One of these, found from Mohenjodaro (No. 420 in Mackay’s list) shows him in a yogic posture (either *padmāsana* or *kūrmāsana*⁴), with eyes in Śāmbhavī *mudrā*⁵. He is sitting on a low throne flanked by antelopes (deer throne). His two arms, covered with bangles⁶, are outstretched and hands rest on his knees. He wears a series of necklaces, and his head is crowned by a pair of horns meeting in a tall fan-shaped head-dress. He is ithyphallic (*penis erectus*; *Ūrdhvamedhū*), has three (or four?) faces and is surrounded by jungle creatures (elephant and tiger on his proper right and rhinoceros and buffalo on the left). Just below the trunk of the elephant is the figure of a man. Two other seals (No. 222 and 235 of Mackay’s list) contain representations of apparently the same deity though many of the details of seal No. 420 are missing. The head-dress in these two seals is similar but is surmounted by a plant motif. On Seal No. 235 the head is adorned with a pig-tail hanging down on one side. On two other seals found at Mohenjodaro the god is seated in a yogic posture wearing a three-pronged

¹DHI, p. 169.

²For a detailed discussion see *ibid.*, p. 170 f.

³Allchins, *op. cit.*, p. 311.

⁴Banerjea (*op. cit.*, p. 159) describes it as *kūrmāsana* while Pusalker calls it *padmāsana* (*The Vedic Age*, p. 190).

⁵Pande, G. C., *op. cit.*, p. 256. Wheeler (*The Indus Civilization*, p. 64) doubts the significance of narrowed eyes.

⁶According to K. N. Shastri the arms are composed of centipedes (Hindi, *kānakhajūras*). But he is wrong. Cf. the statue of the ‘dancing girl’ the left arm of which is covered with bangles. Covering the whole arm with bangles is still a popular fashion in western Rajasthan and Sindh.

head-dress. On his either side is a nāga and a man with hands uplifted in prayer.

The identification of the male god depicted on the Mohenjodaro seals has been a matter of great controversy. Saletore¹ suggested that the figure is that of Agni; Jayabhadgavan² and many Jain historians³ believe that he is a Jain arhant; L. M. Joshi, a Buddhist scholar, suggests that the figure is that of a prototype of an esoteric adept or siddha (and the famous bronze statue of the 'dancing-girl' is that of a prototype of Tāntrika yoginī)⁴ and K. N. Shastri opines that he is a deity the various organs of whose body were conceived as composed of the different animals, though his conception was similar to that of Rudra⁵. According to Herbert P. Sullivan, however, the deity under consideration is not male but female⁶. But now-a-days most of the scholars such as G. C. Pande, Moraes, R. N. Dandekar, etc., agree with Marshall that it is the figure of god who was a prototype of later Śiva⁷. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri doubts it though he admits the antiquity of yoga⁸.

To us also Marshall appears to be right in his belief that most of the features associated with this god are found in the Śiva of later times who is usually described as *Trimukha* (or *Chaturmukha*), *Paśupati* (the Lord of the Animals), *Yogīrāja*, and as sitting on a deer-throne. His special weapon (*āyudha*) is triśūla or trident which may or may not have something to do with the three-pronged horned head-dress. According to J. N. Banerjea it is not at all necessary to assume that the three-pronged head-dress took the form of triśūla because the association of Śiva with horns is evident from a verse found in the Vanaparva of the *Mahābhārata* (88.8). Further, horn as an instrument of music is very often placed in one of the hands of the popular representations of Śiva in Bengal⁹. We however feel that when the personality of Rudra-Śiva was transformed from a

¹Quoted by Dandekar in *Rudra in the Veda*, p. 42, n. 3.

²*Anekānta*, X, pp. 433-56.

³Mehta, M. L., 'Antiquity of Jain Culture', *Marudhara Kesari Muniśri Miśrīmalajī Abhinandana Grantha*, p. 3.

⁴PIHC, 1964, p. 115 ff.

⁵Shastri, *op. cit.*, pp. 78, 83.

⁶*History of Religion* (Chicago), IV, No. i, 1964, pp. 115-25.

⁷Pande, *loc. cit.*; Dandekar, *Rudra in the Veda*, Poona, p. 42 ff; Moraes, quoted by Dandekar, p. 43, n. 3.

⁸CHI, II, pp. 65-7.

⁹DHI, p. 160.

malevolent god of red complexion into a benevolent deity (Śiva) of *karpūra-gaura* (camphor-white) complexion, his primitive looking horns were sublimated into the crescent with which he adorns his matted hair (*Chandramauli*). We also suggest that the association of the Yogī god of the Harappans with trident and bull both, is also obvious from the seal (described below, p. 31) where a standing figure is shown with a humpless bull standing by the side of a trident-post.

The suggestion that the god with three-pronged head-dress depicted on Seal No. 420, etc. is the prototype of later Śiva is strengthened by a number of other factors. Firstly, in the Puranic Hinduism Śiva is worshipped both in human and phallic forms. Now, as we have seen above, numerous stone phalli were found at the various Indus Valley sites. Their connection with the god depicted on the seal is indicated by the *penis erectus* of the deity of the seal. Secondly, Śiva is intimately associated with Nāgas and on one seal Nāgas have been shown with the deity sitting on a throne in Yogic posture. The fact that the Indus people worshipped a prototype of Śiva and also a Mother Goddess who in the Puranic religion figures as the Śakti and wife of Śiva indicate in the same direction. We have discussed the nature of the relationship of the Indus Mother Goddess with 'Paśupati' in a later section of this Chapter (pp. 24-9).

In the Puranic religion Śiva also appears as a hunter. It reminds us of the depiction of a horned archer in the costume of leaves on a seal amulet. Śiva's description as *Kṛttivāsū* may have something to do with the depiction of elephant on the 'Paśupati' seal. In this connection the famous steatite male statue may also be mentioned. In it a 'priest' is shown draped in a shawl decorated with trefoil pattern with eyes half-closed in a yogic attitude and ears having a hole in the middle. He is wearing an amulet on the right arm as is the practice prevalent in India even today. His yogic *mudrā* and the trefoil pattern on his shawl indicate that probably he is a priest. Here we may point out that the trefoil pattern on his shawl is most likely the idealized pattern of *bilva* leaves which are regarded as sacred in Śaivism. The association of *bilva* leaves with nāga worship is also mentioned in ancient Indian literature¹.

Vedic Evidence on the Indus Religion

The suggestion that the Indus people worshipped a horned deity

¹Vide Monier Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, under *bilva*.

with three heads has probably been alluded to in the *RV*. The *RV* refers to the enemies of the Aryans as *Dāsas* and *Dasyus*. According to Pt. K. C. Chattopadhyaya the words 'Dāsa' and 'Dasyu' have been used as exact synonyms. *Sushṇa*, *Ahi*, *Śambara*, *Namuchī*, etc. have been indiscriminately called *Dāsa* or *Dasyu*. They are described as black-skinned (*kr̥ṣṇa yonī*) and noseless (*anāsa*) and as not worshipping or not sacrificing (*a-karman*, *a-devayau*, *a-brahman*, *a-yajvan*, *a-vrata*, *anya-vrata*, etc.). They have also been called as speaking a strange language (*mṛddhavāk*) and having phallus as their deity (*śiśnadevāḥ*). The *Dāsa* and *Dasyu* however were not uncivilized. *Dāsas* like *Śambara* had forts, ninety or ninety-nine or a hundred in number, which *Indra* claims to have destroyed (hence his epithet *Purabhid* or *Purandara*). All these facts indicate the possibility that the *Dāsas* and *Dasyus* were connected with the *Indus Civilization*. The *Ṛgvedic* references to the destruction of puras have been taken to be the references to the walled-cities and forts of the pre-Aryans¹ and the fight of *Indra* with *Dāsas* and *Dasyus* is interpreted as the struggle of the Aryans against pre-Vedic non-Aryans². Piggot even suggests that *Indra's* exploit of releasing the waters actually refers to the destruction of the bunds built to protect the *Harappan* cities from floods³. Many scholars including K. C. Chattopadhyaya, G. C. Pande and G. S. Awasthi however believe that the *Dāsas* and *Dasyus* were not real people, but demons⁴. But we feel that both these views are not mutually exclusive; rather they are complementary to each other. We believe that the *Vedic* seers not only refer to their actual enemies whom they called *Dāsas* and *Dasyus* but also to the gods of their enemies whom they described as demons. Their description of these demons was obviously based on their knowledge of their actual foes or what they heard and saw about them. It would indeed be strange if the Aryans conquered the *Punjab* from the *Indus* people but made no reference to them in their literature. In this connection more than two decades

¹Wheeler, M., *The Indus Civilization*, p. 90; Piggot, *loc. cit.*, pp. 261-3.

²*CHI*, I, pp. 84, 86; Keith, *op. cit.*, I, p. 234; Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology*, p. 157; Piggot, *op. cit.*

³Piggot, *loc. cit.* P. R. Deshmukh supports this view (*PJ*, IV, ii, p. 603). According to S. B. Roy (*PIHC*, XXXIV, 1973, Pt. I, p. 30) the authors of the *Harappa* culture were *Dānavas*.

⁴Chattopadhyaya, K. C., *Studies*, I, p. 206 ff; Pande, G. C., *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism*, p. 253 f. Awasthi, G. S., *Dasyu-Vivechana tathā Dāsa-Mimāṃsā*, Lucknow, Saṁ, 2015.

ago we drew the attention of scholars¹ to the occurrence of the words, 'three-headed' (*Triśīrshāṇam*), 'six-eyed' (*Shaḍaksha*)² and 'bull-checked' or 'bull-helmeted' (*Vṛshasīpra*)³ for the enemies of the Aryans. These adjectives cannot fail to remind anybody of the physical appearance of the Indus god depicted on Seal No. 420 and of the horned dress found so frequently on the Indus seals. In this connection we would also like to point out that the RV refers to a non-Aryan tribe named Vishāṇin⁴ (with horned head-dress) which fought in the Dāśarājña against Sudāsa but was defeated. Significantly, the name of a tribe allied with the Vishāṇins was Śīva,⁵ usually identified with the Siboi mentioned by the Classical authors. Both these tribes belonged to the region which was not far away from Harappa and which has probably itself been mentioned as Hariyūpiyā in the RV⁶.

Here we may also consider the R̥gvedic references to Śīśnadevas⁷ and Mūradevas⁸. The term *Śīśnadevāḥ* obviously refers to the phallus worshippers (*śīśnadevāḥ yeshām te*). This is the view of Stevenson, Lassen, Muir, Weber, Hopkins, R. G. Bhandarkar, J. N. Banerjia, etc. "Let not the Śīśnadevāḥ enter our sacrificial *pañḍāla*", the Vedic ṛshi prays⁹. Accepting the suggestion of Sāyaṇa that it simply alludes to lustful persons as Pusalker and A. K. Chakravarty have done¹⁰, or taking it to mean 'tailed demons' as K. A. Nilakanta Sastri following Roth seems to believe¹¹, would be ignoring altogether the archaeological evidence on the one hand and later developments on the other. As regards the term Mūradeva, it probably means image worshipper¹² in which case it may also be regarded as a reference to the Indus people whose religion was frankly iconic.

¹Goyal, S. R., *Viśva kī Prāchīna Sabhyatāyen*, p. 536.

²RV, X.99.6.

³RV, VII.99.4.

⁴RV, VII.18.16.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶RV, VI.27.5. Abhyavartin Chayamāna is said to have defeated his enemies at Hariyūpiyā.

⁷RV, VII.21.5; X.99.3.

⁸RV, VII.104-24; X.87.2; X.87.14.

⁹RV, VII.21.5.

¹⁰Pusalker, *The Vedic Age*, p. 91. For the view of A. K. Chakravarty vide *PJ*, IV, i, p. 314 f.

¹¹*CHI*, II, pp. 65-6.

¹²Das, A. C., *R̥gvedic Culture*, p. 145.

Indus Mother-Goddess : Sister-Wife of 'Paśupati'

Further light on the nature of the Indus religion may be obtained from a judicious analysis of the Vedic literature. If we proceed with the assumption (for which we have given some reasons, *supra*) that the Vedic age was posterior to the main phase of the Indus Civilization, the cultural development of the Vedic society will have to be understood "as a growing fusion of Aryan and non-Aryan elements."¹ In view of this fact it is now held that "some of the most important elements of the religious life of latter day India go back to the Indus civilization. Among these may be mentioned the worship of a proto-type of Śiva, who is represented as Paśupati, Yogī and perhaps Naṭarāja, of the Mother-Goddess, of the pīpal tree, and of the bull and some other animals associated with gods²." Phallic worship and the great sanctity that has ever been attached to water in India may also go back to the Indus Civilization. However, so far scholars have devoted their attention to tracing the development of the various features of the Indus religion in the Vedic age. We think that it is also possible to reverse this process, that is, to isolate the new features found in the later Vedic religion and ascribe them to the Indus religion provided some indication is available to suggest that they originated from that source and not in some other non-Indus primitive society.

Let us illustrate our idea by an example. From the Indus seals we know that the authors of the Indus Civilization worshipped the *aśvattha* tree. But we do not know the idea behind it. Now, we gather from the *RV* that the early Vedic Aryans did not worship this tree, but by the time of the *AV* (composed during the period of amalgamation of the Aryan and non-Aryan ideas) its worship had become prevalent. It can therefore be easily accepted that this element came into the Aryan society from the Indus religion. Now, from the *AV* we also learn that at the time of its composition the *aśvattha* was worshipped for victory over enemies (III.6.1) and the birth of the male progeny (VI.11.1). It therefore logically follows that most likely the Indus people, from whom the Aryans learnt this cult, worshipped the *aśvattha* for the same purposes. This line of enquiry may greatly enhance our understanding of the Indus religion;

¹Pande, G. C., *Origins of Buddhism*, 1957, p. 256.

²*Ibid.*

specially it can give us an idea of the relationship as conceived by the Indus people between their supreme god, the prototype of Śiva, and goddesses.

In the *Ṛgveda*¹ Rudra shows very little of the greatness which in the later literature attends him. He is the subject of but three hymns, shares one with Soma and finds mention in about seventy-five casual references. He is described as a physically attractive god with well formed jaws, strong limbs, massive build, bold and power-radiant, having a gold chain around his neck and brave like a bull. He has matted and braided hair, is a good archer and thunder-bearer and sits in a chariot. He is god of healing and protector of cattle. He is also described as malevolent. In many hymns it is prayed that his shaft may not strike his worshippers, their kinsmen and cows (vide Ch. III).

The personality of the *Ṛgvedic* Rudra is obviously different from the Rudra-Śive concept which gradually evolved during the post-*Ṛgvedic* period. The transformation of his character begins to take place right from the age of the later *Samhitās*. Already in the 10th maṇḍala of the *Ṛgveda*, composed later than the other portions of this work, a new element to his personality is added when it is stated that Rudra-Keśī drank *viśā*². Yāska and following him Sāyaṇa believed that here Keśī means Sūrya. But in the same sūkta Keśī has been associated with Munis who are described as long-haired, clad in dirty, tawny-coloured garments, walking in the air, drinking poison, delirious with 'mauneya' and inspired. In the words of G. C. Pande, "There can hardly be a doubt that the 'Muni' was to the *Ṛgvedic* culture an alien figure."³ It is quite likely that the reference to Rudra-Keśī and Munis contains a hint to the beginnings of the identification of the Vedic Rudra with the supreme god of the Indus religion though the Yogic practices associated with the worship of the Indus god were still looked upon as miracles by the ignorant Aryans.

The *Sāma Samhitā* gives us no new features of the god, but the *Samhitās* of the *Atharvaveda* and the *Yajurveda*⁴ apart from repeating the description of the *Ṛgveda*, add several new details about him.

¹For references vide Keith, A. B., *The Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas and Upanishads*, p. 141 ff.

²*RV*, 10.136.

³Pande, *loc. cit.*, p. 258.

⁴Vide Keith, *loc. cit.*, for references.

The *Atharvaveda* describes him as Nīlaśikhaṇḍī, Paśupati, Īśāna and Mahādeva, refers to his gaṇas, invokes him for protection against the bhūtas and piśāchas, identifies him with Bhava and Śarva and associates him with Vrātya. The *Yajurveda* strengthens the description of the *Atharvaveda* and adds several interesting features. It lays greater emphasis on his *paśupati* aspect and mentions his *daurvrātya* (translated by Griffith as 'indiscipline'). In this work he is called by names which later became more familiar : Bhava, Śiva, Śitikaṇṭha, Kapardī, etc. He is also described as Tryambaka, is the son of Svadhiti and has a sister Ambikā. In this *Śatarudrīya* litany he is also Śiva and Śaṅkara. Mention is also made of his title Nilagrīva. His association with mountains is proved by the reference to his particular habitat in the Mūjavat Hill and his titles Girichara, Giritra, etc. The reference to his title Kṛttivāsā indicates his association with forest dwellers. In the *Kṛshṇa Yajurveda*, 16, he is described not only as the lord of thieves, robbers, cheats, bald-headed, night-rovers and deformed, but significantly also of the architects, craftsmen councillors and merchants.

Thus, in the evolution of the Rudra-Śive concept in the Vedas, we notice, not the gradual development of a Vedic deity along the lines laid down in the *Ṛgveda*, but the metamorphosis of a minor Aryan god into a god which has both Aryan and non-Aryan features from the various non-Aryan sources. In the *Ṛgveda* he is a minor but powerful god who to a rural community was worth propitiating for prosperity of men and cattle. In the later Saṁhitās he continues to be so but at the same time imbibes traits of the deities of mountain and forest-dwellers and emerges as the central deity who, while retaining the overlordship of the vegetation and animal worlds, appropriated some features of the city-dwelling people including merchants, architects, craftsmen, councillors, etc. It may easily be imagined that he imbibed the features of mountain and forest-dwelling gods when the Aryans came into contact with some primitive tribes, but his attributes as a god of city-dwelling people could come only from the Aryan contact with the Indus people. The Indus Civilization was basically agrarian and cattle-rearing and, therefore, the identification of the supreme god of the Indus religion with the Vedic Rudra must have strengthened the *paśupati* aspect of the latter. But the Indus god was the god of an urban people also and was associated with yoga ; these features were bound to transform the personality of the Vedic Rudra.

Among the new elements of the Rudra-Śive concept the most important is his association with Ambikā. Now, in the Hindu religion Ambikā is the wife of Śiva. But curiously in the *Vājasaneyī Samhitā*¹ of the *Śukla Yajurveda*, *Maitrāyaṇī Samhitā*² of the *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda* and the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*,³ she is described as his sister: "O Rudra, this is thine allotted portion. With Ambikā thy sister kindly take it"⁴. It needs hardly any arguments to prove that the concept of the association of a goddess with a god, unknown in the Ṛgvedic religion in which goddesses played only an insignificant part, must have been the contribution of the Indus religion, for that religion was dominated not only by a great god who convincingly shared many traits of the later Śiva (being a yogī and a paśupati; whose cult was associated with fertility and the liṅgam) but also by a great mother-goddess who equally shared the traits of Ambikā or Pārvatī⁵. But if such was the case it may also be reasonably assumed that the idea that the Mother-Goddess is the sister of Father-God also came from that source. It raises a very interesting possibility. As we all know, in some chalcolithic civilizations sister-brother marriages were in vogue⁶. In Egypt in fact Isis was regarded as both sister and wife of Osiris⁷. That this religious feature had its social aspect in the prevalence of sister-brother marriages both in the royal families and society is also well-known. Is it not possible, then, to assume that in the Indian chalcolithic civilization also sister-brother incest was prevalent? In that case it may be supposed that when the Indus supreme god was identified in the Later Vedic Age with the Vedic Rudra, the Aryans also became familiar with his sister-wife, called Ambikā in the *Yajurveda*. But this incestuous relationship was not palatable to the ethical ideas of the Vedic Aryans. They therefore accepted her only either as his sister or his wife. That is why in the *Yajurveda* etc., composed in the age when the assimilation of the Indus and Vedic thought-currents was taking place, she is found mentioned as his sister while in the later literature she is described as his wife.

¹*Vājasaneyī Samhitā*, Griffith's translation, p. 28.

²*Maitrāyaṇī Samhitā*, 1.10.20.

³*Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, 1.6.10.

⁴Griffith, *loc. cit.*

⁵Allchins, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

⁶*Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, 8, p. 428; for incestuous marriages in Iran, *ibid.*, p. 458.

⁷*Ibid.*, 5, p. 481 f.

The assumption that brother-sister incest was current in the Indus society may help us in solving several other problems. For example, we have a number of references to brother-sister incest in ancient Indian literature which appear difficult to be explained. The Yama-Yamī dialogue of the 10th maṇḍala of the *R̥gveda* refers to the currency of the brother-sister incest in an earlier period (whether the characters of this dialogue are regarded as human or divine), though it also makes it quite obvious that this practice was denounced as being against the moral laws of Varuṇa and Aryans attached great stigma to incestuous connections. However, because of the amalgamation of the Indus and Vedic societies, some people indulged in this practice. Probably hymn VI.55 of the *R̥gveda*¹, which refers to it and the hymn X.162 which, according to Griffith's translation, constitutes a charm for the prevention of abortion and the fifth verse of which seemingly refers to incest², were meant for such people.

As regards the Purāṇas, we do not agree with B. S. Upadhyaya³ who, following S. C. Sarkar⁴, has mentioned a large number of cases from these works in which kings are said to have married their *pitṛkanyās*, for the word *pitṛkanyā* here does not mean 'father's daughter' but the 'daughter of pitaras' who were a group of semi-divine beings⁵. However, there are a number of instances of the brother-sister marriages in the Jātakas and elsewhere which need explanation. For example, a Jātaka story mentions Sitā, the wife of Rāma, as his sister⁶ (was it a case of the confusion created by her title *Janaka-duhitā*?). In another story Kṛṣṇa's twin brother is stated to have married the daughter of his mother by her second husband⁷. A third Jātaka story refers to Udaybhadrā of Kāśī who married his half-sister Udayabhadrā⁸. Among the Śākya marriage with sisters was a recognised custom⁹. We think that the assumption

¹Griffith, *Hymns of the R̥gveda*.

²*Ibid.*

³Upadhyaya, B. S., *Women in R̥gveda*, 1974, p. 129 ff.

⁴Sarkar, S. C., *Some Aspects of the Earliest Social History of India*, pp. 116-135.

⁵Chitrava, Siddheshwar, M. M., *Bhāratavarshīya Prāchīna Charitṛakośa*, p. 421 ff.

⁶Cowell, *Jātakas*, IV.79-82.

⁷*Ibid.*, V.26.

⁸*Ibid.*, IV.67.

⁹*Ibid.*, V.219.

that this custom was current in the Indus society may help us in explaining its existence in the later ages. Thus our suggestion¹ throws welcome light not only on the socio-religious aspects of the Indus Valley Civilization, it also helps us in understanding some curious features of the later Indian society.

Tree-Worship

The Indus seals show the presence of several different forms of tree worship—one in which the tree itself was worshipped in its natural form, the other in which the tree was personified and endowed with human shape and still another one in which trees were regarded as abodes of spirits. On several seals natural trees are represented as enclosed by walls or railings as are commonly found surrounding the base of the sacred trees (*vrksha chaityas*) in the reliefs and coins of the historical period². On a terracotta seal (No. 2410) found at Harappa a deity wearing a three-pronged head-dress is shown standing between the arch formed by two branches of the *āsvattha* tree. In one amulet two men are shown, each carrying a tree torn from the ground, with a deity in between them. In this connection the seals depicting a deity within a tree with a goat (with or without a human face) and a kneeling worshipper before her, described above (p. 17 f.), may be recalled. The sacred nature of the *pīpal* or *āsvattha* tree is mentioned in the *AV* wherein it is said that it was worshipped for obtaining victory over one's enemies and for male progeny (*supra*, p. 24 f.)³.

Animal Worship

The prevalence of animal worship in the Indus religion is indicated by the representations of animals on seals and sealings and also in terracotta, faience and stone figurines. Pusalker⁴ has divided animal representations on the Indus seals into three categories: (1) Mythical animals: Their representations are numerous. For

¹We have discussed this suggestion in our book *Viśva kī Prāchīna Sabhyatāyen*, 1963, p. 551 and in our papers 'Yajurveda men Rudra kā Svarūpa aur uskā Aitihāsika Mahatva' (*Bhārati*, Bombay, 1963, p. 130 ff.) and 'A Socio-Religious Aspect of the Indus Civilization', *Cultural Contours of India*, Part II, Jaipur, 1981, pp. 35-38.

²Banerjea, *DHI*, p. 174.

³See also K. N. Shastri, *op. cit.*, p. 89 ff.

⁴*The Vedic Age*, p. 191 f.

example on one face of a prism-sealing a semi-human semi-bovine creature (with horns, tail and bovine legs) is shown attacking a horned tiger. Vats has compared him with Enkidu or Eabani of the Sumerian mythology¹. On some seals is portrayed a therianthrope figure who fights a tiger on both the sides. He is usually regarded as the Indian counterpart of the Sumerian Gilgamesh². On a seal is shown a composite being with body of a tiger attached to the full body of man. It demands comparison with the later concept of *Narasimha*. On another seal is shown a tiger with human head. According to Banerjea all these creatures remind one of the *ganās* of Śiva³. Sometimes a complex animal is depicted by attaching the heads of several animals to a central boss. (2) Ambiguous animals : Among them are included the strange unicorn (one-horned creature) accompanied with manger or incense burner. The one-horned animal of India has been mentioned in the works of Ctesius, Aristotle, Pliny, etc. According to some scholars the unicorn may be the precursor of the concept of the boar incarnation of Viṣṇu which is said to have been *Ekasṛṅgī*. On some seals tigers or other animals are depicted probably as *genii*. (3) Actual animals : They include rhinoceros, bison, tiger, elephant, buffalo, humped and humpless bull, etc. The depiction of feeding trough before the wild beasts such as rhinoceros, bison or tiger, which could not be domesticated, shows that they were objects of worship. In later ages many of them were regarded as *vāhanas* of gods. Birds are conspicuous by their absence on the Indus seals but are depicted on pottery.

Other Aspects of the Indus Religion

Many Indus seals portray apparently mythological stories. Some of them e.g. those concerning Eabani and Gilgamesh have been noted above. On the third face of the prism-sealing (on the one face of which 'Eabani' is shown fighting the tiger) a human figure, most probably a deity, is shown in the typical yogic posture with another figure to right seated on its haunches. Another sealing contains a

¹CHI, I, p. 123.

²For the story of Eabani and Gilgamesh vide, Goyal, S. R., *Viśva ki Prāchīna Sabhyatāyen*. pp. 96-99.

³DHI, p. 161. According to Walter A. Fairservis the seal references to tree deity, the tiger-gods, superman, etc. seem to indicate a world more common to hunters than to agriculturists (*The Roots of Ancient India*).

legendary scene on both of its faces. On its obverse to the left is depicted a man attacking a tiger from a *machān* (scaffolding) erected on a tree. In the middle is shown a deity sitting on a throne in a yogic posture while to the right are shown three animals, one of them, probably a goat, being in an enclosure. On the reverse from left to right are shown a humpless bull standing by a trident-headed post, then a standing figure, probably of a deity in front of a two-storeyed structure of somewhat unusual appearance followed by three pictograms. The tiger-hunt scene is repeated on many other seals with slight variations. The stories behind these scenes are not known.

Direct depiction of river worship has not been found, though according to one view the seven figures depicted on a seal (*supra* p. 18) may represent the seven rivers of the Punjab. The elaborate arrangement for bathing and the Great Bath of Mohenjodaro suggest that as in later Hinduism ceremonial ablution formed an important part of the Indus religion. The representation of crocodile on seals may indicate the worship of the Indus or the cult of *Makara* or *gharial*.

Among symbols depicted on the seals which seem to have had religious significance mention may be made of troughs which probably symbolized the food offerings to gods conceived in the form of wild or imaginary beasts. Among other symbols are the *svastika* (found in many variations), the *pīpal* leaf, the wheel (that is *chakra*), a simple cross, etc. Probably wheel or cross or *svastika* symbolized the Sun. According to B. M. Barua on one seal the motif of two *suparṇas* (*dvā suparṇā sayujā sakhāyā*, etc.) described in the *RV*, *Kaṭha Upanishad*, etc. has been depicted¹. The pattern of nine squares recalls the later representation of *navagrahas* while, according to Allchins, the maze-like closed pattern found on seals is similar to modern *rangolī*.

At Kalibanga and Lothal were found some new religious features including the so-called fire-altars and *kuṇḍas*. S. R. Rao² calls them sacrificial altars but Sankalia has some doubt³. There was also found at Kalibanga an oblong terracotta cake incised with a bull-headed figure with large incurved horns. It reminds one of the Paśupati of Mohenjodaro. Further, at Lothal no liṅgas, figurines of mother-goddess and representation of Brahmani bull

¹Barua in *B. C. Law Volume*, II, p. 464.

²Sankalia, *The Prehistory and Protohistory of India and Pakistan*, p. 350.

³*Ibid.*, p. 376.

are found. This is significant because at both the sites excavations have been extensive¹. Does all this evidence mean that people of Lothal were an early wave of the Indo-Aryans who were different from the R̥gvedic Aryans who adopted some features of the material culture of the Harappans while the R̥gvedic Aryans did not?

Some religious ideas of the Harappan people are known from the pottery found in the Cemetery H. The shoulders of the urns found in the upper stratum (I) bear registers bounded by straight or wavy lines. On them common motif are peacocks with long streaming feathers on the head. In one case their bodies are hollow and contain small horizontal human forms. A second motif is of bulls or cows, some with curious plant-like forms springing from their horns and one with an *asvattha* leaf appearing from the hump². Another shows two animals facing each other, held by a man with long wavy hair, while a hound stands behind one of them; in yet another a little man of similar form stands on the back of a creature which shares the features of a centaur with those of the Harappan bull-man³. M. S. Vats⁴ suggested that the tiny human forms within the peacock are the souls of the dead; that the broad registers represent the river across which they must be carried, and that the peacocks, bulls and so forth are other aids to their crossing. In support of this he has quoted some extracts from the *R̥gveda*. Perhaps the most convincing details is the hound, which Vats compares with the hound of Yama. Thus in this pottery we may find a striking combination of Harappan elements, such as the *pīpal* leaf, the bull, etc., with a conception which seems to be related with the Aryans⁵.

It appears that the predominant burial rite in the Indus society was extended inhumation, the body lying on its back with the head generally to the north. Quantities of pottery were placed in the graves and in some cases the skeleton was buried with ornaments. A number of graves took the form of brick chambers or cists. From Harappa is reported a coffin burial with traces of a reed shroud. At Kalibanga two other types of burial were encountered:

¹Allchins, *op. cit.*

²*Ibid.*, p. 324.

³*Ibid.*

⁴Quoted by Allchins, *ibid.*

⁵*Ibid.*

one, smaller circular pits containing large urns, accompanied with pottery, but surprisingly no skeletal remains, and two, more orthodox burial pits with what are evidently collected bones¹. From the Lothal cemetery comes evidence of the burial of pairs of skeletons, one male and one female in each case, interred in a single grave. It has been suggested that these may indicate a practice akin to *satī*.²

Relation with Later Hinduism

In all, as Fariservis has said, there is a religious quality to the Indus Civilization that is difficult to ignore. From the individual's birth to death one can detect its traces. The evidence for *liṅga* worship, the depiction of pregnancy, the depiction of the birth of plant from the womb of the deity, the find of a *liṅga* in a jar at Harappa, the representation of animal and even human sacrifices, all these strongly suggest cults related to regeneration and fertility. The formal processions, ablutions of the Great Bath, priesthood suggested by sculptures, use of horned head-dresses, iconographic elements such as man-tiger, tree-deities, 'Gilgamesh' motif—all these prove the complexities of myths and rites connected with a variety of powers not fully known today.

The Indus religion never died out completely. There are many traits of this religion which reappeared in the religion of later Vedic age and in Hinduism of subsequent epochs. Firstly, the Indus religion contributed to the emergence of iconic or image worship in Indian religions. It was something new for the Vedic Aryans. Similarly the worship of gods in the form of symbols such as *liṅga* and *yonī*, so common in Hinduism, was also a contribution of the Indus religion. Secondly, as we will see in the next chapter, goddesses are of almost no consequence in the Vedic religion (p. 67); therefore their emergence as important deities in the Puranic Hinduism should be regarded as the result of the impact of the Indus religion. Thirdly, the Indus religion contributed the concept of the Great God, who convincingly shares many traits of the later Śiva being a *Trimukha* (three-faced), *Ūrdhvamedhū*, *Yogīrāja* and *Paśupati*, who was conceived in human and also probably in *liṅga* form, and who was associated with *nāgas* (snakes), *vr̥shabha* (bull), horns,

¹*Ibid.*, pp. 138-9.

²*Ibid.*

and probably trident or *triśūla*. He was perhaps also regarded as an archer and *Naṭarāja*. He was most likely regarded as the husband and brother both, of the Mother-Goddess. Therefore the evolution of the Rudra-Śiva and Mother-Goddess concepts in the Later Vedic and post-Vedic ages was largely the result of the impact of the Indus religion. The knowledge of yoga among the Indus people is also extremely significant and one of their major contributions to Hindu religion. In a way, at least indirectly, the origins of the Upanishadic, Buddhist and Jain speculations may be traced back to the Indus Valley period. It is also not beyond the bounds of possibility that the Sāṃkhya theory of two eternal principles—one male (*puruṣha*) and other female (*prakṛti*)—was influenced by the co-existence in the Indus religion of the Mother-Goddess and Father-God cults.

Many other religious ideas of Hinduism—tree, specially *pīpal* worship, trees as abode of spirits, zoolatry in its various forms, etc., may be traced back to the Indus religion. Whether the Indus people worshipped their gods with *pūjā* ritual or not, it is almost certain that human and animal sacrifices were prevalent among them. The goat sacrifice, evidenced on seals, and also human sacrifice, survived in the Śakti cult of the later ages. They obviously also believed in the purifying power of water and the Great Bath of Mohenjodaro reminds one of the Pushkaraṇī of Vaiśālī of the early historical period. Thus, “Paradoxically it would appear that the Indus Civilization transmitted to its successors a metaphysics that endured, whilst it failed utterly to transmit the physical civilization which is its present monument.”¹ According to Prof. G. C. Pande the Indus Civilization gives evidence of both the aspects of Indian culture—*Pravṛtti dharma* and *Nivṛtti dharma*. In the worship of the Great Mother one can discern the worship of the creative principle, of Mother Earth, of Nature in its fertility which all over the ancient world belonged to the religion of *Pravṛtti*. At the same time the worship of Paśupati, seated in the midst of beasts, clearly reminds one of the Yogic tradition of *Nivṛtti*². Taking all in all, there is no doubt whatever that there is much in the Harappan religion that continued in and moulded the shape of subsequent Hinduism.

¹Wheeler, *The Indus Civilization*, p. 95.

²Pande, *Sramaṇa Tradition*, Ahmadabad, 1978, p. 6.

Chapter 3

The Early Vedic (Ṛgvedic) Religion

The Vedic Literature

The religion of the Vedic Aryans, who dominated the Indian scene after the decline and collapse of the Indus Valley Civilization, is known from their literature. Generally speaking, Sanskrit literature may be classed under two broad categories : Vedic and non-Vedic (or rather post-Vedic). The Saṁhitās, Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas and Upanishads are included in the Vedic literature¹, while the Sūtras, Smṛtis, Epics, classical literature, philosophical works, commentaries and manuals, these all come under post-Vedic literature. The word 'Veda' primarily means *Vidyā* or knowledge (from the root *vid*, 'to know'). Secondly, it denotes works (*granthas*) containing the most sacred and authoritative *vidyā*. These works were originally of two categories—Mantras and Brāhmaṇas. According to the *Yajña Paribhāshā* of Āpastamba, "The Veda is the name given to the Mantras and Brāhmaṇas" (*Mantra Brāhmaṇayor Vedanāmadheyam*) and the great Vedic exegetist Sāyaṇa agrees with him². Here it is needless to point out that the Āraṇyakas and the Upanishads are regarded as integral parts of the Brāhmaṇas.

The Vedas are also called Śruti. 'Śruti' is what is heard, as opposed to what is composed or remembered. It is therefore revealed and self-authoritative, not composed by any human authors. The ṛshis of the hymns are thus called the seers, the *drashṭās*, of the mantras or hymns. They were not the authors of the contents of the hymns. They were only the medium communicating between gods and men.

The first works revealed to the ṛshis were the four Saṁhitās of the four Vedas : Ṛk, Sāman, Yajush and Atharvan. Of these the

¹For the Vedic literature vide Max Müller, *History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature* (reprinted, 1968); Weber, *History of Indian Literature* (reprinted, 1961); Macdonell, *History of Sanskrit Literature* (reprinted, 1962); Winternitz, *History of Indian Literature*, Vol. I (reprinted, 1972).

²Sukthankar, *Ghate's Lectures on the Ṛgveda*, p. 22.

Ṛk Samhitā is regarded as the oldest and most important, not only from the point of view of its contents, but also from the orthodox standpoint. Some scholars such as Hillebrandt and Whitney are of the opinion that some portions of the *RV* were composed outside India—in Arachosia and the Indo-Iranian border lands. However the bulk of it was composed in the Saptasindhu region. Of its various recensions only one, the Śākala recension, consisting of 1017 hymns of unequal length, has come down to us¹, though we have parts of two other recensions which are placed in the Śākala text itself, namely the Vālakhilya (11 hymns, placed after the eighth maṇḍala) and Bashkala (the so-called 36 Khila sūktas inserted at various places in the Aundh edition of the Śākala recension).

The *RV* comprises of ten maṇḍalas. Each maṇḍala contains several anuvākas, each anuvāka consists of a number of hymns (sūktas) and each hymn is made up of a number of verses. Every sūkta has a ṛshi, devatā and chhanda (a seer, a deity and metre), without whose knowledge the meaning of the hymn cannot be properly understood. Of the various maṇḍalas the first and last are the youngest portions composed by different seers, a few of them being women². The tenth maṇḍala clearly shows familiarity with the first nine books. The maṇḍalas from the second to the eighth are called the maṇḍalas of the seers of Gṛtsamada, Viśvāmitra, Vāmadeva, Atri, Bharadvāja, Vasishṭha and Kaṇva families. The ninth maṇḍala is devoted to the hymns related to the Soma cult.

The hymns of the *Ṛgveda* may be divided into three categories—religious hymns, philosophical hymns and secular hymns. All those hymns which are definitely addressed to divinities, containing an eulogy of them and requests for the grant of riches, progeny, cattle, etc., are included in the first category. The philosophical hymns, very few in number, are those which refer to such questions as ‘who I am?’, ‘whence I come?’, ‘what is the prime cause of the universe?’, etc. As regards secular hymns, it is very difficult to distinguish them from the religious hymns, but generally by secular are meant those hymns which are not specially addressed to divinities. Among these are included the so-called historical hymns

¹Vide, G. S. Rai, ‘Śākhās of the *Ṛgveda* mentioned in the Purāṇas’, *Purāṇa*, VI, No. 1, pp. 97–112.

²See Mishra, Padma, ‘Ṛṣi’, *Prajñā*, XI, No. 2, pp. 154–66. For the view that some of the Vedic ṛshis were non-Aryans, vide Jain, R. C., ‘*Ṛgveda* and Archaeology’, *ABORI*, XLII, Pts. 1–4, pp. 83–89.

which refer to the victory and triumph of some princes or princely families, the *dāna stutis* or praises of gifts which eulogise the generosity of the princes who bestowed presents on ṛshis, etc. Formulas of incantation and exorcism are also found in the *Ṛgveda* though their proper sphere is really the *Atharvaveda*. Then there are *ākhyāna* hymns, which are regarded by some as the earliest forms of dramatic literature in India, and by others as ballads.

As regards the *Sāma Saṁhitā*, it is a collection of *sāmans* or melodies. Of its 1603 verses (not counting the repetitions) all but 99 are taken from the *RV*. The literary and historical value of the *SV* is therefore almost nil¹. It is purely a ritual Saṁhitā² specially meant for the use of the Udgātṛ in sacrifices. According to a Puraṇic tradition at one time there were one thousand Saṁhitās of the *Sāmaveda*. But now only three recensions are extant—the *Jaiminīya*, the *Kauthuma*, and the *Rāṇāyanīya*. The verse on which a *sāman* is chanted is called a *Yonī*, the source. There are in all 585 *Yonīs*. The *Sāma Saṁhitā* consists of two parts—the *Pūrvārchika* and the *Uttarārchika*, that is the first and later verse collections.

The *Yajurveda* is even more pronouncedly a ritual text. It is essentially a guide book for the Adhvaryu priests who did practically everything in a sacrifice except reciting the mantras and chanting the *sāmans*; it is only rarely that it touches secular aspects of life³. Patañjali refers to a tradition of 101 schools or *śākhās* of *YV* of which no less than six, all complete, are now found. Two of them (*Mādhyanandin* and *Kāṇva*) constitute the *Śukla* or *White Yajurveda* and the rest (*Taittirīya*, *Kāṭhaka*, *Maitrāyaṇī* and *Kāpishṭhala*) the *Kṛshṇa* or *Black Yajurveda*. The *Śukla Yajurveda* is also called the *Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā*. It is divided into forty *Adhyāyas* each of which is again divided into short sections or *Kaṇḍikās*, their total being 1975. The *Kṛshṇa Yajurveda* is divided into seven *Kāṇḍas* containing 5 to 8 *Prapāṭhakas*. Each *Prapāṭhaka* is subdivided into *anuvākas*.

The *Atharvaveda* is different from the other three Vedic Saṁhitās. It was originally a prayer-book of the simple folk who felt haunted

¹Winternitz, *op. cit.*, p. 169.

²Vide, Shakuntala N. Gayatonde, *Journal of the University of Bombay*, XXXII, pt. 2, pp. 89–120.

³Cf. Bhandari, V. S., 'Secular Aspect of the *Yajurveda*', *Nagpur University Journal*, XVIII, No. 1, pp. 63–67.

by gods and demons and whose religiosity was exploited by the Brāhmaṇas. At a later date an attempt was made to absorb it within the sacred Śrauta literature and the name *Brahmaveda* was given to it. But it was a mere pretence. Actually it was never accorded full recognition in the ritual of the Soma cult and it never entirely lost its original character. In its present form it is the latest of the four Saṁhitās, but in contents it is by no means so. According to Bloomfield the *Atharvaveda* is the bearer of old tradition; not only in the line of the popular charms but also to some extent, albeit slight, its hieratic materials are likely to be the product of independent tradition that had eluded the other Vedas, the *Ṛgveda* not excepted¹. At the same time, however, it is quite clear that the hymns and charms of the *AV* were collected in a Saṁhitā and handed down to the present day only because the Brahmanical ritual granted a grudging recognition even to frankly magical incantations that were originally doubtless of non-Brahmanical inspiration. This is proved strikingly by the Khila hymns of the *Atharvaveda*—the so-called Kuntāpa sūktas—which are of no particularly sacred character but were retained because they were indispensable for a popular cult. This nature of the *AV* imparts its contents a unique importance for the study of the Vedic society².

The Saṁhitā of the *Atharvaveda* is available in two recensions, *Śaunakīya* and *Paippalāda*, each consisting of twenty Kāṇḍas. It is the *Śaunakīya Saṁhitā* that is usually meant when the *Atharvaveda* is mentioned in ancient or modern literature. Each Kāṇḍa of the *AV* is divided into *anuvākas* and each *anuvāka* into *sūktas*. The earliest references to the *AV* are to the Paippalāda recension. For example the initial verse of the *AV* as quoted by Patañjali and also in the *Gopatha Brāhmaṇa* is not the opening verse of the *Śaunakīya* recension, but of the Paippalāda text.

While only about one-seventh of the material of the first nineteen of the twenty Kāṇḍas of the *AV* is drawn from the *RV*, its twentieth Kāṇḍa consists wholly of the mantras drawn from the *RV*. It was prepared to serve as a manual of the priest called *Brāhmaṇāchchhamṣī* who played a minor role in the the Soma cult.

The Kuntāpa sūktas of this Kāṇḍa are not found in the

¹Quoted in *The Vedic Age*, p. 237.

²Cf. Bhattacharya, D. M., 'The Social Significance of the Atharvāṇic Hymns', *Bhāratīya Vidyā*, XX-XXI (Munshi Indological Felicitation Volume), p. 33 ff.

Paippalāda recension—showing that they had been given a place in this Kāṇḍa at a very late date.

Of the other Kāṇḍas, the 15th and 17th to 19th are regarded as later interpolation because of various reasons. The authenticity of the other Kāṇḍas is however generally accepted¹.

The chronology of the *Atharvaveda* is unusually difficult, for very old things have been described in it sometimes in a very late language. But at the same time it offers forms that would be regarded as archaic even in the *R̥gveda*. According to Chhanda Chakraborty the popular beliefs reflected in the *AV* hark back to hoary antiquity, possibly a period earlier than the *RV*². The first half of IV.16, for example, describes the omniscience of God in a language of such impressive beauty that as a piece of literary art it has hardly any equal in the whole of the Vedic literature; but its second part is an exorcism-formula against liars. And this is not a rare case in the *AV*. This can perhaps be best explained on the assumption that though no less old than the *RV* in contents, the *AV* was codified and canonized very late and at that time its redactors tried to give it a new form.

The Brāhmaṇas, which are in prose, are ritual texts of even more pronounced nature. The sole aim of their authors was to mystify and speculate on the minute details of the sacrificial ritual³. The *Aitareya* and the *Kaushītaki* (or *Śāṅkhāyana*) are the Brāhmaṇas of the *RV*, the *Jaiminīya* and the *Pañchaviṃśa* (also known as *Tāṇḍya Mahā Brāhmaṇa*) are the Brāhmaṇas of the *SV*, the *Śatapatha* is the Brāhmaṇa of the *YV* and the *Gopatha* is the Brāhmaṇa of the *AV*. The *Pañchaviṃśa* contains 25 chapters; when a new chapter was added to it, it was regarded as a new treatise known as *Shadvīṃśa Brāhmaṇa*. The concluding portion of the *Shadvīṃśa Brāhmaṇa* is called the *Adbhut Brāhmaṇa*. The *Jaiminīya* and the *Śatapatha* contain numerous stories which throw welcome light on contemporary social conditions, origin of the epic tales, etc. The *Gopatha* mostly contains quotations from other sources and is quite late in date; according to Bloomfield it is even more recent than the Śrauta sūtra and the Gṛihyasūtra of the *AV*. As literary works, the Brāhmaṇas are regarded very dull and disappointing. The general

¹*The Vedic Age*, pp. 237-8.

²Chakraborty, C., *Common Life in the R̥gveda and the Atharvaveda*, p. 15 f.

³For a detailed description of the Brāhmaṇas, vide 'Introduction' of Jogiraj Basu's *India of the Age of the Brāhmaṇas*.

impression they give is that of pedantry and priestly conceit.

The next group of the Vedic texts are the Āraṇyakas which were followed by the Upanishads. The Āraṇyakas are usually found as supplements to the Brāhmaṇas. They are so called probably because they were to be read in the forest (*aranya*). Their subject matter is symbolic or allegorical speculation of the ritual. The Āraṇyakas were probably meant for the Vanaprasthas as a substitute for the actual sacrificial observances which were no longer practicable for them. It is also likely that these texts were the result of a reaction against Brahmanical ritualism and their authors sought to emphasize the importance of symbolic rather than actual sacrifice.

The Upanishads take an absolutely different path. Their subject matter is *jñāna* leading to the realization of Brahma or Ātman (*Brahma-* or *Ātma-sākshātkāra*) or Moksha, as opposed to *karma*, the subject matter of the other Vedic texts which can lead one only to *svarga* (heaven). According to the generally accepted view they were composed towards the end of the Vedic age—mostly in the centuries preceding the birth of the Buddha but parts of a few probably during his life-time also (cf. 49–52). The Upanishads are the concluding portion as well as the cream of the Veda and are therefore rightly called ‘Vedānta’. The word ‘upanishad’ is derived from the root ‘*sad*’ which means (i) to sit down, (ii) to destroy and (iii) to loosen; ‘*upa*’ means ‘near by’ and ‘*ni*’ means ‘devotedly’. The word ‘upanishad’ therefore means ‘the sitting down of the disciple near his teacher to receive instruction’. The teaching was imparted at private sittings (in contrast to *parishad* or *saṁsad*) only to the qualified disciples. Gradually the word came to signify any secret teaching about Reality and it is used by the Upanishads in this sense (that is *rahasya* or *guhya vidyā*) also.

Originally there must have been at least one Upanishad for every śākhā of the four Vedas. The *Muktikopaniṣad* gives the number of the Upanishads as 108. But only about a dozen Upanishads are regarded as important and authentic. On most of them Śaṅkarāchārya has commented. The principal Upanishads now available are—*Īśa*, *Kena*, *Kaṭha*, *Praśna*, *Muṇḍaka*, *Māṇḍūkya*, *Taittirīya*, *Aitareya*, *Chhandogya*, *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, *Kaushītaki* and *Śvetāśvatara*.

The Sūtra literature is not a part of the Veda and belongs the post-Vedic period, but it does help us to understand the atmosphere of the ‘Vedic’ people in the Upanishadic and post-Upani-

shadic periods. The style of these works is unique. If the Brāhmaṇas err on the side of verbosity and repetition, the sūtras err on the side of brevity. A sūtra means an aphorism, as brief as possible (*svalpāksharam*) but at the same time of unambiguous meaning (*asandigdham*). It serves merely as mnemonic catchword; the rest of the doctrine contained in it was stored up in memory or developed in the commentaries. The most important Sūtra works are the Vedāṅgas—Śikshā (pronunciation or phonetics), Chhanda (metre), Vyākaraṇa (grammar), Nirukta (etymology), Jyotisha (astronomy) and Kalpa (ceremonial or ritual). However the oldest works of all these Vedāṅgas have not come down to us in the sūtra style. The oldest Śikshā works are the *Prātiśākhya*s and the *Vyāsa Śikshā* and *Pāṇinīya Śikshā*. The oldest available Chhanda work is that of Piṅgala. Pāṇini's *Aṣṭādhyāyī* is the oldest available sūtra work on grammar. Similarly, Yāska's *Nirukta*, a commentary on the *Nighaṇṭu*, is the oldest available nirukta work. Many of these Vedāṅga works are quite late in date. No sūtra work on Jyotisha is extant.

As regards the Kalpasūtras, they are connected with the Brāhmaṇas and Āraṇyakas. They are divisible into two categories: the Śrautasūtras and the Gṛhyasūtras. The former deal with the Grand Sacrifices while the latter describe the domestic sacrifices. The Śrauta sūtras are supposedly based on the Śruti or Veda, while the Gṛhya sūtras are regarded as based on *smṛti* or memory. The Śulvasūtras, which are concerned with the measurement and construction of fire altars, are attached with the Śrautasūtras. The Gṛhyasūtras deal also with the various ceremonials other than domestic sacrifices that are performed at the different stages of the life of an individual. The Dharmasūtras, which are more concerned with individual as a member of society and state rather than as a member of the family, are a continuation of the Gṛhyasūtras and forerunners of the Smṛti works. The metrical Smṛtis are usually the elaboration of the prose Dharmasūtras. Of all the Vedic schools only the Baudhāyana and the Āpastamba schools of the *Kṛshṇa Yajurveda* give under the general title of Kalpasūtra all the four types of sūtra texts. Other important sūtra authors are Āśvalāyana, Kātyāyana, Śāṅkhāyana, Lāṭyāyana, Gautama and Vasishṭha. The dates of the various sūtra texts are difficult to be determined. But scholars generally believe that most of them were composed after

the advent of the Buddha¹.

History of the Vedic Studies

The history of Vedic Studies² commenced in the Vedic age itself. For the Brāhmaṇa works, which themselves form a part of the Vedas, bring together all those passages which contain explanations of the Saṁhitā-texts or derivations of words. The *Prātiśākhya* works are also attempts in the same direction, though they are concerned more with the text and orthography than with the regular interpretation. Works like *Sarvānukramaṇī* of Kātyāyana and the *Bṛhaddevatā* are important from the point of view of the preservation of the text, only indirectly serving the purpose of Vedic interpretation.

The oldest and the foremost direct attempt to interpret the Vedic texts is found in the *Nirukta* of Yāska. In the days of Yāska, who flourished only shortly before Pāṇini, the meaning of the mantras had become obscure and such questions as whether the mantras are meaningless or not were boldly raised and discussed. Yāska himself refers to several older interpreters of the Vedas, though unfortunately none of their works are available today. Of these, the *Nairuktas* is the most general name, meaning the old expounders of the Veda, of the same type as Yāska himself, mainly taking their stand on etymological derivation. The *Aitihāsikas*, who are also frequently referred to by Yāska, were those who believed that the gods of mythology were generally deified mortals and their deeds the amplification in imagination of human acts³. In addition to them were the *Yājñikas* who gave liturgical interpretations of numerous passages such as we find in the Brāhmaṇas and other kindred treatises.

After Yāska Śaṅkarāchārya wrote commentaries on all the principal Upanishads. Occasionally passages from the Saṁhitās are also quoted and interpreted by him in the course of his argumentations. The Pūrva-mīmāṃsakas have also made important contributions to the Vedic exegesis; the very object of the mīmāṃsā being the interpretation of the Vedas. "Its purpose", says Somanātha in his *Mayūkha Mālā*, "is to determine the sense of revelation."

¹For the date of the Gṛhyasūtras, vide Pande, G. M., 'The Antiquity of the Gṛhyasūtras, *Vishveshvaranand Indological Journal*, I, No. 2, pp. 287-90.

²Sukthankar, *Ghate's Lectures on the Ṛgveda*, Ch. IV-V; Chattopadhyaya, K. C., *Studies*, II, pp. 25-62; pp. 83-92.

³Sukthankar, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

The most important contribution to the Vedic exegesis in pre-modern period was made by the great āchārya Sāyaṇa in his *Vedārtha Prakāśa* which is a detailed commentary on the *R̥gveda*. He also wrote several other works. His commentary on the *R̥gveda* contains a very informing and learned introduction. Sāyaṇa was the minister of Bukkāṛāya and Harihara, the kings of Vijayanagara (14th century A.D.). His brother Mād̥hava, afterwards called Vidyāranyaśvāmī, was also a great scholar. He was the author of the well-known *Sarvadarśana saṅgraha* or 'a compendium of all the philosophical systems'. In the *Vedārtha Prakāśa*, the commentary on the *R̥gveda*, Sāyaṇa has paraphrased each and every word in the text, pointing out all the grammatical peculiarities, giving etymological derivations of difficult and new words wherever possible. From the modern standpoint his work is certainly full of defects. For Sāyaṇa the *R̥gveda*, along with all other Vedic works, is a holy book whose authority is not to be questioned. Every word of it is sacred. Naturally he could not think of applying the rules of higher criticism to it, which are permissible only in the case of human compositions. But in fairness to him it must be said that he has left no word unexplained, howsoever obscure it may be. In many cases it is Sāyaṇa alone who hits upon the right and the only right meaning of a word or a passage.

Several other commentaries on the *R̥gveda* are mentioned; but we know nothing definite about them. Thus there are the *Rāvāṇa Bhāshya* and *Kauśika Bhāshya*. Again, Devarāja in his commentary on the *Nirukta* mentions the *Veda Bhāshyāṇi* of Bhaṭṭasvāmī, Rāhadevaśrīnivāsa and Mād̥havadeva. All of them seem to be older than Sāyaṇa. Mahīdhara and Uvaṭa are the great and equally important commentators on the *Yajurveda*¹.

The orthodox paṇḍitas regarded the Veda as revelation. But even modern conservative Sanskritists from the days of Wilson have held that Sāyaṇa's commentary was the only safe guide through the intricacies and obscurities of the text. "Against these there stepped forth Roth, who revolutionized the whole thing and may be credited with having laid the foundation of the modern Vedic scholarship. Induction and comparison were the guiding principles of his method. He brought together the several passages where a certain word occurred, classified them, and fixed upon the stages through

¹*Ibid.*, p. 100.

which the word has passed and thus gave, as it were, a history of the word from beginning to end.”¹ But as the study of the Vedas advanced the golden mean came to be followed. Due sympathy for traditional interpretations of Indian commentators, combined with the spirit of honest search after truth with patience and intelligence became the guiding principle of Vedic studies².

It was in the year 1784 that the modern study of ancient Indian learning was based on a firm foundation with the establishment of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. The following year saw a translation of the *Gītā* by Wilkins. The year 1805, however, marked an epoch in the course of Vedic studies when Colebrooke contributed to the *Asiatic Researches* his paper “On the Vedas, the Sacred Writings of the Hindus”. The paper was a lengthy survey of the whole of the Vedic literature. About twenty years later Friedrich Rosen, a German scholar, undertook with zeal the editing of the *Ṛgveda* but died before completing his work. In the year 1846 Rudolph Roth’s *Zur Litteratur und Geschichte des Veda* was published. As noted above, Roth gave a new turn to the Vedic studies. The St. Petersburg Sanskrit-German Lexicon in seven volumes also testifies to the indefatigable zeal and industry of Roth. He compiled this work in collaboration with Bohtlingk. In this stupendous dictionary the history of every word is traced from the *Ṛgveda* down to the classical literature.

Next came A. Weber. His *Indische Studien* is a remarkable repository of oriental research in all its branches. From Weber we pass on to Max Müller who wrote on almost all the branches of oriental studies—Vedic exegesis, comparative philology, comparative mythology, philosophy, grammar, and so on. The commentary of Sāyaṇa was also edited by him³.

Next we may mention the name of Muir who edited the *Original Sanskrit Texts* in five volumes. His industry, grasp of the subject and the wide range of literature which he drew upon, were truly remarkable. Haug’s edition of the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* also deserves a mention here, especially on account of its learned and informing Introduction.

¹*Ibid.*, p. 103.

²*Ibid.*

³For a description of the contribution of German Indologists to Vedic studies see, Noelle, Wilfried, ‘On the Veda and Upaniṣads’, *Indian Philosophy and Culture*, VIII, 403, pp. 140–43.

Among the several translations of the *Ṛgveda*, the oldest is that of Wilson. Two German translations of this work, one by Ludwig and the other by Grassmann, also deserve to be noticed. Grassmann's Dictionary of the the *Ṛgveda* published in 1873-75 is also a very useful work.

Kaegi's *Essay on the Ṛgveda* (1880) is a model essay. It briefly surveys the contents of the *Ṛgveda*. The *Vedische Studien* in three volumes by Pischel and Geldner are also solid contributions to Vedic exegesis while Whitney's *Sanskrit Grammar* attempts to review the language and the grammatical forms historically. His translation of the *Atharvaveda* also deserves notice. Oldenberg, a great Vedic scholar, also put the Vedic students under his obligations by his monumental commentary on the *Ṛgveda*.

Apart from the scholars mentioned above a host of other Western Indologists have made significant contributions to the study of Vedic religion.

As regards Indian scholars, we may begin with the attempt of S. P. Pandit who was one of the first Indians to interpret the *Ṛgveda* on modern lines. Unfortunately he died before completing his work, the *Vedārtha Yatna*.

B. G. Tilak's two books *The Orion* and *The Arctic Home in the Vedas* are original contributions of great value to the study of Vedic history, religion and criticism. In these works he has tried to prove the antiquity of the Vedas and has propounded the theory that the original home of the Aryans was in the Arctic region. Among others mention may be made first of Svami Dayananda Sarasvati and Sri Aurobindo who gave completely new interpretations of the Vedic texts in their learned works. Dayananda in his *Satyārtha Prakāśa* and the *Ṛgvedādibhāshyabhūmikā* opposed *Sāyana* and modern scholars both and propounded that the *Ṛgveda* knows only one god; words like *indra*, *varuṇa*, *sūrya*, etc. are merely his adjectives¹. In his *On the Veda* and other works Sri Aurobindo has given a mystical interpretation of the Vedas which is based partly on his knowledge and partly on his mystical experiences². Dr. V. S. Agrawala has also given a mystical interpretation of the Vedas, though

¹See Arya, Jayadeva, 'Vaidika Śākhāon kā Svarūpa', *Saptasindhu*, XI, No. 8, pp. 11-20.

²See Purani, A. B., 'Sri Aurobindo and Vedic Interpretation', *Advent*, XXI, No. 2, pp. 17-21.

his interpretation is different from that of Aurobindo¹. In his *Vedic Gods as the Figures of Biology* (1931) B. G. Rele has proposed the strange theory that the Vedas are the books written on the physiology of nervous system in a language which is full of metaphors. Equally strange is the attempt of Paramśiva Ayyar who in his work named *Rks* has suggested that the *Rgveda* describes the events which took place when the earth was just born and that its gods represent nothing but geological phenomena. Among Western scholars, in recent years, J. Gonda has come out with a criticism of the tendency of viewing all the Vedic gods as representations of the forces of nature. All these views, though interesting, can hardly be accepted by a historian who seeks to place the evidence of the Vedas within the parameters of time and space.

Important contributions to Vedic studies have also been made by Raghvan, Saletore, Dandekar, K. C. Chattopadhyaya and a host of others.

Authors of the Vedas

According to the orthodox view the Vedas are of divine origin. From the *Atharvaveda* and from the Purāṇas a large number of passages may be quoted which agree in preaching that the Vedas had a divine or mystic origin. In the *Jaiminīya nyāyamālā vistara* (1.1.25 and 26), the view that the Vedas had any personal author is refuted. The Naiyāyikas assert that they are the works of Īśvara, the Highest Self. The Mīmāṃsakas seek to defend the authority of the Vedas with the doctrines of *Svataḥprāmāṇyavāda* (that is, the self-validating character of knowledge), the *śabdanityavāda* (doctrine of the eternity of the word) and the impersonal character (*apaurusheyatva*) of the Vedas. The Vedāntins however hold that the *apaurusheyatva* of the Vedas consists in the fact that in this creation they are exactly like those which existed in the previous creation, and so on without beginning.

It should, however, be remembered that there was another idea running through all types of ancient works according to which Saṁhitās are inferior in comparison to the Upanishads. Accord-

¹Agrawala, V. S., 'A Study of the Symbolism of Agni', *Bhārati*, VI, Pt. I, pp. 21-42; 'Vedic Folk Lore', *Folk Lore*, VI, No. 1, pp. 1-2, 4; 'Vedic Symbolism', *Bhārati*, VI, pp. 95-105; 'Vedic Symbolism', *JIH*, XLI, pt. 2, pp. 517-23; 'The Vedas and Indian Culture', *Indian Antiquary* (Third Series), I, No. 3, pp. 154-62.

ing to this view the *Saṁhitās* deal with only *karma* whose fruits, howsoever glorious and pleasing at first, are after all perishable while the Upanishads preach *jñāna* or knowledge which is the only efficient means for obtaining the highest bliss. In other words the Vedic hymns, though of divine origin, are an inferior science in contrast to *Brahmavidyā*, or knowledge of *Brahma*, the highest of all knowledge. For example, in the *Gītā* (11.42 ff.), the Vedas are condemned as being flowery speech dealing with actions and their rewards, of no value to the possessor of the knowledge of *Brahma*.

If, however, we turn to the *R̥gveda* itself and examine its contents with a view to determining its authorship, we find a very large number of passages where we have a distinct reference to the fact that the hymns were composed or made by the sages or ṛshis. Then, references are made to old and new ṛshis and also to hymns of different ages clearly implying that the *Saṁhitā* came into existence only gradually. Further, we have passages in which the ṛshis distinctly speak of their consciousness of their own ignorance and inability to find out the depths of knowledge, as against the omniscience ascribed to them by later writers. Therefore modern scholars usually believe that the Vedas were composed by ṛshis in the same way modern poets compose their poems. The view of certain historians that the *Brāhmaṇas* or priests deliberately spread the idea that the scriptures were of divine origin or *apaurusheya* with the object of attaching greater importance to the Vedas and maintaining their own superiority rests merely on conjecture.

Chronology of the Vedic Literature

No one now doubts that the *R̥gveda* is the most ancient document of the Aryans. But despite the universal agreement on this point, there is still a diversity of views regarding the probable age of the *R̥gveda*. Max Müller assigned it approximately to 1,200 B.C. and his view has been very popular, specially among Western Indologists. Whitney calls the period from 2,000–1,500 B.C. as the period of the oldest hymns. Benfey also says: "It can hardly be doubted that the most eastern branch (of the Indo-Iranians) had their abode on the Indus as early as 2,000 years before the Christian era." Weber, on the other hand, placed the migration of the Aryans into the Indus region in the 16th century B.C.

But there are several astronomical theories which seek to push

back the beginning of the Vedic age considerably. On astronomical bases Haug assigned the composition of the bulk of the Brāhmaṇas to the years 1,400-1,200 B.C. Then allotting 500-600 years for the composition of the *Ṛk Samhitā* he placed it between 2,000 and 1,400 B.C. He further suggested that the oldest hymns and the sacrificial formulae were a few hundred years older, and therefore the commencement of Vedic literature may be fixed between 2,400-2,000 B.C.

Shankara Balkrishna Dikshit, in his *Bhāratīya Jyotisha Śāstra* relies upon a passage of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* which, according to him, proves that this work was composed in about 3,000 B.C. Therefore the *Taittirīya Samhitā* which must have preceded the *Śatapatha* and which also mentions Kṛttikā and other nakshatras must be placed about 200 years earlier than this period while the *Ṛgveda*, which is decisively older than the *Taittirīya Samhitā*, must be placed earlier still.

Tilak in his *Orion* has tried to prove even a greater antiquity for the hymns of the *Ṛgveda*. On the ground of several astronomical references scattered about in the ancient Sanskrit literature, he has postulated four different periods for the composition of the Vedic literature. The oldest period is the Aditi or pre-Orion period, extending from 6,000 B.C. to 4,000 B.C. The next is the Orion period, roughly extending from 4,000 B.C. to 2,500 B.C. The third is the period from 2,500 B.C. to 1,400 B.C. The fourth and the last period extends from 1,400 B.C. to 500 B.C.

Jacobi has also put forth a theory according to which the period of *Ṛgveda* goes back to at least 4,000 B.C. This theory is also based on astronomical calculations connected with a change in the beginning of the season which has taken place since the time the *Ṛgveda* was composed¹.

To us none of these theories appears satisfactory. The basic difficulty in the theories based on astronomical data is that various scholars emphasize the importance of different astronomical references and seek to interpret them according to their presumptions. Similar attempts to determine the date of the *Mahābhārata* war with the help of astronomical data have proved equally futile and untrustworthy. To us it appears that the most reliable datum for this problem is the evidence of the Boghaz-köi inscriptions (c.1,400 B.C.)

¹Venkateswar has placed the composition of the *RV* in 11,000 B.C.

which refer to Vedic Indian deities, and not to the Indo-Iranian ones.¹ It should also be remembered that nowhere in the ancient world extending from India to Europe the Indo-Europeans (of whom the Vedic Aryans were a branch) are seen before c. 2,000 B.C. For example the Kassites in Babylon, the Hittites in Anatolia and the Mycenaeans in Greece—all make their appearance in the beginning of the second millennium B.C. Therefore the advent of the Aryans in India and the beginning of the composition of the *Ṛgveda* cannot be placed much earlier than 2,000 B.C. On the other hand, it cannot have taken place much later than this date because otherwise the occurrence of the names of the Vedic gods in the Boghaz-köi documents in c. 1,400 B.C. would become inexplicable. Thus the view that the advent of Aryans in India and the composition of the *Ṛgveda* began in c. 2,000 B.C. harmonizes well all the evidence of archaeology, Vedic philology, ancient Indian history and West Asian history². As regards the upper limit for the composition of the Vedic literature it is generally and rightly believed that its composition was almost over by the sixth century B.C. It may however be once again emphasized that the dates of the various Vedic texts overlap each other so much so that while the beginning of the *AV* is regarded almost as early as that of the *RV* (though the bulk of the *AV* may be later than the bulk of the *RV*) but the *RV* in its present form is also regarded as containing materials of 'the latest period of the Vedic literature'³.

In the recent years Dr. L. M. Joshi⁴ has sought to prove extremely late dates for the Vedic texts. He suggests that the gods of the Mitannians mentioned in the Boghaz-köi inscriptions of c. 1,400 B.C.

¹In the fifteenth-fourteenth centuries B.C. Indo-European names are frequent among the Kassites of Babylon and the Mitannians, the neighbours of the Hittites. In a treaty (discovered at Boghaz-köi and published by Winkler) which was concluded between king Mattiuaza, the son of Dusatatta (Daśaratha?) and the Hittite king in about 1380 B.C., the former invokes his gods as witnesses. They include Mi-it-tra (Mitra), U-ru-w-na (Varuṇa), In-da-ra (Indra) and Na-sa-at-ti-ia (Nāsatyas). Among the Boghaz-köi documents of about the same time a fragmentary book on chariot-racing has also been found which uses the word *vartanna* (Sanskrit *vartana*) for 'turning' and words *aika*, *tera*, *panza* and *shatta* for one, one, three, five and seven.

²Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 252.

³Chattopadhyaya. K. C., *Studies*, II, pp. 16-24.

⁴*History of Punjab*, Patiala, 1977; *Brahmanism, Buddhism and Hinduism*, Kandy, 1970.

represent the stage when the Iranians and Indo-Aryans 'had not yet been separated'; that these gods found their place in Vedic Aryan pantheon 'later on' (that is after 1400 B.C.); that 'the beginning of Vedic literary tradition may be placed a few centuries later' than 'the fall of the Harappan cities in about the middle of the second millennium B.C.'; that the date of the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā* of the *Yajurveda* 'is not later than say 600 B.C.'; that the Brāhmaṇas 'were compiled possibly between the eighth and fifth centuries B.C.' though later portions of several Brāhmaṇas may have been added 'in a post-Buddhist century' and that there is 'no conclusive evidence to place even the oldest Upanishads in a pre-Buddhist era'. 'The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* (sic) and the *Chāndogya* can perhaps be assigned to the fifth century B.C.' but the other Upanishads, namely *Taittirīya*, *Kaṭha*, *Kena*, *Aitareya*, *Kaushītakī*, *Muṇḍaka*, *Praśna* and *Śvetāśvatara* perhaps belong 'to the fourth and third centuries B.C.' and the *Mahānārāyaṇa*, *Maitrāyaṇī* and *Māṇḍūkya* 'to the first centuries of Christian era', that is to the age of the Kushāṇas¹. The anxiety of this Buddhist scholar to assign latest possible dates for the Vedic literature is matched only by his desire to prove the antiquity and deep influence of the ideas and institutions connected with Buddhism. He everywhere appears to start with the strange assumption that every idea or institution which has even a remote similarity with Buddhist ideas or institutions must have been the result of the influence of this religion, and hence was later than the date of the Buddha. He seems to believe that the Aryans contributed virtually nothing except the cult of sacrifice. He even tries to ascribe extreme antiquity to the esoteric practices later followed by the Tāntrika Buddhist Siddhas, so much so that he regards the male-god depicted on the famous Paśupati seal found from Mohenjodaro as 'the prototype of an esoteric Adept or Siddha' and the well-known bronze statue of the 'dancing-girl' found from the same site as 'the prototype of tāntric yogini'². We think it quite justifiable if somebody traces the antiquity of Śramaṇic ideas back to the Vedic and the Indus civilizations, but it is indeed too much if a person tries to prove the existence of the Tāntrika Siddha tradition in the Indus civilization. It merely proves that a deliberate attempt is being made to prove the antiquity of a particular aspect of Indian religious

¹*History of the Punjab*, pp. 142-52.

²Joshi, L. M., 'Protohistoric Origins of Esoterism in India', *PIHC*, 1964, pp. 115-20.

tradition. The theory that the composition of the *RV* began several centuries after the middle of the second millennium B.C. and that all the Vedic Upanishads were composed after the fifth century B.C. and some in the Kushāṇa age is the other aspect of the same mentality. As is well-known, with the extermination of the Vedic Kshatriya dynasties by Mahāpadmanada in c. 400 B.C. the Vedic Age finally came to an end. Now the entire North India was politically dominated by the rulers of the Śūdra and Vrātya extraction. Even the political condition of the age of the Buddha is obviously posterior to the political condition as reflected in the Upanishads which speak of Kāśī as independent kingdom and of kings Aśvapati, Janaka, Pravāhaṇa Jaivalī, etc. who must be placed long before the sixth century B.C. when North Bihar was dominated by the Vajjis or the Lichchavis and Kāśī had ceased to exist as an independent state. The Upanishadic Janaka cannot in any case be placed later than Karāla Janaka whose downfall led to the fall of the Videhan monarchy and establishment of the Vajji republic which must have occurred more than a century earlier than the age of the Buddha. The Ajātaśatru of the Upanishads obviously belonged to the famous Brahmadatta dynasty of Benaras which also ruled earlier than the age of the Buddha. The language of the Upanishads is obviously later than the language of the *R̥gveda*, but at the same time it is also anterior to classical Sanskrit and many older usages, belonging to the pre-Pāṇinian age, are found in it. It is much akin to the prose of the Brāhmaṇas which, therefore, must be regarded as older than the age of the Buddha and Pāṇini¹. Actually except the *Maitrāyaṇī* and the *Māṇḍūkya* Upanishads, none of the early or 'Vedic' Upanishads can be assigned to the post-Vedic period². The argument that H. C. Raychaudhuri used to determine the date of the Mahābhārata war³ and which has been rather misused by Joshi to prove the lateness of the Upanishads is obviously wrong. According to this argument Guṇākhyā Śāṅkhāyana, mentioned in the *Śāṅkhāyana Āraṇyaka* was separated from the time of Uddālaka Āruṇi by two generations only and from Parīkshit, the grandson of Arjuna Pāṇḍava, by seven or eight generations. Raychaudhuri placed Guṇākhyā Śāṅkhāyana in the sixth century and, assuming that the average length of a patriarch may be about 30 years,

¹*The Vedic Age*, p. 471.

²*Ibid.*, p. 471-2.

³*Political History of Ancient India*, p. 35 ff.

placed Parīkshit in the ninth century B.C. But he forgot that the *Bṛihadāranyaka Upanishad*, the *Vaiṣṇava Brāhmaṇa* and the *Jaiminīya Upanishad Brāhmaṇa* also contain these *vaiṣṇava* lists in which 40 or more generations of patriarchs are enumerated. Therefore if Uddālaka Āruṇi of these lists will be placed only two generations earlier than the sixth century B.C. then the last member of these lists, and therefore the final composition of these texts, will have to be placed more than a thousand years later—that is in the Gupta age. That will be an absurd position to adopt.

Main Features of the Ṛgvedic Religion

Before we analyse the progress of the Vedic religious thought, it must be clearly understood that what we are studying is not the religious ideas of a single book or of a single period or of a single social group. In the words of E. V. Arnold the Vedic literature is, as it were, a library which developed in its present form in course of centuries. The *Samhitā* of the *RV*, which is regarded as the earliest work of this literature was itself composed in the course of several centuries¹. Therefore even in the *RV* we have a procession of thoughts, not a fixed stereotyped picture. In it polytheism, monotheism and pantheism are found existing side by side. However, the composition of the major portion of the *RV* took place centuries earlier than the composition of the later *Samhitās* and the *Brāhmaṇa* works. Therefore the religious atmosphere of the *Ṛgvedic* or early Vedic period was different from the religious atmosphere of the Middle Vedic Age (that is the period of the later *Samhitās* and *Brāhmaṇa* texts) which in turn was different from the atmosphere of the Later Vedic or Upanishadic period.

A striking trait of the Vedic religion (including the religion of the *Ṛgveda* and of the later *Samhitās* and *Brāhmaṇas*) is its practical and utilitarian character. The *sūktas*, though highly poetic in nature, are at the same time meant to be recited or sung by the *purohitas* or bards on occasions of sacrifice. The priest offers prayers and oblations of soma or *ghī*, and in return expects rewards for his *yajamāna* from the gods, such as long life, prosperity, livestock, warlike sons, and so on. In the words of Bloomfield “Recipro-

¹Chattopadhyaya, *Studies*, II, p. 24. “We should take the *Ṛgveda Samhitā* in its present form as containing materials from the earliest to (almost) the latest periods of Vedic literature.”

city frank, unconditional reciprocity, becomes an accepted motive.”¹

The Vedic religion is frankly *pravṛtti mārgī* or this-worldly. It assures the worshippers or house-holders not immortality or heaven, but a long life full hundred years, prosperity, warlike offspring, in short, all the pleasures of this world. Conquest of enemies, freedom from diseases, abundance of food and drink seem to be the most desirable objects for the Vedic Aryans. It is only very rarely that immortality (*amṛtattva*) or dwelling with gods in heaven (*svarga*) is referred to.

Another feature of the Vedic religion is that it is essentially a religion of priests.² The priests enjoy a very important position in the ritual. They are mediators between princes and gods. They propitiate gods with prayers and offerings and, thus pleased, the gods actually take part, as it were, in the combat of humans and make their favoured party victorious. Sometimes both the combatants pray the same gods for assistance, but the gods help the party whom they favour, and the other party is vanquished. The spiritual idea that he who has God on his side obtains success or victory, thus seems to be present here.

The Vedic religion was the religion of the upper classes. It presupposes an established household of considerable extent, a wealthy householder, expensive materials, and many priests not at all ashamed of their demand for large fees. It was definitely different from the popular religion or the religion of the poor masses with its humble rites and reliance upon magic and the medicine man, the description of which is found in the *Atharvaveda* and the *Gr̥hya sūtras*.

However, it should be remembered that though the greater part of the Vedic literature deals with the religious ideas and rituals of the priestly and upper classes, yet there were groups in the Vedic society who were opposed to this religion. We shall discuss their ideas in detail in the Chapter on ‘Non-Vedic Ideas in the Vedic Age’. The Vedic religious thought was also influenced by the non-Aryan thought-currents. As is now generally recognized, the religion of the Indus Valley and the world-renouncing ideology of the munis and yatis (that is the śramaṇa thought-current) left a powerful impact on the this-worldly religion of the Vedic priests. The

¹Bloomfield, *Religion of the Veda*, p. 184.

²Keith, A. B., *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads*, p. 55.

Ṛgveda itself contains references to these developments. Thus the study of the *Ṛgvedic* religious thought should not be restricted to the evolution of the ideology of the Vedic priestly circles only.

Nature of Ṛgvedic Gods

The *Ṛgvedic* poets were deeply impressed by the apparently mysterious working of the powerful forces of nature, the unexplained mysteries of whose working invests them with almost a 'supernatural' or divine character. They looked upon these various natural forces as divinities and natural events as actions of personified beings¹. The religion of the *Ṛgvedic* *rshis* was thus in the beginning essentially a polytheistic one in which natural forces were deified and worshipped as gods.

Probably in the Indo-European period itself there had arisen the conception of anthropomorphic deities of the sky, such as Dyaus, Mitra, or the *Aśvins*.² Consequently the great gods of the *Ṛgveda* were conceived as human, as men with supernatural power, free from death but still as subject to birth and similar to human beings in their family relationships. However, the Vedic pantheon does not have the clear cut personalities of the Greek pantheon and unlike the Greek gods and goddesses it is usually quite easy to see that their anthropomorphic form is only a faint veil over their natural element.

The degree of anthropomorphism found in the Vedic gods is extremely variable. In some instances the active element is constantly present. For example, the waters are indeed goddesses, but they are also wholesome to drink; the goddess *Ushā* is described as a beautiful maiden but she also appears as the natural dawn. *Sūrya*, the Sun, is born as the child of the sky but the constant presence of the natural Sun hinders the development of his anthropomorphic form. The same consideration affects *Agni* who never succeeds in becoming free from his element of fire.

Indra, on the other hand, is one of those gods who had become more or less emancipated from the phenomena which produced

¹For a detailed survey of the various views on the nature of the Vedic gods see R. N. Dandekar, 'Vedic Religion and Mythology', *Journal of the University of Poona*, No. 21, pp. 1-53; for the theory that the same seven planets are differently named as different gods according to changes in their functions, see R. Shamastry, 'Vedic Gods', *B. C. Law Volume*, I, pp. 277-81.

²Keith, A. B., *op. cit.*, p. 58; see *infra*.

their conception. Perhaps the Vedic ṛshis themselves did not remember the natural element he symbolised. Varuṇa is freer still from traces of his natural element. The Aśvins have also lost every trace of their origin in nature.

While discussing the question of the form of gods (*atha ākāra chintanaṁ devatānām*) Yāska states that there were three different views on this subject—that the gods have human forms, that they do not have human forms, and that they have partly human forms and partly not. This fact is an additional proof of the arrested personification of the Vedic deities.

While most of the Vedic nature gods are normally conceived as anthropomorphic, theriomorphic conceptions of the deities are also found. It was asserted by Oldenberg that in the earlier periods of religion theriomorphic conceptions were more frequent than anthropomorphic but, according to Keith, there is no proof for such a theory.¹ Two deities are recorded for us in animal form only, the one-footed goat (Aja Ekapād)² and the serpent of the deep (Ahi Budhnya). The mother of the Maruts, gods of the storm-wind, is also called the dappled cow. The sacrificial food is personified as a lady with hands full of butter, but she is also styled a cow. The goddess Saramā in dog shape finds for Indra the cows. But on the whole there are comparatively few instances in the Vedic religion of the direct and wholly animatistic veneration of natural objects. The most obvious is the cult of the snakes, which was probably borrowed by the Aryans from the pre-Aryan people (see Ch. I). The Indus people are also known to have worshipped snakes (see Ch. II). The Vṛṣhākapi hymn has been connected by some scholars with the worship of monkey-god. But others merely read in it a description of a virility charm³ or a reference to Viṣṇu or some other god.

Beside the concrete figures of the great nature gods there were deities with definitely limited functions, though they were also conceived as nature powers. Of such deities we have good examples in the Kshetrasyapati and Vāstoshpati. Kshetrasyapati is the spirit

¹Keith, A. B., *op. cit.*, p. 61.

²For the various views on the significance of the concept Aja Ekapāda, vide Upadhyaya, G. P., 'Re-Examination of the Nature and Significance of the Vedic Deity Aja Ekapāda', *PIHC*, XXXVI, pp. 68-75.

³Dange, S. A., 'A Virility Charm in the Rgveda (The Hymn of Vṛṣākapi)', *Nagpur University Journal*, XVI, No. 2, pp. 127-45.

who dwells in the field while Vāstoshpati is the spirit who has his abode in the house. More concrete still are such cases as Sītā, the furrow, and Urvarā, the field.

A further development of this attitude of mind gives us gods who have no immediate concrete background of any kind such as Wrath and Speech. With them may also be mentioned such figures as the gods Savitṛ, Dhatṛ, Trāṛ and Tvashtṛ who are agent gods, who impel, create, protect and produce.¹

The worship of natural objects, whether celestial, ethereal or terrestrial, should be distinguished from the reverence paid to earthly objects or animals, which are deemed to be filled with the divine spirit for a certain purpose and in certain conditions. The reverence paid by the purohita to his offering implements, such as the pressing stones and the offering post, and the sacred strew on which the god is invited to take his seat are supposedly filled with the divine touch for the period of the offering. At one place in the *RV* a poet says: "who will buy this my Indra for ten cows? When he hath conquered his foe, let him return it to me".² According to Keith in this passage some fetish of Indra, either a rough anthropomorphic picture or something much ruder, is meant. The latter alternative has, however, the greater probability, for the statues of the deities are otherwise not hinted at until the end of the Vedic period.³

Before we close our discussion on the nature of the Ṛgvedic deities, two other points may be noted. Firstly, it should be remembered that the Ṛgvedic pantheon is a male-dominated one; goddesses are surely there, but they play comparatively very insignificant role. Secondly, it will be well to remember that the nature and personality of Vedic gods underwent great transformation in later Hinduism. We shall have occasion to discuss this point in detail when we shall take up the study of the Puraṇic pantheon; here we only wish to point out that the gods of the *Ṛgveda* substantially differ from those of the Puraṇic religion. Not only the personalities of the gods changed in the Purāṇas but their mutual relations also altered immensely. Many gods who were very prominent and dominating in the Ṛgvedic age were reduced to the rank of minor deities in the Purāṇas and *vice versa*. Thus Varuṇa, Indra and Agni stand

¹Keith, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

²*RV*, IV.24.10.

³Keith, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

out most prominently in the *Ṛgveda*, and their importance is not equalled by any other god; but in the Purāṇas, if they have not been reduced to utter insignificance, at least they have been put to comparative subordination by the side of the triad of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva, though Indra, at least in name, continues to hold his position of the suzerain of gods. In the *Ṛgveda* Varuṇa is the god of justice, who watches the conduct of men and punishes them. But in the Purāṇas he is merely a deity presiding over waters, to whom no importance is attached whatsoever. On the other hand, Viṣṇu exemplifies the trend of rising to prominence from a position of comparative insignificance. Many deities such as Ushā, Parjanya, Aryaman, etc., ceased to exist altogether and Savitr, Pūshan, Mitra, Sūrya, who were in the *Ṛgveda* so many different godheads with distinguishing characteristics, later on came to be mere synonyms, all signifying but one god.

Great Gods : their Classification

The *Rgveda* recognizes the number of the gods as 33. Of this number no explanation in detail is given. It is certain however that it is not exhaustive, for other gods are mentioned in addition to the 33. This plurality of divinities creates chaotic condition. An approach to the problem of introducing order and system into this apparent chaos has been through classification. Some scholars classify them into Indo-European, Indo-Iranian and Indian deities, based on the comparative antiquity of their mythological creation. But the data as regards the dates and periods of many gods is insufficient and the available accounts of Germanic, Slavonic and Celtic mythologies are defective. A division into transparent, translucent, opaque, and symbolic gods, based on the stages of personification which the deities represent, introduces subjective element (owing to want of finality regarding etymologies and interpretations) and involves difficulties as regards to clear lines of demarcation¹. A classification according to relative greatness may derive support from *RV*, I.27.13² which states: “May Sūrya guard us out of heaven, the Vāta from the firmament and Agni from terrestrial spots?”. But the difficulties of determining relative greatness are almost insuperable. The traditional classification hinted at in *RV* (I.139.11) and followed by Yāska,

¹Apte, *The Vedic Age*, p. 366.

²*Ibid.*

in his *Nirukta* (VII.5) is regarded as the best by modern scholars. It gives us a triple division of the Vedic gods corresponding to three orders, namely, terrestrial (*prithvīsthānīya*), aerial or intermediate (*antarikshasthānīya* or *madhyamasthānīya*) and celestial (*dyusthānīya*). Prthivī, Agni, Soma, Bṛhaspati, rivers, etc. belong to the first order; Indra, Apāninapāt, Rudra, Vāyu-Yāta, Parjanya, Āpaḥ, and Mātariśvan to the second; and Dyaus, Varuṇa, Mitra, Sūrya, Savitr, Pūshan, Vishṇu, the Adītyas, Ushā and the Aśvins to the third. This division is also overlapping and not very clear-cut, as Tvashṭṛ and Prthivī are assigned to all the three spheres, Agni and Ushā to the terrestrial as well as the aerial spheres, and Varuṇa, Yama and Savitr to the aerial as well as the celestial ones. But it is based on the natural basis which the deities represent, and is thus the most practical and the least open to objection.

The Celestial Gods

The oldest among the gods of heaven, going to the Indo-European period and identical with the Greek Zeus, is Dyaus (Roman Jupiter, Zeus Pater, Dyaus Pitr) a personification of the sky. Dyaus is generally paired with Prthivī, the earth, in the compound Dyāvapṛthivī, the Universal Parents, who are celebrated in six hymns¹.

Next we proceed to consider Varuṇa. He also belongs to the Indo-European period because his name corresponds to the Greek Ouranos. Pt. Chattopadhyaya however does not agree with the equation of Varuṇa with Ouranos². However his mention in the Boghaz-köi inscriptions proves his antiquity. The comparatively small number of sūktas addressed to him do not do justice to his importance in the *RV*. He is a king and universal monarch having a golden abode in heaven which is lofty and firm, and has a thousand columns and doors. He wears glistening garments. Omniscience, undeceivableness, moral elevation and sanctity are his principal attributes. He has spies whom none can deceive. He is predominantly called the Asura, who rules by means of his māyā which means 'occult power' (applicable in a good sense to gods and in a bad sense to demons). He controls the destiny of mankind and beholds all secret things. Neither gods nor mortals may violate his ordinances called ṛta (see *infra*, p. 69). He is the preserver, and protector of

¹*Ibid.*, p. 368.

²Chattopadhyaya, *Studies*, I, p. 87.

rta which means not only cosmic laws, but also moral conduct and correctness of the cult of sacrifice. He binds the sinners with his pāśas or fetters. In every hymn to Varuṇa there is a prayer for forgiveness for sin.

There is uncertainty regarding the physical basis of the idea of Varuṇa. The view generally held is that he is the encompassing sky. That is why it is said that the Sun and Moon are his eyes. This original conception, it is supposed, goes back at least to the Indo-Iranian period since Ahura Mazda (the wise-spirit, the protector of divine order called *arta* or *asha*) of the *Avesta* agrees with the Aśura-Varuṇa in character, if not in name. In the opinion of V. M. Apte¹ Varuṇa in the *RV* is pre-eminently the All-Pervader, the All-Encompasser, the All-Envelope. His name appears to have been derived from the root *vr* ('to cover' or 'to encompass'). Another and more important fact is Varuṇa's overlordship of the Waters (āpaḥ) which are according to Apte far more intimately connected with him in the R̥gveda than is generally supposed. If Varuṇa in later mythology sank to the position of the lord of waters it was probably due to the fact that the original sense of the Āpaḥ (Waters) as 'Cosmic Waters' in the *R̥gveda* was forgotten.

Mitra is so closely associated with Varuṇa that only in one hymn (III.59) he is addressed alone. In the Avesta Mithra is a sun-god, the guardian of faithfulness, and is closely associated with Ahur Mazda which incidentally is an additional argument in favour of the theory that Varuṇa is the Indian counterpart of Ahur Mazda. The R̥gvedic evidence also points to the fact that like Mithra Mitra is also a solar deity in the aspect of a benevolent power of nature². He stimulates people to activity and watches them ceaselessly.

Sūrya is the most transparent of the solar deities. He is the son of Dyaus and Aditi. His wife is Ushā. As the all-seeing god he is often called the eye of Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni and other gods.

Savitr̥ is pre-eminently a golden deity. He is evidently distinguished from Sūrya, as in *RV*, VIII.63. But there is a large number of passages where it is difficult to distinguish between the two. Chapekar thinks that when Sun is below the horizon, invisible but near enough to shed his light on this earth, he is called Savitā³.

¹The Vedic Age, p. 368.

²For a study of Mithraism vide F. A. Bodes, 'Mithra and Mithraism', *PJ*, III, Pt. 1, pp. 271-74 (Eng. Sum.).

³Chapekar, N. G., 'Savitā', *Indian Antiquary*, II, No. 1, pp. 29-33.

Yāska refers to several views regarding the natural basis of Aśvins. According to him the Nairukta school explained them as sky and earth, or day and night, or sun and moon, while the Aitihāsikas believed that they were two kings, the performers of holy deeds. Geldner believed that they were saints who saved the people in times of trouble. According to Oldenberg, however, the two gods are the morning and the evening star respectively.

The connection of the word Nāsatya with *nāsa* (nose) is mentioned in the Epic but is of no value. However the Epic legend that the Aśvins fathered Nakula and Sahadeva is interesting.

Apart from his connection with Soma, the Moon is not prominent in the Vedic literature.

The Atmospheric Gods

Indra is the greatest god of the *Rgveda*, with the solitary exception of Varuna who may be deemed to equal him in might. He is the subject of 250 hymns, or almost a quarter of the whole of the *RV* and shares with other deities at least fifty more. He is the most individualized and anthropomorphic god of the Rgvedic pantheon, with the largest amount of mythology to his share.

The *RV* gives a vivid picture of his personal appearance. He has head, arms, hands and a great belly. He is *Vajrī* that is 'bearer of the thunder-bolt' *par excellence*. He also bears a bow. His favourite drink is soma. The epithet *Somapā* (Soma-drinker) is specially his. Sometimes he drinks three ponds full of soma. He also drinks milk mixed with honey, and eats as many as 100 or even 300 buffaloes. He is a great charioteer (*Ratheshūha*) and is extremely generous (*Maghavan*) to his worshippers. Of the other gods Indra is closely connected with the Maruts (hence his epithet *Marutvant*), Agni (whom he generates or finds in the waters), Varuṇa, Vāyu, Soma, Bṛhaspati, Pūshan and Viṣṇu (whose relation to him becomes in some passages a very close one). He is a great warrior. He pierces the mountains and releases the pent up waters like the imprisoned cows. His victory over waters earns him the title *Apsujit*. He is characteristically called *Purandara* or *Purabhid*—the destroyer of forts. He is *Śakra* that is 'mighty' and *Śakraku* that is 'the doer of a hundred powerful deeds'. He is like a bull who is controlled with seven

ficient rulers must be regarded as ludicrous. For a mystical interpretation of the Aśvin Sūkta, see V. S. Agrawala 'An Exposition of the Aśvin Sūkta of the *Rgveda*', *Vishveshvaranand Indological Journal*, IV, Pt. I, pp. 25-33.

opes (*Vṛshabhāḥ saptaraśmi*). He is the Slayer of Vṛtra, which is one of his greatest deeds. He struck Vṛtra on the back and pierced his vital parts. But the action is not done once, but ever and again, and Indra is implored to perform it in the future as he did it in the past. According to Chattopadhyaya the cradle of Indra-Vṛtra myth was Russian Turkistan¹. The slaying of Vṛtra is also attributed to Agni and Soma probably because of their association with Indra².

Another myth tells of the slaying of the three-headed Viśvarūpa by Indra. The Paṇis stole and hid away cows in a cave among the rocks, but Indra's dog Saramā found them. From other accounts it seems that Indra advanced against the Paṇis and recovered the cows.

The Indra-Vṛtra myth can throw light on the original nature of Indra which has been a matter of great speculation since ancient times. According to the author of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (VI.9-13) Vṛtra was the name of an actual king. According to Yāska Vṛtra is the name of those clouds which obstruct rains and Indra is the god of rains. According to B. G. Tilak Indra symbolised the Sun and Vṛtra represented the ice of the Arctic winter. According to Macdonell Indra seems to have been a god of thunderstorm. Pt. K. C. Chattopadhyaya³, however, believes that Indra was originally the god of strength and war. The name is probably Indo-European. In the Celtic religion we have a goddess Andraste (*Indrashthā*) whose name resembles that of Indra. In the Hittite documents we have a god Inaras. However the concept of god is definitely as old as the Indo-Iranian times, since the Verethraghna of the *Avesta* and the Vahagn of the Armenians are clearly the same as the Vṛtrahan of the *RV*. Verethraghna is known to have been the god of victory. The existence of Indra in the Indo-Iranian period is also known by the fact that the Kassites who were of Indo-European origin and worshipped Sūrya and Marutta and who ruled over Babylon in the middle of the second millennium B.C. assumed names like Indabugash (= *Indradeva*)⁴. The existence of Indra in the period of Indo-

¹*Studies*, I, p. 82.

²For a study of the later evolution of Indra-Vṛtra myth, see Shende, N. J., 'Indra in the Brāhmaṇas of the *Rgveda*, *Bhāratīya Vidya*, XXIV, pp. 46-58; for Indra's relations with waters and cows cf. Venkatasubbiah, A., 'On Indra's Winning of Cows and Waters', *PJ*, II, no. 2, p. 611 (Eng. Sum.).

³*Studies*, I, p. 100.

⁴Goyal, S. R., *Viśva kī Prāchīna Sabhyatāyēn*, p. 161.

Iranian unity is conclusively proved by the discovery of his name alongwith those of Mitra, Varuṇa and the Nāsatyas among the gods of the Mitannians of the Boghaz-köi inscriptions.

The connection of Indra with war and might is plain in the *RV* and 'Indriya' was, even in early Buddhist texts, synonymous with 'bala'.

In later Indian mythology, the status of Indra declined though in name he continued to be the king of gods (Devarāja). Now he became the god of rains, probably because of his earlier association with storm-gods, Maruts, waters and vajra, later interpreted as lightning. According to Allan Dahlquist¹ he is identical with Heracles who, according to Megasthenes was worshipped by the people of India in 300 B.C. We have shown the untenability of this view elsewhere².

Among other atmospheric gods are included Trita, Āptya, Apām Napāt, Mātariśvan, Ahi Budhnya, Aja Ekapād, Maruts and Rudra. Rudra is an ordinary deity in the *RV* but he is interesting from the point of view of later Puranic mythology. His physical basis is not certain. Most likely he is the personification of thunderstorm. The *Rgveda* describes both the aspects of his personality—destructive and benevolent. His appearance is different from that of the later Śiva. He has braided hair and a brown complexion. He wears nishka (golden necklace) and other ornaments. He fathered the Maruts whom he brought forth from the shining udder of Pṛṣṇi, the cow. He is fierce and is called a bull as well as the ruddy boar of heaven. He is exalted and mightiest of the mighty. He is *Asura* and the lord (*Īśāna*) and father of the world. He is *Jalāsha* (cooling) and *Jalāshabheshaja* (possessing cooling medicines). He is the great physician. He is easily invoked and auspicious (*Śiva*), but in many passages he is described as malevolent. He is requested to save his worshippers from his bolts which destroy cows and men. In the preceding chapter we have seen how his personality was transformed as a result of the influence of the Indus Paśupati³. Hazra even goes to the extent of maintaining that Rudra 'cannot be in his origin an Aryan god at all or have a purely natural basis' and that he 'was

¹Dahlquist, Allan, *Megasthenes and Indian Religion*, 1962, p. 72 ff.

²Goyal, S. R., 'Christian Bias in the Historiography of Early Kṛṣṇa Worship', *Bias in Indian Historiography*, ed. Devahuti, pp. 120-139.

³See Chattopadhyaya, K. C., II, *Studies*, p. 47 f.

hostile to the Vedic sacrifices.¹

The Maruts—the storm-gods—form an important group of deities (gaṇa). They are thrice-sixty or thrice-seven. They are described as the sons of Rudra and Pṛṣṇi, the cow, or as self-born. They are all brothers of equal age. They are associated with lightning (*vidyut*) and make loud noise (roaring of winds). They shed rain which is described as their milk, honey or *ghī*. They are constant allies of Indra.

Vāyu and Vāta (wind) are almost interchangeable terms. When differentiated Vāyu is the god, and Vāta the element. Parjanya literally means ‘rain-cloud’. When personified he becomes an udder or a pail. He is also described as a bull. Āpaḥ or waters are mothers, wives and goddesses. They are mentioned in the *Avesta* as *āpo* and hence their deification took place at least in the Indo-Iranian period.

The Terrestrial Gods

Agni, a personification of the sacrificial fire, presents in its conception the household life of the Vedic Aryans. According to Sukthankar² he stands out most prominently in the whole of the Vedic pantheon. At least from the point of view of the number of hymns addressed to him he is second only to Indra. He is a most striking instance of arrested personification. In the *Ṛgveda* Agni is both an elemental phenomenon and a personal god. The Vedic poets never forgot his physical basis, the fire, and describe him as butter-backed, flame-haired, and the one who eats the oblations with his tongue. He is also described as smoke-bannered (*dhūmaketu*). As the central figure of the sacrifice he is variously called *ṛtvij*, *vipra*, *hotṛ*, *purohita*, *adhvaryu* and *brahman* and is thus the divine counterpart of the earthly priesthood.

The word *agni* is Indo-European, in as much as Latin has *ignis*, Lithuanian has *ugnis* and old Slavonic *ogni*. In the Indo-European period sacrificial fire was a well-known institution. The Greeks and Romans offered their oblation to gods by casting it into fire. The Iranian Aryan were also fire-worshippers.

Agni is spoken of under three forms, the Fire on the earth, the Lightning in the atmosphere and the Sun in the heaven. Agni is generated from the *araṇis* (the sacred fire-sticks) which are often

¹Hazra, R. C., ‘An Overlooked Aspect of Ṛgvedic Rudra’, *JAIH*, pp. 123–48..

²Sukthankar, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

described as his mothers. He is often said to be the son of Dyaus and also of Dyāvapṛthivī or of Waters (Apām Napāt). He is also described as being generated by Indra between two clouds or produced from waters. Sometimes Indra is said to be his twin brother. He is very frequently described as the son of strength (*ūrjo napāt*). He is 'one who knows all created beings' (*jāta veda*). He issues from the trees which he consumes. Thus he is the eater of his own mothers. He is the lord of the people, honoured guest and the lord of the house. He is the immortal domestic priest concentrating in his own person all the sacrificial offices. He is the mouth of gods (*Agni mukhā ha vai devāḥ*). He is the messenger between gods and men. Once it so happened that Agni got tired of his work of serving gods and men and concealed himself in the waters. But the god Yama betrayed him and Varuṇa, as the representative of the gods, induced him to resume his task of expediting the sacrifices to the gods. This has been turned into a very neat story in the *Mahābhārata*.

Agni is not only *havya-vāhana* (the carrier of oblations) and *kavya-vāhana* (the carrier of offerings to Pitṛs) but also *kravya-vāhana* (burner of the dead bodies). He drives the dasyus into the forests and brings great booty to the Aryans. He is connected with the Āṅgiras who are often described as the seven priests who brought down Agni from the heavens or first enkindled him for man. Mātariśvan, the Indian Prometheus, is also said to have been the first to introduce Agni to human beings.

Soma is an important deity in the *Ṛgveda* because the soma sacrifice was the centre of the Ṛgvedic ritual. Like the corresponding Haoma of the *Avesta* Soma grows on the mountains, but his true origin is said to be in heaven from which he was brought to earth by an eagle. He is the king of plants (*vanaspati*). In some hymns he is identified with Moon. Among the remaining terrestrial deities, Pṛthivī is so closely associated with Dyaus that generally they are celebrated conjointly. The personification of Pṛthivī is only slight. Certain rivers are also lauded, the most important among them being the Sarasvatī, sometimes identified with Sindhu¹. Various features of the earth's surface besides rivers, such as mountains,

¹For the identification of Sarasvatī of the *Ṛgveda*, vide Chattopadhyaya, *Studies*, II, pp. 138-24. According to him in the earlier portions of the *RV*, Sarasvatī meant the Indus while in the later portions it meant Sarasvatī in Kurukshetra. Also see Godbole, N. N., 'Ṛgvedic Sarasvatī', *ABORI*, XLII, pp. 1-41.

waters and plants, and artificial objects like sacrificial implements and weapons are also deified. The Demons, often mentioned, are either the aerial foes of the gods like Dāsas or Dasyus (Asuras occur in the later parts of the *RV* only) or constitute a lower class of terrestrial goblins, commonly called Rākshasas or a species designated by the term Yātu or Yātudhāna¹.

Bṛhaspati, also called Brahmaṇaspati, is the lord of prayers. He has few physical features. Like Agni he is both, a domestic priest as well as the divine priest. As the divine priest he seems to be the proto-type of Brahmā, the chief of the later Hindu triad. Viśvakarmā is a seer, a priest, our father, the Vidhātṛ. He was later identified with Prajāpati. Goddesses play only an unimportant part. The only exceptions are Ushā (discussed above, p. 60) and Aditi who is mentioned about 80 times and is described as the daughter of Vasus and the mother of Ādityas. Her natural basis is controversial. The goddess Diti is however only a name in the *R̥gveda* though in the *Atharvaveda* she is the mother of Daityas. The concept of Ambhṛṇi in the Ambhṛṇi sūkta in many ways reminds the description of the Mother Goddess found in the Durgā Śaptaśatī. We shall discuss it later on.

Among the abstract deities some, such as Tvashtṛ and Prajāpati originated from the epithets of other deities. Some are the personifications of abstract nouns such as wrath (Manyu), faith (Śraddhā), etc. Some deities are mentioned in groups like the Maruts, the Vasus and the Ādityas. An all-embracing group is that of the Viśvadevas.

Henotheism and Monotheistic-Monistic Tendencies

Thus, the religion of the *R̥gveda* is basically polytheistic. But it is also apparent that the plurality of gods could not satisfy the intellect of the R̥gvedic seers. Their dissatisfaction with polytheism finds expression when they identify gods with one another or invoke gods in pairs or conjointly in groups of three or more. Yāska records² that in the opinion of the school of Nairuktas the whole of pantheon could be reduced to three, Agni on earth, Vāyu or in Indra in the air and Sūrya in the heaven. Gradually the tendency to regard the gods as closely related became stronger. Thus a poet could say³: “Thou, at birth, O Agni art Varuṇa; when kindled thou dost become

¹*The Vedic Age*, p. 379.

²*Nirukta*, VII.5.

³*RV*, V, 3.1.

Mitra; in thee, O son of strength, all gods are centered; to the worshipper thou dost become Indra”.

In the *R̥gveda* this tendency of assimilation, which may be called in some degree monotheistic but with a pronounced tendency to pantheism, made the growth of any real hierarchy among gods difficult. It is true that the *R̥gveda* expressly says that some gods are great and some are small¹. It is also a fact that three Vedic deities do appear as being of much greater importance than the others—Indra as the great ruler, Varuna as the lord of physical and moral order and Agni as the messenger between men and gods. However, throughout the *R̥gveda* there is no trace of any consistent subordination of one god to another. The lack of system in this regard is clearly shown by such statements as those made by both Indra and Varuna that they are obeyed by all other gods. Other passages tell us that Varuna and Sūrya are subject to Indra and that Varuna and the Aśvins submit to the power of Vishnu, who otherwise is of comparatively minor importance in the Vedic pantheon. The appearance of what Max Müller calls Henotheism or Kathenotheism is due to this unconscious urge towards monotheism imperfectly moulding polytheistic tendencies and thus presenting an inconsistent picture. When individual gods are alternately regarded as the highest, a large number of attributes, personal characteristics and functions become common to all the gods, the merging of all these qualities into one divine figure becomes easy, and thus polytheistic anthropomorphism evolves into a kind of arrested spiritual monotheism².

But the *R̥gvedic* seers were not content with this monotheistic development. The *R̥gveda* asks: “who has seen the first-born, when the boneless one bore the one with bones”³. As if in answer to this question, verse 46 of the same hymn affirms that the central principle was the sexless *sat* (the ‘real’) which, though one, was called by various names. Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni, Yama, Mātariśvan, etc. Thus, in some of the late hymns of the *R̥gveda* (which designate indifferently the Supreme or Absolute as ‘He’ or ‘It’) is reflected the

¹*RV*, I.27.13.

²*The Vedic Age*, p. 382; Bhargava, P. L., ‘The Aryan Conception of Divinity through the Ages’, *Mysore Orientalist*, I, No. 1, pp. 15–18; Chakrabortti, Samiran Ch., ‘Conception of Vedic Divinity’. *Calcutta Review*, Vol. 175, No. 1, pp. 31–44.

³*RV*, I.164.4.

usual vascillation between monotheism and monism met with in all philosophies¹.

Moral Ideas and the Concept of Ṛta

The progress from monotheism to monism was smooth and almost unconscious owing to the growing influence of the conception of ṛta, the Ṛgvedic counterpart of the later conception of *dharma*. The devas are said to be born in ṛta and governed by it. As pointed out by K. C. Chattopadhyaya originally the term *ṛta* did not mean *satya* only². In the *RV* it denotes the cosmic order or law prevailing in nature. In the physical world the ṛta takes the form of physical laws. The Dawns arise in the morning according to ṛta. The Fathers have placed the Sun in the heaven according to ṛta. The Sun is the bright countenance of ṛta. The year with its twelve spokes is the wheel of ṛta. In the moral world, the word ṛta designates 'truth' and 'right'. In the religious world it takes the form of sacrifice or rite. The way to the later conception of the Absolute, which is impersonal and is designated by the neuter terms *sat* or *brahman*, was also paved by the abstract notion of ṛta. It was the earliest crude precursor of the Absolute of the later Vedānta³.

The concept of ṛta clearly shows that the consciousness of sin (*anyta*) was recognized. Sin resulted from the violation of ṛta or 'order' in the moral sphere (i.e. of 'truth' and 'right') as well as in the religious one (i.e. of sacrifice or rite), or of the commands of God.

Cosmology and Cosmogony

An important feature of the Vedic religious thought is its cosmology and cosmogony. The cosmology of the *Ṛgveda* is simple. It conceives the cosmos as comprising of sky and earth, which gives to mythology the idea of the dual deity Dyāvāpṛthivī, at first united, then parted. Another division distinguishes earth on the one hand, the heaven

¹*The Vedic Age*, p. 382.

²Chattopadhyaya, *Studies*, I, p. 113.

³*The Vedic Age*, p. 382-3. For a detailed study of the concept of Ṛta, vide J. C. Tavadia, 'The Meaning of Ṛta', *ABORI*, XXXV, pp. 27-34; G. Ramkrishna, 'The Concept of Ṛta and the Ethical Element in Vedic Literature', *Vedānta Kesari*, LIV, No. 3, pp. 154-60; for the view that the term Ṛta denotes not moral order but a culture that existed before the *RV*, vide A. K. Vidyalankar, 'Ṛta Varuṇa Sabhyatā', *Saptasindhu*, XII, No. 7, pp. 18-26.

on the other and places atmosphere or the air between them. In that case the boundary of the visible sphere is the vault (*nāka*) of the sky¹.

The heaven is essentially the abode of the gods and the Fathers (*pitaras*). From the heaven to the earth is a distance which no bird can fly². The atmosphere is usually described as watery or dark. It is often conceived of as divided into the upper or heavenly and the lower or earthly regions, but the threefold division is also found. In the *RV* no consistent view is expressed as to the origin of the world. In the later part of the *RV* and later literature more serious attempts are made to solve the riddle of the origin of the world, and Prajāpati appears as the creator god, though beside him there usually is to be found a primordial matter upon which he works. *RV*, X. 190 inform us that from heat (*tapas*) were produced *ṛta* and *satya*; then night, the ocean, and *saṁvatsara* (year) were produced in succession. *RV*, X.72.2 states that *sat* was produced from *asat*.

From the mythological point of view, each one of the gods in turn is said to be the creator of the universe³. The universe is sometimes looked upon as the finished product of the carpenter's and joiner's skill. For example *RV*, X.31.7 asks 'What was the wood, which was the tree, out of which they fashioned heaven and earth?' *RV*, X.121 believes that Hiraṇyagarbha arose from the great waters, pervading the Universe, and created the world out of eternally pre-existing matter. But the Nāsadiya sūkta describes creation from the highest monistic level. "In the beginning", it says, "there was no 'Non-existent', because this creation arose therefrom, nor the 'Existent', because its usual manifestations—the firmament or the heaven beyond it—were not then. The one breathed by itself, breathless, and there was nothing beyond it. There was no death then; how could there be anything immortal then? There was no light which could give us distinctions like night or day". Thus is suggested the highest philoso-

¹Keith, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

²*RV*, I.155.5.

³*The Vedic Age*, p. 383; For a detailed interpretation of the *Sṛṣṭividyā* as propounded in the Nāsadiya Sūkta, see V. S. Agrawala, 'Nāsadiya Sūkta', *Bhārati*, No. 6, Pt. 2, pp. 1-11; for the interpretation of the Vedic creation ideas by Stella Kramrisch cf. 'The Triple Structure of Creation in the Rgveda', *History of Religion*, Chicago, II, nos. 1 and 2. Cf. also Norman W. Brown, 'Theories of Creation in the Rgveda', *JAOS*, LXXXV, No. 1, pp. 23-31 and J. Gonda, 'World and Heaven in the Veda' (Eng. Sum. in *PJ*, No. 2, pp. 65-6).

phical truth that we cannot characterize the Absolute because of the inadequacy of our language¹. The doubt expressed at the end as to whether anyone knows the truth about creation is a beautiful expression of the ignorance of the wise. In the words of Apte this “hymn rises to the breath-taking heights of monism”².

Instead of the five elements of later philosophy, the RV postulates only water as the primordial element or matter from which the others gradually evolve. In the Purusha sūkta (X.90) the body of the Purusha is said to be the original material, as it were, out of which the world is made.³

Neither in the philosophical hymns nor in the mythology are the gods treated as existing from all eternity to all eternity. The philosophy of the Veda makes them born after the creation of the world, or derives their being from the Non-existent or the element of water. In mythology, most of them are the children of sky and earth. In one hymn which appears to be late they are born from Aditi, from the waters, and from the earth, doubtless in accordance with the threefold division of the Universe.⁴

Like gods, men came into being by creation. Obviously they must be included among the offspring of the universal parents, sky and earth.⁵

Life Hereafter

As the R̥gvedic Aryans were *pravṛtti margīs*, full of the *joie de vivre*⁶, they were not particularly interested in the life after death. They believed that after his death a man enters the kingdom of Yama. Yama was the first of the mortals who died and discovered the way to the realm. There Yama and the Fathers live in the midst of the joys of immortality⁷. There the spirits enjoy such pleasures as the drinking of soma, milk, honey, *surā*, etc. and music.

There is no evidence for the beliefs that life is full of misery and

¹*The Vedic Age*, p. 383.

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*, p. 384.

⁴Keith, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶*The Vedic Age*, p. 384.

⁷For Yama see Georges, Dumezile, ‘The Sabhā of Yama’, Eng. Sum. in the *PJ*, V, No. 1, p. 241–2; see also R. G. Trivedi, ‘R̥gveda men Yamarāja’, *Tripathagā*, VIII, no. 4, pp. 105–14; R. N. Dendekar, ‘Yama in the Veda’, *B. C. Law Volume*, I, pp. 194–209.

that misery leads to ever recurring cycle of births and deaths which can be ended only by eradicating desires.

The *Ṛgveda* is full of prayers for long life, freedom from disease, heroic progeny, wealth, power, abundance of food and drink, the defeat of rivals, etc. There is no trace of pessimism in the thoughts of the *Ṛgvedic* sages.

Hell is represented as a place of punishment for evil-doers. This is characterized as low and dark. There is, however, no sordid picture of hell and its terrors.

Ṛgvedic Sacrifice

Vedic religion was essentially a religion of *yajña* or sacrifice. The worshipper offered some oblations to god with the chanting of prayers and expected that god would grant him desired boon in return. Thus, as noted earlier, it was relationship of give and take between god and man. There were in main two varieties of sacrifices :

(1) *Gṛhyakarmāṇi* : Certain hymns and verses of the *RV* were used as benedictions and prayers at birth, marriage and other occasions of daily life, at funerals and ancestor-worship, as well as at ceremonies for ensuring the fertility of the cattle and the growth of the fruits in the field. These ceremonies, called *gṛhyakarmāṇi*, were associated with *yajñas* of the simplest type, namely offering of milk, grain, *ghī*, or flesh cast into the fire.

(2) *Śrauta Sacrifices* : These were especially performed in connection with the Soma-cult relating to Indra which could only be undertaken by *maghavan* (aristocratic and wealthy men) and kings. These required comparatively extensive sacrificial area with three altars (*chitis*) for the three sacred fires, and a host of priests headed by four chief priests who received liberal payment (*dakṣhiṇā*) for the joint performance of numerous elaborate and intricate rites and ceremonies on behalf of the *yajamāna* (sacrificer). The *yajamāna* did very little himself. Animal sacrifices are indicated by the *āpri-sūktas*. The *Purusha sūkta* does not describe an actual human sacrifice, but merely preserves, in all probability, the memory of it.

The humanized gods of the *Ṛgveda* shared human weaknesses and were evidently regarded as susceptible to flattery and gifts. A full meal was certain to win divine favour. Thank-offerings were known. It was the expectation of rewards that chiefly inspired the offering of prayers and oblations in the *Ṛgveda*. However in the

Ṛgveda, the sacrifice is as yet only a means of influencing the gods in favour of the offerer. The conception of gods as subject to control by the worshipper, if he only knew the correct means, had not yet developed.¹

¹*The Vedic Age*, p. 381.

Religion of the Middle Vedic Age

The period when the Saṁhitās of the *Sāmaveda*, *Yajurveda* and *Atharvaveda* and the majority of the Brāhmaṇa texts were composed may be designated as the Middle Vedic Age¹. Roughly it falls in between the period of the composition of the greater part of the *Ṛk Saṁhitā* on the one hand and of the Upanishads on the other, though as we have made clear in Chapter 3, the process of the composition of the later portion of the Saṁhitās of the *Ṛgveda* and the *Atharvaveda* also continued in this period. The Āraṇyakas were composed during the period of transmission from the Middle Vedic Age to the Later Vedic Age, that is the age of the Upanishads.

Supremacy of the Cult of Sacrifice

The Middle Vedic Age may easily be described as the Grand Age of the Cult of Sacrifice. In the Early Vedic or Ṛgvedic Age the cult of sacrifice was simple². There were daily and periodical sacrifices, such as the morning and evening offerings, the New and Full-moon sacrifices and the four monthly or seasonal sacrifices. There were also a number of domestic ceremonies that inspired religious sanctity to the various events in the life of a family, such as birth, marriage, funeral, ancestor-worship, house-building, cattle-feeding, and farming. In these domestic varieties of the sacrificial cult, the *grhapati* himself generally officiated as the priest, though he could call in a regular *purohita* if he felt the need of help. The development of the cult of the Grand Sacrifices, especially the Soma-sacrifices, had only begun. But now, in the Middle Vedic Age, they were elaborately developed and systematized. The *Sāmaveda* and *Yajurveda* Saṁhitās were compiled solely for use at these Grand

¹For a detailed study of the *Atharvaveda* vide Chhanda Chakraborty, *Common Life in the Ṛgveda and the Atharvaveda*, Calcutta, 1977; also Introduction of Whitney's trans. of the *Atharvaveda*. For a detailed study of the Brāhmaṇas cf. Jogiraj Basu, *India of the Age of the Brāhmaṇas*, Calcutta, 1969.

²See Keith, *op. cit.*, p. 252-56.

Sacrifices, called Śrauta Sacrifices. Further, a regular science of sacrifice was now evolved. It is the main subject-matter of the Brāhmaṇa texts.

The Grand Sacrifices were fundamentally different from domestic sacrifices. In them three sacred fires, instead of one, were necessary. Altars or *chitis* for these were erected on a vast sacrificial place set up according to rules and to the accompaniment of an elaborate ritual. A large number of priests, divided into four groups headed by four chief priests, were required for the correct performance of the extremely complicated and elaborate ritual. The *yajamāna* himself did almost nothing except giving liberal *dakṣiṇā* to the priests. The Śrauta sacrifices were "based on śruti", whereas the domestic or Gṛhya sacrifices were *smārta*, that is based on *smṛti* or 'memory'. Later, they were described in the Gṛhya-sūtras, which fall in the category of the Smṛti literature.

The four groups of priests who helped in the performance of the Śrauta sacrifices were (1) The *Hotṛ*¹ or 'Invoker' who invoked the gods to sacrifice by reciting appropriate verses from the *RV*; (2) the *Udgātṛ* or 'Chanter' who sang *sāmans*; (3) the *Adhvaryu* or 'Performer', who executed all the sacrificial acts, muttering simultaneously the *yajush*, that is prose prayers, and the sacrificial formulae and (4) the *Brahman* or 'High Priest' who as the general superintendent guarded against any error or deviation from the correct performance of the sacrifice and protected it from danger by repeating the sacred formulae. The Brahman had to be well-versed in all the Vedas, Hotṛ only in the *Ṛgveda* (from which he took the sacrificial and invitatory verses), the Udgātṛ only in the *Sāmaveda Saṁhitā* and the Adhvaryu only in the *Samhitā* of the *Yajurveda*.

Traditionally the Śrauta sacrifices are divided into Haviryajñas and Somayajñas. The Haviryajñas consist of Agnihotra, Darśa-Pūrṇamāsa, the Chāturmāsya, Āgrayaṇa, animal sacrifices, Sautrāmaṇī and the Piṇḍapitṛyajña. The Soma sacrifices are also divided into seven—Agnishṭoma, Atyagnishṭoma, Ukthya, Shodāṣī, Vājapeya, Atirātra and Āptoryāma. They are further classified into Ekāhas, Ahīnas and Sattras. Aśvamedha and Rājasūya were among the most important Soma sacrifices.²

¹See Shende, N. J., 'The Hotṛ and other Priests in the Brāhmaṇas of the *Ṛgveda*', *Journal of the University of Bombay*, New Series, XXXII, pt. 2, pp. 48-88.

²Pande, G. C., *loc. cit.*, p. 274. See page 275-7 of Pande's work for a brief

dated other gods. In the *Śatapatha* they are said to have their realm above Devaloka¹. However their exact nature remains obscure.

As a result of the new concept of sacrifice, the pre-eminence of gods was bound to suffer. If the sacrifice is the only power that matters and if it can bend the gods to the will of the sacrificer, the gods cannot be of much importance. As a result some of the minor deities of the *Ṛgveda* either completely disappeared or continued to exist in name only. Prajāpati (as 'Lord of Creatures') is the main subject of speculation in the Brāhmaṇa texts but he was not 'a god of the people'. The 'god of the people' was Rudra. This is obvious from his description in the *Yajurveda* and the *Aitareya, Kaushītaki* and *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇas*. Rudra as Bhūtapati is a dreaded figure. In the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* he usurps the dominion of Prajāpati over all cattle, when the latter committed incest with his daughter. As we have seen in Ch. 2 in all probability Rudra of the *Yajurveda* and Brāhmaṇa texts is not merely a development of the *Ṛgvedic* Rudra, but an adaptation of him by amalgamation with several popular gods of the non-Aryans, including the Indus Paśupati. In any case, now he emerges as the 'Great God' (*Mahādeva*) and receives the appellation "Śiva" (the "Auspicious One") which later became his chief name.

Next to Rudra comes Vishṇu, who, as noted above, is identified with the all-important sacrifice. He therefore rises to a high position. Probably he claimed undivided allegiance of some localities while Rudra was worshipped in others. Nārāyaṇa and Vishṇu are brought into relation in the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*. Later on they were completely identified.

A new development in the Vedic pantheon is the gradual emergence of goddesses as an important factor. Now, probably as a result of the non-Aryan impact, casual reference is made of Durgā, Kālī, Ambikā and Umā. The wives of the gods, only occasionally mentioned in the *Ṛgveda*, find established place in the Brāhmaṇas. Rākā and Sinīvālī are connected respectively with the full moon and new moon. Vāk, mentioned in the *Ṛgveda*, acquires a more concrete form in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* in which she is mentioned as a goddess of learning. In the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* she is described as the wife of Indra. The *Kāṭhaka Saṃhitā* identified her with Sarasvatī. The *Pañchaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa* makes her wife of Prajāpati.

¹*Ibid.*

Ambikā, as we have seen in Chapter 2, appears as the sister of Rudra in the *Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā* and the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*. But in the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* she is his wife. In the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* she is also mentioned as Durgā Vairochanī, Kātyāyanī and Kanyākumārī.¹

Some other changes in the Vedic pantheon may here be noted. Gandharvas, Apsarās, Nāgas, etc., are now raised to a semi-divine position. Snake-worship which was borrowed probably from the Indus people and aboriginal tribes becomes more popular. The motif of the Devāsura battle makes its appearance. There is a gradual evolution of the concept of Brahman. At first it meant the 'prayer-verses and formulae' containing secret magic power by which man seeks to bend the divine beings to his will. Next it came to mean the *trayīvidyā* which contains these prayers and formulae. Then it meant the first created thing, and finally in this period it came to signify the 'creative principle' the cause of all existence.

Such an evolution of meaning of the word Brahman was possible because, in this age, the divine origin and authority of the Vedas was unquestionably accepted. In the *Purushasūkta*² the act of creation is treated as a sacrifice completely offered (*sarva-hut*) from which the three Vedas arose³. According to the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*⁴ the Self-Existent breathed out the Vedas. The so-called authors of the Vedas were just inspired poets (*rshis*) to whom the divine revelation was communicated. The theory that *śabda* or 'articulate sound' is eternal is correlated to the fact that the Vedas are communicated by word of mouth through untold generations.

Other Aspects of Middle Vedic Hieratic Religion

There are many creation-legends in the Brāhmaṇas. The majority of them usually start with the narration that Prajāpati practised *tapasyā* as a preparation for the task of creation, but there are passages in the Brāhmaṇas where it is said that Prajāpati himself was created and where the creation begins with either primeval waters or Brahman or the non-existent. Desire is the motive power of all creation.

¹For references see Bhattacharya, N. N., *The Indian Mother Goddess*, p. 100.

²RV, X.90.

³*The Vedic Age*, p. 448.

⁴ŚB, XI.5.8. 1 ff.

As regards moral ideas, the central ethical teaching of the Brāhmaṇas is that life is a duty and a responsibility. Man is born with certain debts (*ṛṇas*) which he must pay in his life. He has a debt to pay to the gods (*deva ṛṇa*) to the ṛshis (*ṛshi ṛṇa*) and to the manes (*pitr ṛṇa*). He can discharge them if he worships the gods, studies the Veda and performs funeral ceremonies, is hospitable to guests and offers *bali* to the *bhūtas*. The Brāhmaṇas have a remarkable sacrifice—the Sarvamedha—wherein everything is sacrificed to attain the freedom of spirit.

There are hints even in the Brāhmaṇas that excessive ritualism was bringing about a reaction. For example, in the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*¹ asceticism is held up as a great ideal, while in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* it is said that knowledge is more valuable than sacrificial gifts or asceticism.² The idea that confession implying repentance somewhat mitigates the sin is seen in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. Inner purity is regarded as important as external purity. Truth in words and deeds, performance of *dharma* (duty), respect for parents, love of fellow-beings and abstinence from theft, adultery, and murder are regarded as necessary for moral life.

The description of heaven and hell as found in the *RV* is elaborated in the later Saṁhitās and Brāhmaṇas. But its essentials are the same. The two paths—one of the Devas (*Devayāna*) and the other of the Pitṛs (*Pitṛyāna*) foreshadowed in the *RV* are mentioned. The attainment of immortality and the company of the gods in the heaven (*svarga*) is the deeply cherished aim of life. However the *Śatapatha*, *Jaiminīya* and *Kaushītaki Brāhmaṇas* elaborate the horrid picture of hell.

An important aspect of the religio-philosophical thought of this period is the development of the doctrine that reward and punishment are not eternal. How could the limited good or evil that men can do in a brief life result in endless pleasure or pain in the next world? Therefore reward or punishment, which is in exact correspondence to the good or bad deeds performed, must sometime come to an end. It means that there is prospect of rebirth for both the pious and the wicked. Thus field was prepared for the conception of a beginningless and endless circuit of birth and death; the so-called doctrine of *saṁsāra* or transmigration with its corollary

¹*TB*, III.12.3.

²*SB*, X.5.4.16.

that ultimate happiness is much higher than the life in heaven (*svarga*) and consists in freedom from *saṁsāra* which is the true *moksha* (release). This, however, was the main doctrine of the Upanishads and is only vaguely adumbrated in this period. Some scholars such as Oldenberg and Bloomfield¹ see in the eschatological speculations of the Brāhmaṇas the origin of the doctrine of *saṁsāra*. But as pointed out by G. C. Pande² the doctrine of *saṁsāra* was closely related with a number of other ideas which came into existence in the Upanishadic period only. We shall discuss this problem later on.

Āraṇyakas : Beginning of Reaction to Excessive Ritualism

The excessive ritualism of the Brāhmaṇas was bound to produce a reaction. The *Āraṇyaka* texts, usually appended to the Brāhmaṇas, are virtually an admission that the correct performance of a ritual, which had developed into enormous proportions in the Brāhmaṇas, could not be expected from all. How could ordinary people perform sacrifices which were highly complicated, required a large force of priests, involved huge expenditure and lasted for years together? The epics narrate now the ṛshis like Śaunaka performed satras which took twelve years to complete. There were again some arts of the sacrificial knowledge which were of mystical nature and which could be taught only in the privacy of the forest. The *Āraṇyaka* texts were composed to deal with these problems. They are, therefore, mainly devoted to an exposition of the mysticism and symbolism of the sacrifice. Meditation, rather than performance, is the spirit of their teaching. They substitute a simpler ceremonial for the complicated sacrifices of the Brāhmaṇa texts. They stress the efficacy of the inner or mental sacrifice as distinguished from the outer or formal sacrifices, consisting of oblations of meat, rice, barley or milk. They thus mark the transition from the way of action (*karmamārga*), which was the main concern of the Brāhmaṇas, to the 'way of knowledge' (*jñānamārga*) advocated in the Upanishads. Further, the *Āraṇyakas* emphasize upon *upāsana* (meditation) of certain symbols and austerities for the realization of the Absolute, which by now had superseded the 'heaven' of the Brāhmaṇa works as the highest goal of human life.

¹Oldenberg, *RV*, p. 563 ff; Bloomfield, *RV*, p. 252 ff.

²Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 283.

Religion of the Atharvaveda

It is generally held that the religion of the *AV* is an admixture of Aryan and non-Aryan ideals. According to this view when the Vedic Aryans advanced into India they came across uncivilized tribes worshipping serpents and stones. But instead of destroying these primitive neighbours the Aryans absorbed them. This spirit of accommodation naturally elevated the religion of the primitive tribes but degraded the Vedic religion by introducing into it magic, sorcery and witchcraft. But this view is not wholly correct¹. Magic and religious cults both having an identical aim in the beginning, namely, the control of the transcendental world, were included in the religion of the Aryans; only the outlook of the upper classes depicted in the *RV*, *YV*, etc. was more priestly-oriented while the common man relied more on magic and witchcraft. The *AV* is more concerned with the latter, though it cannot be denied that the Aryan contact with the pre-Aryan peoples of India, who had their own worship of spirits and stars, trees and mountains, and had other superstitions must have strengthened this aspect.

Representing as it does a part of primitive science of man, magic is found in similar forms all the world over. As Winternitz points out, "many of these magic songs, like the magic rites pertaining to them, belong to a sphere of ideas which, spread over the whole earth, ever recur with the most surprising similarity in the most varying peoples of all countries. Among the Indians of North America, among the Negro races of Africa, among Malayas and Mongols, among the ancient Greeks and Romans, and frequently still among the peasantry of the present-day Europe, we find again exactly the same views, the same strange leaps of thought in the magic songs and magic rites, as have come down to us in the *Atharvaveda* of ancient India."² The *AV* then is unique among the texts of this age as an important source of information regarding popular religious beliefs not much modified by priestly religion.

In the *AV* (and other Vedic texts) magic is based on several principles. Firstly, it is based on the principle that the hostile powers should be propitiated or/and threatened. Thus the Rākshasas are given the portions that fall away from the grain. The disease *takman*

¹Cf. Apte, V. M., *The Vedic Age*, p. 444; Keith, *op. cit.*, p. 337 ff.

²*HIL*, I. p. 128.

is entreated to depart and also addressed as a god. What is more interesting is the fact that both methods might be tried in close conjunction: the jackal might be addressed with formulas of reverence, and at the same time a fire brand be thrown at it. The ants receive an offering but, if that fails, a poisonous mixture is made for them, and the aid of the gods in their utter extirpation is sought. The use of noise to drive away demons is common. The use of a staff is of special interest: the student is given a staff for protection not only against human foes but also from Rākshasas and Piśāchas. Yet another form is that of shaking: the black antelope skin used at a sacrifice is shaken out with the view to removing any evil that may have crept there. In many cases the plan adopted is of the transfer of evil to some other person or thing. Diseases are specially often the subject of exorcism in one form or another. Burying things also produces good results. For the purpose of protection the use of amulets is very common indeed. The death of a man may be brought about in many ways: an image of him may be made of wax and melted or it may be pierced to the heart, or again his shadow, which is in some degree the man himself, may be likewise treated.

The meanings of dreams is an interesting part of Vedic magic and is dealt with in various passages including an *Atharvan Pariśiṣṭa*. The existence of men skilled in the interpretation of omens is recorded, as for instance in the case of the men who could tell the marks which led to luck or otherwise.

In many cases the sacrifice itself is degraded to mere magic. It becomes the means by which the sorcerers, who practise magic, can be made to show themselves, rival wives can be overcome, the monarch in exile can regain his throne, and so on¹.

The magic spell is sometimes in prose, in the style of the formulas, but more often in verse. The finest hymn to Varuṇa in the Vedic literature is found in the *AV* where it has been preserved in the form of charm².

As the *Rk*, *Sāma* and *Yajus Samhitās* were compiled by the priests for use in the yajñas to be performed for wealthy yajamānas, their tone, even where the mantras are not directly addressed to the gods, is mainly one of begging and persuading. But the tone of the *AV* is

¹Keith, *op. cit.*, p. 396.

²For details vide Chhanda Chakraborty, *Common Life in the Rgveda and Atharvaveda*, Ch. XII.

completely different. Here the Brāhmaṇa purohita is addressing his social inferiors. Therefore in this work his supposed privileges are shamelessly asserted while of his obligations there is hardly any mention.

The Atharvan priest ordinarily moved in the society of the poor and ignorant villagers and satisfied their demands of primitive superstitions. But as even the people of the upper classes were not above those superstitions, the Atharvan priest gained access to them also—even to the rulers of the country—and in fact came to be recognized as the king's alter ego in the role of his purohita. While the other priests were experts in the higher Śrauta-ritual which was performed only at intervals, the Atharvan had to advise the king on trivial events of his daily life. He therefore had to be in the company of the king constantly. In these circumstances only he could be the king's chief adviser.

As the principal aim of the *AV* is to appease (the demons), to bless (the friends) and to curse (the foes), it did not find much favour with the priesthood who excluded it from the sacred *trayī*—the three-fold lore. This was, however, a later development. At their origin, magic and cult both have an identical aim—the control of the transcendental world. They have this essential unity of purpose. There soon comes a time, however, when the priest who pays homage to the gods parts company with the magician who is in league with the demons. It is a remarkable fact, however, that in spite of this aversion to the *AV*, the Veda of magic, the ritual texts which describe the great sacrifices do incorporate exorcism-formulas and magic rites whereby the priest can destroy the enemy whom he hates and who hates him¹. Later Manu sanctioned the use of exorcism against enemies².

Least savoury of the magic charms of the *AV* are those of witchcraft (*abhichāra*) and the like, which constitute its Āṅgiras part. The purpose of some is defensive, but the majority of them are offensive in purpose and directed against human enemies. Evil spirits are firstly directed to come out in the open and proclaim their real character; for, as soon as they do that, they lose their dangerous power of doing injury. The metal most effective against the demons is lead, which therefore plays a prominent part in these hymns.

¹*The Vedic Age*, p. 442-43.

²*Manusmṛiti*, XI.33.

Thus there are two imprecations directed against the kidneys of an enemy. The purpose of the hymn VII.70 is to frustrate the enemy's sacrifice, as is disclosed by its very first verse :

Whatever that one offers with mind, speech, sacrifice, oblation and Yajus.

That offering of his let Niṛṛti in concord with death destroy before it has taken place.

Most characteristic hymns of this genre are perhaps those with the refrain 'he who hates us, whom we hate'. Along with charms for victory, longevity, cure from fever, etc., we find also charms for winning the heart of a maiden¹.

A large number of medicinal charms are included in the *AV*. The chief malady that was sought to be treated magically is *takman* (most likely malarial fever). The plant *Kushṭha* is mentioned as potent in fighting *takman*, but whether as medicine or as amulet, is not quite clear. At one place *takman* is asked to seize the Śūdrā and the Dāsī or to go away to the Mūjavants or 'to the Vāhlikas further beyond', and in the last verse the author says quite maliciously that he is sending *takman* to the Gandhāris, Aṅgas and Magadhas 'like one sending a treasure to a person'². The *AV* contains charms against snake-bite also. In one of them occurs the word *tabuva* which was connected with 'taboo' by Weber.

The concept of gods in the *AV* is more advanced than that of the *RV*. The conception of Rudra-Śiva for example certainly represents a transitional stage between the conception of Rudra in the *RV* and the systematic philosophy of Śaivism in the *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad*. Rudra has been invoked in a long hymn, and as is usual in prayers to this god, has not been asked to confer boons, but only not to injure³. The various names applied to the god in this hymn naturally call to mind the *Śatarudrīya*.

The theosophical and cosmogonic speculations of the *AV* indicate a later stage of development than that of the *RV*. It contains more theosophic matter than any other Saṁhitā. The philosophical terminology is of an advanced type and the pantheistic thought is practically the same as in the Upanishads. However sometimes a magical twist is given to the philosophical hymns. For example at one place the conception of *asat*, 'the non-existent,' has been used as a spell

¹*The Vedic Age*, p. 418 f.

²*AV*, V.2.

³*AV*, IX.2.

to destroy enemies, demons, magicians, etc¹. Some *AV* hymns of philosophical import are inspired more by practical considerations than by a longing for the Ultimate Reality. According to Winternitz² in these hymns there is more of the mystery-mongering, so characteristic of the magician, than the search for truth that distinguishes a philosopher. He is also of the view that they do not represent even a transitional stage between the creative thought of the philosophical hymns of the *RV* and the philosophy of the Upanishads. However V. M. Apte differs³. The idea of a supreme God, like Prajāpati, as the creator and preserver of the Universe, and that of an impersonal creative principle (which form the two chief doctrines of the Upanishads), and some technical terms such as 'brahman', 'tapas', 'asat', etc. are also found in the *Atharvaveda*.

Some philosophical ideas of the *AV* are quite original and profound. That *Kāla* or Time is the First Cause of all existence is a truly philosophical notion, but it has been given a mystic turn. Elsewhere Prāṇa (Breath) and Kāma (Love) are described as First Causes. The Rohita hymn contains a sublime glorification of the 'Red One' (the genius of the Sun) as a cosmogonic power. Alongside of this are found mystical fancies such as the exaltation of the sun as a primeval principle under the guise of a Brahmachārī, and the glorification of the Ox, the Bull, the Cow, and Vrātya, each being alternately looked upon as the Highest Being⁴. *AV* XI.8 suggests the idea of Brahman as the First Cause of all existence and of the oneness of man with the world soul. The long hymn to Mother Earth is classified as a cosmogonic hymn but there is not much philosophy in it. It has been acclaimed by V. S. Agrawala as one of the most beautiful productions of the religious poetry of ancient India⁵.

¹*AV*, IV.19.6; *The Vedic Age*, p. 442.

²*HIL*, I, p. 150.

³Apte, in *The Vedic Age*, p. 443.

⁴*The Vedic Age*, p. 444.

⁵Agrawala, V. S., 'Vedic Conception of the Motherland: A Study in the Pṛthvī Sūkta of the Atharvaveda', *B. C. Law Volume*, Part I, pp. 368-76.

Chapter 5

Śramanic and Other Non-Vedic Ideas of the Early and Middle Vedic Age

In the preceding chapters on the Early or Ṛgvedic and Middle Vedic religious ideas we have tried to portray the picture of the evolution of the Vedic or Brahmanical religion which was this-worldly (*pravṛtti mārgī*) in nature and in which the worshipper sought to propitiate the gods by performing sacrifice of various types with the help of priests. But it should not be presumed that the entire society of the Vedic Age believed in the cult of sacrifice. Firstly, in the *RV* there are references to peoples and groups who were opposed to the ritualistic religion of the Vedic Aryans. In the *RV* II.12.5 is mentioned the existence of a section of people who believed neither in the existence of Indra and nor in heaven. In the *RV* VIII.103.3 Agni is invoked to help the sacrificer with animals and other types of wealth as such things were often stolen away by the non-believers. In the *RV* VII.104.24 Indra is prayed to help the sacrificer against his harassers who included male and female both. In some verses the oppressors of the ritualists are called Yātudhānas and Yātudhānis. According to Sāyaṇa the term Yātudhāna means 'he who causes *yātanā* or *pīḍā*'. In several verses various gods are invoked to crush them. In some verses the harassers of the ritualists are called *Rakshasas* and Indra, Agni, Soma, or some other god is invoked to drive them out from the venue of ritual and for destroying them. The *Rakshasas* were divided into different tribes or groups¹ and their banners were marked with the representation of dog, owl, eagle, vulture, etc. They surrounded the ritualists, destroyed their rituals and even murdered them. The epic legends of the harassment caused to Viśvāmitra and other ṛshis by the *Rākshasas* (*Rakshasas* of the *RV*) and Rāma's or some other king's endeavour to make them free of this menace were based on the actual

¹*RV*, VII.104.22.

experience of the Vedic ṛshis.

It is also not beyond the bounds of possibility that some of the harrassers of the ritualists were Aryans themselves. According to *RV* I.33.5 some of them were of reddish complexion (*pishaṅga-bhr̥shṭi*) though of evil nature. As pointed out by R. K. Bhattacharya they most likely belonged to the Aryan community itself.¹

Secondly, we should remember that the Vedic literature refers to people who worshipped images (*mūradevāḥ*) or symbols of gods. Such persons could not have been whole-hearted supporters of the hieratic religion. Then, as we have seen, the *AV* has preserved the picture of the superstitions and beliefs of the common man which were accepted as a part of the Vedic tradition only grudgingly and at a later date. It proves that the Ṛgvedic ritualistic religion did not enjoy undisputed monopoly even amongst the Aryans.

But the Indian society of the Early and Middle Vedic Periods was even more heterogeneous than is indicated by the facts mentioned above. The Aryans entered India in waves at different times. Therefore they themselves could not have been a compact group. It is just possible that the different waves of the Aryans belonged to different cultural traditions, as was the case in Greece. There, the early wave of the Indo-Europeans, known as the Achaeans, defeated the authors of the Cretan Civilization but readily adopted the material culture of the vanquished. But the later wave of the Indo-Europeans, known as the Dorian, was more destructive and less amenable to cultural adaptation; it therefore destroyed the Mycaean Civilization created by the Achaeans but did not itself adopt it.² A similar situation might have occurred in India; the possibility that the authors of the Lothal and Kalibangan (where figurines of mother-goddess and stone liṅgas are absent but fire altars are found) were a wave of the non-Ṛgvedic Aryans cannot be ruled out.³ It might have adopted the material culture of the Indus people minus its religion while the Ṛgvedic Aryans refused to adopt the urban ways of life altogether. Here one is instantly reminded of the well-known theory regarding the Inner and Outer

¹Bhattacharya, R. K., 'Opposition to Rituals in the Ṛgveda', *Religious Life in Ancient India*, ed. by D. C. Sircar, p. 11.

²Botsford, G. W. and Robinson, C. A., *Hellenic History*, pp. 11, 31.

³*Supra*; see Goyal, S. R., *Viśva kī Prāchīna Sabhyatāyen*, pp. 534-35.

Bands of the Indo-Aryan-people.¹

Then there were non-Aryans which Aryans came into contact with. They belonged to different cultural traditions and various degrees of cultural development. There were on the one hand the authors of the highly developed urban Indus Civilization (or their descendants) and, on the other, a large number of primitive tribes living in forests, mountains and plains. Thus the structure of the Indian society in the Early and Middle Vedic Age was quite complex. This complexity is reflected in the religious ideas of the period. The Vedic literature itself, which is mainly concerned with the hieratic religious tradition (and only partly with the religious beliefs of the masses), proves the growing impact of the non-‘Vedic’ religious ideas on the society of the Early and Middle Vedic Age. It was as a result of the fusion of all these Vedic and non-Vedic ideas that the Upanishadic and the various post-Vedic religious ideologies evolved, their similarities and dissimilarities being largely the result of the degree of emphasis given on or hostility shown to the various shades of ideas of the Vedic and non-Vedic thought-currents.

‘Frontier’ Nature of the Vedic Civilization

The migration of the Aryans into India in the form of tribal waves imparted to their civilization the character of a ‘frontier’ civilization. In the early period the Aryans were settled in the north-west of India. Their geographical horizon extended from Kubhā in the west to the Gaṅgā in the east. Later on the Kuru-Pañchāla region in western U.P. became the chief centre of the Aryan orthodoxy. Still later the Aryans crossed the Sadānīrā (Gandak) and advanced from Kosala to Videha. Even by the sixth century B.C. Magadha in Bihar was looked down upon as impure and the Lichchhavis of north Bihar were described as Vrātyas. In the south the Aryans only gradually expanded towards the Vindhya and beyond. Thus during the whole of the Vedic Age the Aryans were constantly on the move. That is why their polity was characterized by *jana* states, that is tribal monarchies, rather than *janapadas* or territorial states which came into being only towards the close of the Vedic age. Thus the Vedic society like the American society of eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was an expanding pioneering society exhibiting some

¹Chanda, R. P., *The Indo-Aryan Races*, Ch. II.

of the characteristic of a frontier civilization so lucidly described by Laski¹—“its sense of insecurity and robust optimism, its premium on ‘success’ and its reliance on religion as means unto that. Under such circumstances priests and warrior kings were naturally in the fore and led society.”² But the migrations of the Vedic tribes also produced another type of leaders whom we may call, using the terminology of Robert Park, the marginal men of the Vedic Age³. It were they who were indeed responsible for the fusion of the Aryan and non-Aryan elements. Their type however needs some elucidation.

Migrations and Role of ‘Marginal’ Man

As a factor of social change migrations are obviously different from peaceful penetration, wars and revolutions. Their role in ancient human history was far more important than it is today. In ancient times migrations usually started with pushing and pressing of a whole or nearly whole tribe (or a group of tribes) and ended with a fusion of the migrating people with the people of the land to which they migrated. It involved not only a change in the habitat of the migrating tribe and some changes in the customs and mores of the migrating tribe and the native people both, but also the emergence of a changed type of personality which it produced. It led to the breaking down of traditional organisation of the two societies and the emancipation of individual man. Energies that were formerly controlled by custom and tradition were released. The individual was freed from social restraints and constraints to which he had been subject. He experienced a release from conventional modes of thought and usually gave evidence of this release in aggressive self-assertion⁴. Inevitably, however, this release was followed in course of time, by the re-integration of the individual in the new social order. In a certain sense and to a certain degree he became a cosmopolitan person. He learnt to look upon the world in which he was born and bred with something of the detachment of a stranger. Simmel has described the position of such a stranger in the community in terms of movement and migration. According to him⁵

¹Laski, H. J., *The American Democracy*, Ch. I-II.

²Pande, G. C., *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism*, p. 264.

³Park, Robert, ‘Human Migrations and Marginal Man,’ *The American Journal of Sociology*, xxxiii.

⁴Teggart, J. F., *Theory of History*, p. 196.

⁵Quoted by Robert Park.

such a stranger presented in his personality the specifications of a wanderer and settled resident both; he stayed but was not settled. That means he was not bound, as others were, by local conventions. And despite all this he was not ready to break with his past. He was a cultural hybrid—a man living and sharing intimately in the cultural life and traditions of two distinct peoples, never quite willing to break with the past and never quite accepted. He was a 'marginal' man—a man on the margin of two cultures and two societies which had by that time not completely fused together. He was usually, though not necessarily, a man of mixed blood. He lived in two worlds in both of which he was, in smaller or greater degree, a stranger. The conflict of culture as it took place in his mind was the conflict of his divided self—the old self and the new. It is true that such a crisis may occur in the life of every individual and does occur even in modern times in the lives of those who settle down in foreign countries, but in the case of the 'marginal' man produced by ancient migrations such a crisis was relatively permanent and took place in the life of a large number of individuals. The result was the marginal man became a personality type which lasted for several generations.

'Marginal Man' of the Vedic Age

The religious ideas of the Middle Vedic Age were not only the natural evolution of the R̥gvedic, Atharvavedic and non-Aryan thought currents described in the preceding chapters but were also the result of the fusion of these various ideologies which found expression in the minds of those who stood on the boundary line of various religious traditions. As we will see below, these people usually belonged to more than one religious *milieu* and more often than not found themselves in a sort of dilemma. There were non-Aryans who were attracted by the Aryan religious ideas but could not cut themselves off from their past. Similarly there were Aryans who were inclined to accept the elements of non-Aryan religions or were impressed by the thinking of non-Vedic Aryan traditions but were proud of their Vedic heritage also. Such people were the product of the migrations of Aryan tribes (and also of the non-Aryan tribes which were forced by the Aryans to move onwards) and were part of and yet strangers to both the cultural worlds—to which they originally belonged and by which they were influenced. They therefore belonged to the category of 'marginal' man of

Robert Park and the 'stranger' of Simmel. It was in their minds that conflicting cultures of the age met and fused. In the lives of many this conflict of old and new cultures found expression in a moral dichotomy and inner turmoil—something which was quite natural when one set of habits and ideas was being discarded and the other one was not fully adopted.

'Marginal' man of the Vedic Age came from both the sides of the margin—Aryan and non-Aryan. On the non-Aryan side already in the Ṛgvedic Age we find references to Dāsas who had adopted some Aryan practices and gave gifts to Brāhmaṇas. The *RV* VIII.46.32 refers to a Dāsa named Balbūtha as a giver of gifts to Brāhmaṇas. The Munis of the *RV* discussed below were in a way the 'marginal' men of the Ṛgvedic period because though their tradition 'went back to the pre-Vedic pre-Aryan origins' and they were 'alien to Ṛgvedic culture'¹, yet occasionally they are called the friends of Indra and obeisance is made to them. The *ŚB* addresses Tura Kāvasheya as a Muni² but *AB* informs that his father Kavasha Ailūsha was driven out from the sacrifice on the Sarasvati with the words 'O, son of a female slave, you are a rogue and not a Brāhmaṇa'³. On this account they even refused to dine with him⁴. The Yatis are at several places described as enemies of Indra and at some places as friends of the Aryan Bhṛguṣ. Thus they were also a category of the 'marginal' men. The very collection and classification of the Vedas has been attributed to Vyāsa in whom the presence of non-Aryan blood is beyond doubt.

From the Aryan side the 'marginal' men came from diverse social groups. Firstly, there were the Vrātyas. They spoke Aryan language but did not believe in ritualistic religion. Then there were princes like Devāpi who are said to have become degraded because they, according to Puranic tradition, gave up their adherence to the Vedic religion⁵. The Aryan thinkers who adopted and popularised the worship of the Yajurvedīya and Atharvavedīya Rudra (who had imbibed a number of non-Aryan elements; *supra*) obviously belonged to both the cultural worlds. Same was the case of those Aryans who adopted yoga and other peculiarities

¹Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 258.

²*ŚB*, II, p. 1041.

³*AB*, VIII.1.

⁴Cf. Basu, Jogiraj, *India of the Age of the Brāhmaṇas*, p. 30.

⁵Chitrav, *Bhūratavarshīya Prāchīna Charitrakośa*, p. 300

of the Indus religion. They stood on the boundary line of the two worlds. The Kshatriya princes of the Upanishadic Age such as Pravāhaṇa Jaivalī of Pañchāla, Aśvapati of Kekaya, Ajātaśatru of Kāśī and Janaka of Videha and their Brāhmaṇa contemporaries such as Yājñavalkya and the people of dubious descent such as Satyakāma Jābāla, Raikva, etc. also stood on the margin of the two cultural traditions; for on the one hand they preached an other-worldly philosophy which was opposed to this-worldly ritualistic religion of the Saṁhitās and Brāhmaṇas and on the other did not reject the authority of the earlier Brahmanical texts.

Munis of the Vedic Age

The most important group of people who stood on the boundary line of the Vedic and non-Vedic religious ideas were the Munis. They were the champions of the other-worldly or Śramaṇic ideology. In the Introduction to his commentary on the *Gītā*, Śaṅkarāchārya has observed that the Vedic religion is two-fold Pravṛtti Dharma and Nivṛtti dharma (*Dvidivho hi Vedokto dharmah Pravṛtti lakshano nivṛtti lakshanaḥ cha*)¹. Scholars like Jacobi and Oldenberg basically accept this thesis and attribute the rise of the Nivṛtti dharma (gnostic and ascetic tradition) to a reformist school within the Vedic tradition and regard Buddhism and Jainism as continuations of this reformist tendency. Some others such as S. K. Chatterji and R. P. Chanda believe that the two tendencies may be attributed to different ethnic traditions—Aryan and non-Aryan, the ascetic tradition being the contribution of the latter. Some other historians feel that the ascetic movement arose as a result of the break up of tribal economy and other socio-economic changes which were concomitant with the Second Urban Revolution². According to G. C. Pande, however, it would not be correct to think of Pravṛtti and Nivṛtti as belonging to two different ethnic and historic strata. Even in the Indus Civilization, he argues, one can discern both these tendencies—Pravṛtti dharma in the worship of Mother-Goddess and fertility cult and Nivṛtti dharma in the worship of Paśupati and Yogic tradition³. However he also admits that the Vedic religion was 'in the beginning essentially Pravṛtti dharma but later on

¹Gītā, Śaṅkara's Comm., Gita Press ed., p. 1.

²For references see Pande, G. C., *Śramaṇa Tradition, Its History and Contribution to Indian Culture*, pp. 4-5.

³*Ibid.*, p. 6.

partly through inner evolution and more through the influence of the Muni Śramaṇas it developed Nivṛtti dharma as a tendency within its fold¹.

The term 'Śramaṇa' became popular only with Buddhism and Jainism though the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* uses it to denote a particular class of sages.² In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* it is used with the term *tāpasa*.³ Gradually it became a general term for the class of monks of the various heterodox sects. The *Dīgha Nikāya*, the *Indica* of Megasthenes and the inscriptions of Aśoka indicate that the heterodox sects claimed for the Śramaṇas equality of status with the Brāhmanas. An essential feature of Śramaṇism was *tapas* that is austerities. It was unknown to R̥gvedic religion though it was gradually imbibed by the later Brāhmanism.⁴ *Tapas* was different from *Yajña* in that by the later were attained worldly success, wealth, children and heaven while the former helped in obtaining mystic superhuman faculties. By a natural anthropomorphism the gods were supposed to perform *tapas* as they were expected to offer sacrifices.⁵

The earliest literary evidence for munis comes from the *RV*. The word 'muni' occurs once in a hymn to the Maruts (*RV*, VII.56.8). Here it appears to mean a person in ecstasy. At another place (*RV*, VIII.3.5) Indra is said to have been the friend of the munis (*Indro muninām sakāḥ*). The third and the most important mention of the munis occurs in the famous Keśi Sūkta (*RV*, X.136). It delineates for us the strange figure of the muni who is described as long-haired (*keśī*), clad in dirty, tawny-coloured garments (*piśāngī rasate malā*), walking in the air (*vāta-vān*)⁶ or flying (*antarikṣa-ya pātati*), delirious with the state of being a muni (*umalā mānavaṇa*) and inspired (*dēvashīḡa*). He enjoyed friendship with

¹Panda, *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism*, p. 201.

²*TJ*, II.7.

³*Brh. Up.*, IV.3.22.

⁴ Cf. Jain Bhagchandra, 'Antiquity of Śramaṇa Cult', *World F. J. m.*, XV, No. 1, pp. 3 ff.

⁵ Chakrabarti, H., *Aesthetics in Ancient India*, p. 9, n. 18.

⁶ The term *Vāta-vān* cannot be taken to mean 'one having wind as his god' as is argued by many (cf. Chakrabarti (op. cit., p. 57) since the very next words clearly refer to their clothes. Sivananda interprets the term as 'one of Vāta-vān, a sage'. According to G. C. Panda the words *antarikṣa-ya pātati* occurring in verse 4 seem to recapture and expand the sense of *Vāta-vān*.

Vāyu (*Vāyoḥ sakhātho*) and drank poison¹ with Rudra (*keśī vishasya pātrena yad Rudrenāpibat saha*). He followed the moving wind (*vātasyānudhrājini yanti*) attained the status of god (*yaddevāso avikshata*). Mortal men (*martāso*) could only see his body (*śarīra*) and no more. He treaded the path of sylvan beasts, Gandharvas and Apsarās (*apsarasām gandharvānām mṛgānām charaṇe charan*). Many aspects of the personality of the muni are rather obscure but it is obvious that he is described as keśī (long-haired) and that he used ochre-robies and had distinctive condition of ecstasy (*mauneya*). His association with the Rudra cult is also quite clear. The reference to the drinking of poison by Rudra with muni may be the germ of the later Vishapāna legend of Śiva while his association with sylvan beasts reminds one of the Paśupati aspect of this god. His description as keśī (long-haired) reminds one of the Keśīs and Jaṭilas of the sixth century B.C. both of which belonged to heterodox tradition.² Obviously the author of the Keśī Sūkta regarded the munis as different from the Vedic ṛshis. As G. C. Pande has said the Vedic Aryans were filled with a certain sense of wonder and awe at the sight of miracle performing munis.³ The shape of their ideology in this archaic period is a matter of speculation. It is however obvious and certain that they belonged to the ascetic śramaṇa ideology from which later Jainism, Buddhism, the Sāṅkhya and Yoga and some other minor systems evolved. In the age of the Buddha the leaders of this ideology were often styled as munis, śramaṇas or parivrājakas. They preached *yoga* and *dhyāna* and lived a homeless life. They did not accept the authority of the Vedas and the efficacy of sacrificial ritual, did not believe in the Vedic gods as creator and disregarded the Brahmanic claim of superiority of birth. "There are five signs of the folly of those who have lost their intelligence" Dharmakīrti declared⁴, "belief in the validity of the Vedas (*Veda-prāmāṇyam*), belief in a creator (*kasyachikartṛivādah*), expecting ethical merit from ablutions (*snāne dharmechchhā*), pride of caste (*jāti-ādāralepah*) and engaging in violence to be rid of sin (*pāpa-hānāya santāpārambhah*)". How far

¹Griffith interprets *visha* as 'water'. But the word usually means poison and this meaning is consonant with the later Vishapāna legend of Śiva.

²Sāyana takes the term *Keśī* in the sense of 'sun'. Sukumar Datta agrees with him.

³Pande, *Origins*, p. 258.

⁴Quoted by Pande in *Śramaṇa Tr...*

these ideas had developed by the Middle Vedic Age, it is difficult to say. But a continuous existence of muni tradition may easily be traced in the Vedic literature. For example the *AV* (VII.74.1) refers to a devamuni who acquired mysterious powers by the dint of asceticism. Similarly the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* (VI.33.3) speaks of Aitasha, the Muni, who was regarded as deranged by his own son and whatever he said was branded on *Aitasha Pralāpa*.¹ The *Pañchaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa* (X.14.47) refers to a place called Munimaraṇa where Indra restored Vaikhānasa to life who had been killed by Asuras. The *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* also speaks of Vātarasana sages who were Śramaṇas and Ūrdhvamanthīs. According to this text the Vātarasana Śramaṇas led a celibate life, could disappear at will and teach to the Brāhmaṇas the way beyond sin. It also makes obeisance to the munis of Gaṅgā and Yamunā.²

The Yatis

Like the munis, the yatis also belonged to the non-Aryan ascetic tradition which was gradually incorporated within the Vedic fold. In some passages of the *RV* they are described as associates of the Bhṛguṣ and hence in good relations with Indra.³ The *Sāmaveda* also mentions them as champions of the Bhṛguṣ. But in other passages they are described as hostile to Indra who threw them before the Śāla Vṛksha.⁴ Like the munis they also had mystical powers. They are said to have overcome the Asuras, their foes. The *Pañchaviṃśa* (X.14.4) and *Aitareya Brāhmaṇas* (VII.8) refer to the killing of yatis by Indra. Sāyaṇa explains yatis as *Āsurāyaḥ Prajāḥ* and *parivrājakas* both. According to P. V. Kane the people of Aryan descent who led a life of meditation and mortification were called munis while persons corresponding to them among the non-Aryans were called yatis. According to D. R. Bhandarkar however the yatis belonged to the community of the Asuras themselves.⁵ According to P. V. Kane if there is any connection between *Yati* and *Yātu* (sorcery) then the yatis were probably non-Vedic sorcerers.⁶

¹Compare it with *unmadita manuayena* of the Keśi Sūkta.

²Cf. Pande, *Origins*, pp. 258–9.

³*RV*, VIII.3.9, 6.8.

⁴*Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, VII.28.1.

⁵See Chakraborty, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

⁶Kane, P. V., *History of Dharmasāstra*, II, p. 419.

The Jainas

While the existence of the munis and yatis in the age of the *R̥gveda* (who believed in ascetic way of life, practised yoga and whose general view of life was other-worldly) is beyond doubt, it is rather problematical whether Jainism as a distinct religion existed in that hoary past. According to the Jainas twenty-three Tīrthaṅkaras had flourished before Mahāvīra (6th century B.C.), the 24th Tīrthaṅkara. The historicity of Pārśvanātha, the twenty-third Tīrthaṅkara is also generally accepted and he is placed about 250 years before Mahāvīra. The historicity of other Tīrthaṅkaras is however as yet a matter only of the Jaina faith. But H. L. Jain¹ has sought to prove the historicity of Ṛshabhadeva, the first of the Tīrthaṅkaras by correlating the description found in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* with the evidence of the Keśī Sūkta of the *RV*. The *Bhāgavata*² speaks of the royal sage Ṛshabha who became an *avadhūta* and in this context mentions the Vātaraśana Śramaṇas and uses the epithets *Keśabhūri bhāraḥ* and *Mamavrataḥ* for Ṛshabha. It reminds one of the Keśī Sūkta of the *RV* which refers to munis as *keśīs* and *vātaraśanāḥ*. According to H. L. Jain the *RV* here refers to Ṛshabha, the first of the Jaina Tīrthaṅkaras. His contention may or may not be correct, but it does open interesting possibilities.

The Vrātyas

Another group of people belonging to the non-Aryan culture complex was that of the Vrātyas. In the *Manusmṛti* (X.20) Vrātyas are defined as the offsprings of the dvijātis or twice-born who have fallen from Sāvitrī. The *Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra* (I.9.16) however says that those who are born of the mixture of varṇas are called Vrātyas. In the *Mahābhārata* the Vrātya is defined as the progeny of a Śūdra man and Kshatriyā woman³. But despite these differences all these texts agree on one point and that is that the Vrātyas were *Sāvitrī-patita*. That is why many scholars including P. V. Kane derive the term 'Vrātya' from *vrata*, vow⁴. However, others including

¹Quoted by Pande, *Śramaṇa Tradition*, p. 3.

²*Bhāgavata P.*, V.5.29, 31 (Gita Press ed.).

³Karṇa parvan, 37.44-6; Droṇa parvan, 143.17.

⁴*History of Dharmasāstra*, II, p. 386.

H. Shastri¹ have opined that this derivation is not possible and if it is so derived it will not have the sense of a person who neglected his sacred vows (*vratas*). Now-a-days scholars generally believe that the term 'Vrātya' should be derived from 'Vrāta', meaning 'tribe' or 'group' (*Vrāte samavetāḥ Vrātyāḥ*)².

According to some historians the Vrātyas were a non-Aryan tribe³, while others have advocated their Aryan descent⁴. To us the view that they were Aryans of non-Vedic culture complex seems to be correct. From the *Pañchaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa*⁵ it appears that they spoke Aryan language (*dīkshita vācham*) and that their patriarchs were known as *grhapatis*. But their ways of life differed from those of the Aryans. They were definitely not included within the pale of the Vedic orthodoxy. They did not approve of the Brāhmaṇical sacrifices⁶ and partook a kind of *surā* presumably as a part of their religious practices⁷. From the *Pañchaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa* it appears that even in dress etc. they differed considerably from the Aryans. Significantly according to this text they were divided into two classes—the *arhats* and *yaudhas* which remind one of the division of the Vedic community into *brahma* and *kshatra*. The use of the term 'arhat' by the Vrātyas (later adopted by the Jainas) suggests that they were non-Vedic. The *arhats* and *yaudhas* were probably the Vrātya counterparts of Vedic *brahma* and *kshatra*⁸. In the *AV* Māgadha is connected with the Vrātya as a friend⁹. In the *Lāṭyāyana* (VIII.6.28) and *Kātyāyana* (XXII.4.24) *Śrauta Sūtras* also the property of Vrātya (*Vrātyadhana*) is directed to be given to a low Brāhmaṇa or to a Māgadha Brāhmaṇa. These references indicate, if not prove, that the Vrātyas lived in the eastern part of the country.

The Vrātyas seem to have described their supreme being as Ekavrātya. In the Vrātya Kāṇḍa of the *AV* the Ekavrātya

¹Shastri, H., *Absorption of the Vrātyas*, p. 3 (Quoted by S. Singh in *Evolution of the Smṛti Law*, p. 134).

²Singh, *Ibid.*, p. 136.

³For example Bhandarkar, Dutta, Ghosh, Bhagawat, etc. believe in this theory. For references see S. Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

⁴E.g. H. Shastri, Chattopadhyaya, Keny and Keith. For references see S. Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

⁵XVII.1.9-15.

⁶*AV*, XV, 12.1-4.

⁷Karmarkar, A. P., *The Vrātya System of Religion*, p. 23.

⁸Dandekar, R. N., *Rudra in the Veda*, Poona, 1953, p. 8.

⁹See Law, B. C., *Māgadhas in Ancient India*, p. 1.

is described as practising austerities (*tapah*), as standing erect for a whole year (XV.3.1) and as having seven *prāṇas* (breaths), seven *apānas* (expirations) and seven *vyānas* (out-breathings) (XV.15.1-2). It indicates his close association with yoga. He is said to have motivated Prajāpati and to have become beautiful, great, elder, Satya, Brahma and Tapas. He is said to have been followed in his marches by Bṛhat, Ādityas, Yajña, Viśvedevāḥ, Varuṇa, Soma, etc. (XV.1.2 ff.). The gods are said to be his servants, Will his messenger and all beings his dependents. As pointed out by Sampurnananda¹ the word Ekavrātya here does not seem to signify a human being. It appears to have a mystic significance like the Purusha of the Purusha Sūkta of the *RV*. His close affinity with Rudra is also clearly indicated. Certain features of his physical appearance such as blue belly and red back (XV.1.7), his identification with Mahādeva (XV.1.4) and association with yoga as well as the fact that among the deities of the Vrātyas were included Ugra, Rudra, Bhava, Śarva, Paśupati and Īśāna suggest that the Vrātyas contributed a lot to the worship of Rudra-Śiva. The *Pañchaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa* divides the Vrātyas into four categories—*hīna*, *gārāgir*, *śamanīchameḍhra* and *nindita*. Of these four categories the *gārāgir* (= swallows of poison) reminds us of the munis of the *RV* who drank poison in the company of Rudra and the term *śamanīchameḍhra* (= one whose penis hangs low through control of passion) brings to mind the rigorous penances and yogic practices observed by the munis and brahmachārīs (*infra*).

Thus we may conclude that the Vrātyas were the followers of a distinct religious cult which was Aryan but non-Vedic in origin and which had close affinities with the cult of Rudra-Śiva.

The Brahmachārī Cult

According to R. N. Dandekar² another ascetic cult of non-Vedic origin having close affinity with Rudra and phallus worship was that of the Brahmachārīs. They are mentioned in the Brahmachārī Sūkta of the *AV* (XI.5). The views that the Sūkta refers to the Vedic student or Brahman or sun have been challenged by Dandekar. According to him the object of the Sūkta is the glorification of a cult which was known as the Brahmachārī cult. Its members followed

¹Sampurnananda, *The Atharvaveda Vrātya Kāṇḍa*, p. 11.

²Dandekar, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-7.

a life of rigorous discipline, clothed themselves with heat (*gharma*), stood up with fervour (*tapas*) and acquired special virile powers. Many of their features remind one of the Rudra-Śiva cult. For example the Brahmachārī is described as being followed by the Gandharvas (XI.5.2) whose association with Rudra-Śiva is well known (cf. the Keśi Sūkta of the *RV*, p. 94-5). The most striking evidence in this connection is the description of the Brahmachārī as the possessor of great penis (*bṛhachchhepa*) and the sprinkler of the seed (*retah siñchati*). It makes it quite clear that his cult was a part of the culture complex to which the Rudra and Liṅga worship belonged.

The Liṅga Cult

From the above discussion it is quite obvious that in the Middle Vedic Age the Liṅga cult became comparatively more popular and despite its non-Vedic origin began to claim increasingly greater recognition among the Vedic Aryans themselves. The Ṛgvedic *rshis* prayed (*RV*, VII.21.5), 'let not the Śiśnadevāḥ enter our sacrificial pandal'. As we have seen this and other such derogatory references to Śiśnadevāḥ are most likely to the phallic worshippers of the Indus Civilization. But gradually alongwith the transformation of the personality of Rudra, ideas concerning phallic worship found entry in the Vedic religion. The *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* (II.7) refers to Vātaraśana sages who were Śramaṇas and Ūrdhvamanthīs. According to Sāyaṇa the term Ūrdhvamanthī means Ūrdhvaretas i.e. 'one whose semen goes up'. It obviously indicates their claim of control over sexual passions and reminds one of the description of the Vrātyas in the *Pañchaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa* as *śamanīchamedhra* (one whose penis hangs low through control of passion) and of the Brahmachārīs as *bṛhachchhepa* ('possessor of great penis').

The increasing popularity of Liṅga worship is indicated by some other passages of the *AV*. At one place (X.8) it describes the Skambha as co-extensive with the universe and comprehends in him the various parts of the material universe and also the abstract qualities. In this connection it is said that He who knows 'the golden reed (*vetas*) is the mysterious Prajāpati'. Significantly the word *vetas* used here in the sense of reed has been used in the sense of membrum virile in the *RV* (X.95.4-5) and the *ŚB*. According to Rao¹

¹*Elements of Hindu Iconography*, II, i, p. 571.

“It is the same Skambha that has given birth to the story of Śiva’s appearance as a blazing pillar between Brahmā and Viṣṇu when they were quarrelling about the superiority of one over the other.” There are also many phallic ideas and rites depicted in the *Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā*, *Taittirīya Saṁhitā*, *Maitrāyaṇī Saṁhitā* and the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. In the *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad* (4.11.5-2) Rudra is described as the Lord of Yonis thus indicating his close association with the cult of Yonī, and indirectly with the cult of Liṅga.

Resistance to the ‘Marginal’ Ideologies

The impact of the non-Vedic ideologies created a number of social and moral problems for the Vedic society and even threatened the very basis on which it rested. The non-Vedic ideologies on the one hand put the ideal of promiscuity (*kāmāchāra*) before the Aryans and on the other hand induced them towards other-worldly or Śramaṇic outlook—*munivṛtti*. It may appear as a strange phenomenon but it is a fact that the thinkers responsible for both these rather contradictory appearing outlooks were associated with the Rudra-Śiva cult. But the curious contrast in the two outlooks is more apparent than real, for even in the historical period Śaivism in its Tāntrika form is found associated simultaneously with *nivṛtti dharma* as well as the grossest and crudest forms of sexual rites. The erotic images found on the Śaiva temples of Khajuraho and other places are the best evidence of this combination. The Purāṇas are full of the stories which narrate how Śiva used to go for begging alms in naked fashion making wives of ṛshis fall in love with him¹. That there was an atmosphere of sexual laxity among many tribes of the Vedic age is a well-documented fact (*supra*). Though the identification of these tribes is not always possible yet it can be readily imagined that they were associated with the Rudra and Liṅga cults discussed above. Their impact created a turmoil in the Vedic society. The Yama-Yamī dialogue of the tenth maṇḍala of the *RV* composed in the Middle Age records the mental agony of Yama whose sister Yamī wanted to have incestuous relations with him on the plea that they were sanctified by time and tradition while Yama felt that such relationship violated the laws of Varuṇa. Here our suggestion that in the Indus Valley Civilization brother-sister marriages were prevalent may be recalled (pp. 24-9). It is just

¹Cf. *B. C. Law Volume*, I, p. 461.

possible that Yamī's plea emanated from the fact that in some tribes (of Indus origin) such a tradition went back to great antiquity while Yama's arguments were based on the moral ideas of the Vedic society. Thus this instance is a fine example of a young man and woman living on the boundary line of two moralities. The *Mahābhārata* records several stories belonging to the characters of the Vedic age which relate how the Vedic Aryans had to safeguard their society from the impact of those who believed in promiscuous relations. According to one story Dīrghatamā, a ṛshi, began to follow the life of complete sexual freedom—the custom of cattle or *go-dharma*—and other ṛshis had to expel him from the hermitage for this sin¹. In the same epic at one place Pāṇḍu refers to the age when women were not bound with one husband; they had sexual relations with anybody they liked². The institution of marriage was then introduced by Śvetaketu, the son of Uddālaka. As this type of promiscuous nature of sexual relations cannot be deduced from the moral ideas of the Vedic Aryans and as there are indications that many non-Aryan tribes followed such customs, it may be reasonably argued that promiscuity was not a feature of Vedic society; rather it was a danger to which the Vedic society was exposed.

Among the Aryans the importance of the life of householder (*gṛhastha*) was supreme. Their religion was this-worldly and its fulfilment depended upon the procreation of male progeny. Therefore when some Aryans were attracted by the *nivṛtti* ideal of munis, it became a problem whether or not to denounce the philosophy of renunciation. That is why on the one hand our ancient literature is full of praise for munis, yatis and sannyāsīs, and on the other numerous passages denounce them roundly. This dichotomous attitude is found in the *RV* itself which on the one hand looks upon the munis as alien to the Vedic orthodoxy and on the other as a friend of Indra. Similarly in yatis it sees a friend of the Bhṛgu but at the same time an enemy of Indra. But by and large till the end of the Middle Vedic Age the stronger tendency was to denounce all such groups. The *Mahābhārata* condemns the sannyāsīs as great sinners (*papishṭha*)³. According to a story⁴ the great penitent Jarat-

¹Meyer, *Sexual Life in Ancient India*, p. 124.

²*Mbh.* 1.122.3-21.

³*Mbh.* 12.8.7.

⁴Meyer, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

kāru, who was greedy for strength by penance, was persuaded by his forefathers to marry because without it he could not procreate a son needed for the performance of sacrifices for the liberation of manes. Similarly it is said that though Kuṇigarga's daughter performed penances throughout her life yet she could go to heaven only after giving up her maidenhood by marrying Śringavāna¹. In one passage Indra, the great god of this-worldly religious ideology, explains the futility of sannyāsa to certain sons of Brāhmaṇas who were intending to adopt the life of recluse². When Yudhisṭhira expressed the desire to lead the life of a sannyāsī, his brothers and Draupadī successfully persuaded him to give up the idea by emphasising the futility of renunciation and necessity of leading the life of a householder. All these instances indicate the dilemma of those Aryans who were feeling attracted towards the life of renunciation but were at the same time finding it difficult to discard their heritage of looking at this world as something desirable.

Varṇa and Caste Systems and the New Category of 'Marginal Man'

The mutual contact of the various Aryan (belonging to both 'Vedic' and 'non-Vedic' categories) and non-Aryan (belonging to both 'Indus' and 'non-Indus' traditions) cultural currents produced not only their mixture but also a compound—not only a combination of the various ideologies but something entirely new. It led to the emergence of the ideal of the Purushārtha as the goal of human life, of the Āśrama theory as the ideal pattern for the life of the individual and the varṇa system as the ideal pattern for social organisation. All these three institutions aimed at arriving a synthesis between the conflicting claims of the divergent *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti* ideologies. Much of this synthesis, specially the emergence of the Āśrama and the Purushārtha doctrines, took place in the Later Vedic or the Upanishadic Age, or even later. But the varṇa system, which later on became transformed into the caste system, began to solidify in the Middle Vedic Age itself.

The chief obstacles in the cultural assimilation of the Aryan and non-Aryan races were not only the differences in their linguistic, mental and cultural make-up, but also their divergent physical traits. In the modern times the Japanese find it more difficult to mix up with

¹Vedalankar, H., *Hindu Parivāra Mīmāṃsā*, p. 16.

²*Mbh.* 12.11.27.

the Americans than the Europeans do because of their racial complexion; the Japanese wear, as it were, 'a racial uniform' which classifies them instantly. The menace of the black-skinned non-Aryans was the Vedic Indian counterpart of the Yellow Peril which the modern Americans have been so conscious of. Under these circumstances though the Aryans and the non-Aryans lived together, each playing a role in politico-economic life, yet for a long time they did not interbreed to a perceptible extent. In other countries the relations of the conquered with the conquering people usually took the form of slavery. In India when the process of adjustment began it assumed the form of varṇa system (which gradually transformed itself into the caste system) which made both of them integral parts of one society. The varṇa system was thus a form of accommodation in which the problems created by the inflow of tribal waves (and many other problems) found solution.

But the emergence of the varṇa system did not solve the problem of the 'marginal man' completely, because from the very beginning the varṇa system was based, at least in practice, on birth and not on a person's qualifications and inclinations (as probably was the theoretical assumption), and therefore it only produced an additional category of persons who found that crossing the barriers of one's own hereditary group was not easy. The prevalent view that in the Vedic Age the varṇa of an individual was decided by his vocation and not birth is not correct. Viśvāmitra, a Kshatriya, wanted to attain the status of a Brāhmaṇa but despite his great spiritual attainments, admired even by his opponents, he could not fulfil his ambition. Mahidāsa Aitareya, the author of the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, was the son of Itarā, a Śūdrā. His father, who had other sons born of wives of higher castes, treated him shabbily and did not give him his name. In the Upanishadic Age Jānaśruti Pautrāyaṇa, a Śūdra, succeeded in persuading Raikva by the allurements of sumptuous gifts to impart real knowledge to him, but himself could not rise above the status of Śūdra. Similarly in the *Mahābhārata* Karṇa, known as the son of a charioteer (*sūta*), was not accepted as a Kshatriya even when he was raised to the status of the king of Aṅga by Duryodhana; Draupadī flatly refused to let him participate in her *svayamvara* on the plea of his low caste. In the *Rāmāyaṇa* Śambūka, a Śūdra, is cold-bloodedly killed by the hero of the epic himself for his ambition to become a *tapasvī*. The agony of people like Kavasha Ailūsha, Mahidāsa Aitareya, Viśvāmitra, Karṇa, Jānaśruti Pautrā-

yaṇa and Śambūka is not difficult to be imagined. Here it is interesting to recall that in the same society Brāhmaṇas such as Paraśurāma and Droṇa, who spent their lives pursuing the activities of a Kshatriya warrior, were accepted unhesitatingly by everybody as Brāhmaṇas. It will not, however, be correct to assume that only Brāhmaṇas had such a dichotomous attitude towards varṇa system. The Kshatriyas also suffered from a sense of superiority complex. That is why the Buddha and Mahāvīra on the one hand denounced the four-fold varṇa system and the Brāhmaṇic claim of superiority over others and, on the other, were never tired of claiming the highest status for the Kshatriyas. This psychology, if properly understood and interpreted, may explain a number of problems of the social aspects of ancient Indian religious history.

Chapter 6

Religion and Philosophy of the Later Vedic (Upanishadic) Age

The Upanishadic and Sūtra Literature

The evidence for the Later Vedic Age is provided by the Upanishads. Sometimes the evidence of the early Sūtra literature is also used for this period¹, and it is just possible that the composition of the early Sūtra works began towards the close of the Upanishadic age. But, by and large, the Sūtra works are placed in the post-Upanishadic age and this view seems to be fairly correct. It may however be remembered that the cult of sacrifice was quite popular even in the Upanishadic age, though Upanishads being themselves a product of the reaction against the cult of sacrifice and mainly philosophical in nature do not discuss it from ritualistic point of view. Therefore the evidence of the Sūtra works, though somewhat later in date, may be used to fill up this gap because the elaborate sacrificial cult, delineated in them, could not have been much different in the Upanishadic period. Therefore one may utilize the Sūtra works for understanding the development of the Vedic ritualistic religion in the Upanishadic Age with the explicit understanding that most of the Sūtra works were chronologically later than the early Upanishads.

We have already given a brief idea of the Upanishadic literature (p. 40) and its chronology (pp. 49–52). The first *adhyāya* of the *Muktikopanishad* gives a list of one hundred and eight Upanishads, while the actual number of available works which go by this name is over two hundred. Of these only about a dozen texts are regarded as early or Vedic and authentic. The great āchārya Śaṅkara has commented only on about a dozen of them (*Īśa*, *Kena*, *Kaṭha*, *Praśna*, *Muṇḍaka*, *Māṇḍūkya*, *Taittirīya*, *Kaushītaki*, *Aitareya*, *Chhāndogya*,

¹For example in *The Vedic Age*, ed. by Majumdar and Pusalker, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay.

Bṛhadāraṇyaka, *Śvetāśvatara* and *Nṛsiṃhapūrvatāpanī*)¹. Some scholars regard the commentaries on the *Kaushītaki* and *Śvetāśvatara* as not being his². Apart from these there are about half a dozen more Upanishadic texts the passages of which have been quoted by him. From this list the *Nṛsiṃhapūrvatāpanī* should be deleted for it is generally regarded as a late work. Rāmānuja, another great Vedānta philosopher, has not commented on the Upanishads but in his writings he has quoted about a dozen of them, though many of them are different from those included in the list given above³.

As regards the relative chronology of the Upanishads, those which eulogize sectarian deities or religious doctrines or discuss symbolic ritualism, Tantrism, Occultism, etc. are apparently of post-Vedic period. Some of them are more akin to the Purāṇas and Tantras than to the Vedas⁴. The fact that we have a text named *Allopanishad* written in the reign of Akbar (16th century A.D.) proves the continuity of the tradition of the composition in this genre of religious texts. As regards the early Upanishads most of them form the concluding portion of their Āraṇyaka which in turn is a continuation of the Brāhmaṇa text of the same name⁵. The Upanishads belonging to the *Atharvaveda* are generally of a later date⁶. Further, in the early Upanishads, mostly in prose, there is more of pure speculation while in the later ones, generally in verse, there is more of religious worship and devotion. However, even the recognised early Upanishads contain portions which appear to be comparatively late. In other words, early and later material is found in the same Upanishad as is the case with earlier Saṃhitā and Brāhmaṇa texts. According to Prof. S. Radhakrishnan the *Aitareya*, the *Kaushītaki*, the *Chhāndogya*, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and parts of the *Kena* are early, verses 1-13 of the *Kena* and iv.8-21 of the *Bṛhadaranyaka* form the

¹On many other later Upanishads the commentaries of Śankara are available, but the authenticity of some of them is doubted. Belvalkar has published *Four Unpublished Upanishads* which he includes among the early ones.

²Cf. Swami Madhavananda in *CHI*, I, p. 347.

³*Ibid.*

⁴Cf. *The Vedic Age*, p. 472.

⁵These are the *Aitareya*, *Kaushītaki*, *Taittirīya*, *Mahānārāyaṇa*, *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, *Chhāndogya* and *Kena* Upanishads. All of them, excepting the *Mahānārāyaṇa*, belong to the early group.

⁶Desai, S. G., 'The Ancient, Late and Later Upanishads', *Journal of the Yoga Institute*, Bombay, X, No. 9, 1965, p. 133 ff.

transition to the metrical Upanishads while the *Kaṣha*, *Māṇḍūkya* and *Śvetāśvatara* are comparatively later¹.

As regards the methodology of the Upanishads, practically all these texts follow the Brāhmaṇic habit of indulging in fanciful word-plays, redundant repetitions, thread-bare symbolising, sacerdotal reward and imprecations. But these gradually diminish in comparatively later texts. The earlier texts consist of short and simple disquisitions on single isolated problems. As we approach the centre of the Upanishadic period, conventional openings such as the chance encounter of a few learned Brāhmaṇas falling into discussion and repairing to someone else to finally solve the riddle, give place to single sustained episodes, its high water mark being the great symposium at Janaka's court². The philosophical problems are how correctly formulated, but the discussions are not always strictly 'philosophical'—similes, and *ad hoc* proofs being still made to subserve every purpose. Anything like a Socratic method is wanting³. The Upanishads generally huddle together all kinds of physical, metaphysical, psychological and physiological categories—speaking of Beatific Bliss in one breath and bodily nourishment in the next. It is a legacy which they inherited from the Brāhmaṇa texts. Similarly it is to Brāhmaṇic methodology that we have to trace the Upanishadic *penchant* for argument by analogy—taking the proposition to have been established the moment one similar case or *dṛṣhṭānta* is adduced. The Upanishads are largely indebted to the Brāhmaṇas also for their frequent use of the *prātīkas* or symbols specially for the purpose of meditation (*upāsana*)⁴.

Very little is known about the lives of the great thinkers whose ideas are preserved in the Upanishads. Leaving aside deities and mythical heroes to whom sometimes the views propounded in these texts have been ascribed, the names of Janaka, Aśvapati Kaikaya,

¹Radhakrishnan, S., *Indian Philosophy*, I, p. 142. Deussen's well-known classification into Ancient Prose, Early Metrical, Later Prose and Atharvaṇa Upanishads labours under the great disadvantage of regarding each Upanishad as a complete unit. Belvalkar has divided the thirteen principal Upanishads into nearly a hundred units and have assigned them to Brāhmaṇic (c. 1250–1100 B.C.), Brāhmaṇa-Upanishadic (c. 1100–900 B.C.), Upanishadic (c. 900–750 B.C.) and Neo-Upanishadic (c. 750–550 B.C.) periods (cf. his *Gopal Basu Mallik Lectures on Vedānta Philosophy*, pp. 43–46.

²Belvalkar, *ibid.*, p. 46.

³*Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 35–6.

Mahidāsa Aitareya, Raikva, Śaṅḍilya, Satyakāma Jābāla, Pravāhaṇa Jaivali, Uddālaka Āruṇi, Śvetaketu, Bhūradvāja, Pratardana, Bālāki, Ajātaśatru, Yājñavalkya, Gārgī, Maitreyī and Ghora Āṅgīrasa stand out prominently. It may be noted that some of them such as Aśvapati of Kekaya, Janaka of Vidcha, Pravāhaṇa Jaivali of Pañchāla and Ajātaśatru of Kāśī were royal sages rather than Brāhmaṇa priests. However despite the fact that the Kshatriyas played an important part in the Upanishadic movement, it is not proper to maintain that there was any organized rivalry between them and the Brāhmaṇas or that the Upanishadic philosophy was a Kshatriya revolt against the ritualistic religion of the Brāhmaṇas. That the Upanishads constitute a revolt against sacerdotal system of the Brāhmaṇas and also a revolt of the Kshatriyas against Brāhmaṇa priests has been supported by several scholars¹ on the basis of a few Upanishadic passages². But as pointed out by Prof. G. C. Pande it is only the *pañchāgnividyā* which is specifically attributed to the Kshatriyas³. On the other hand, a number of Upanishadic philosophers such as Yājñavalkya and Uddālaka Āruṇi were decidedly Brāhmaṇas. Actually the Upanishads do not attach too great a value to caste. "They rather show that the love of truth was placed above the usual pretensions of caste. The story of Satyakāma who was declared a Brāhmaṇa for his love of truth, of Raikva, and of Uddālaka Āruṇi who went to king Pravāhaṇa Jaivali for learning what he did not know, are instances in point."⁴

Despite the wide dispersal of Aryan settlements in the Upanishadic Age, the centre of Vedic orthodoxy continued to be in western U.P. and eastern Punjab. Gandhāra, Śibi and Kekaya, Madra and Kuru, Pañchāla, Kosala and Kāśī, Vidcha and Vidarbha—these are the kingdoms which are usually mentioned in the Upanishads⁵. Although spread far and wide, these janapadas were not isolated in their intellectual and religious life. Scholars moved

¹Cf. *The Vedic Age*, pp. 472-3; *HIL*, I, p. 227 ff.

²Cf. *Chh. Upa.*, I.8-9; V.3-10; V.11-34; VII; *Br. Upa.* II.1; V.2; *Kaush. Upa.*, I, IV, etc.

³Pande, G. C., in *History of the Punjab*, ed. by L. M. Joshi, Patiala, 1977, p. 102.

⁴*Ibid.* According to Belvalkar in their present form Upanishads represent an alliance between the 'Brahmanism' and its less radical opponents with a view to combating certain extreme and disruptive forces then menacing the whole social fabric (*loc. cit.*, pp. 35-42).

⁵Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

to distant places in search for knowledge. Kuru and Pañchāla represented the orthodox nerve centre of this life while the more radical movements arose in Vidcha¹.

Upanishads in Relation to Earlier Vedic Texts and Religion

The Upanishads deal not with secular knowledge but Brahmanvidyā, the knowledge of the Ultimate Reality. As a branch of the Vedas they are regarded as 'breathed out' by Brahman and only 'visioned' by the seers². They, like any other scripture, are themselves regarded as the means of valid knowledge (*śabda pramāṇa*). Hence for questions such as whether our personality survives after death, whether there is a future life, what is the nature and goal of this world, what is the nature of God and soul, etc. they are claimed to be the last word in Hindu tradition. In fact it is claimed that God is 'the Being that is known only through the Upanishads'³. It is true that the mystery of the starry heavens above, of birth and death, and of conscience attracted speculative attention even in the preceding periods of Vedic history, but at that time the mode of speculation was mythical and poetic, or magical and dogmatic. Gradually however categories of language developed which made philosophical and scientific explanations possible. The Nāsadiya Sūkta of the *Ṛgveda* presents an early example of poetical wondering about the mystery of creation. In the Upanishadic Age scholars and assemblies encouraged discussion and debate. Pāṇini's *Ashṭādhyāyī* (5th-4th centuries B.C.) presupposes a long anterior development of scientific thought. The *Chhāndogya Upanishad* refers to a wide variety of disciplines then pursued by the learned⁴. Upanishadic philosophy, thus, developed through discussion and debate in an atmosphere of varied and vigorous intellectual activity⁵. It represented the search for a finally satisfying truth, a coherent explanation of all things. This ultimate truth or principle 'which may explain all things' and 'knowing which everything becomes known', was called Brahman and its science Brahmanvidyā⁶.

The Upanishads are called *Vedānta*, literally 'the end of the

¹*Ibid.*

²Swami Madhavananda, *op. cit.*, p. 349.

³*Chhāndogya Upa.* 7.1.2.

⁴Cf. Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 95.

Vedas', either because of their position at the end of Vedic texts or on account of their representing the essence or final aim of the Vedas. The latter sense is intended when the term Vedānta is used for the philosophical system which seeks its beginning with the Upanishads. They constitute the first Prasthāna or body of the authoritative texts that the Vedānta system recognises. The terms *Vedaśīrsha* and *rahasya* are also used for Upanishads, the former because the Upanishads are the top of the Vedas (the beginning being considered the root) and the latter because only qualified initiates had access to their secret doctrines.

However in view of the distinctive character of their contents, the Upanishads are also regarded as independent of the Vedic hymns and the Brāhmaṇas. The early Vedic religion was marked by simplicity. It was polytheistic in nature in which many gods were worshipped by simple sacrificial ritual. In the Middle Vedic Age monotheism was achieved, but without renouncing polytheism, and the victory of the cult of sacrifice was complete. In the Upanishads, Vedic "religion advanced from pursuing the world to transcending it, from propitiating Gods to seeking the Self"¹. This change in the character of Vedic religion came about through the interaction of a number of causes. "Changed social and material circumstances were undoubtedly important in creating dissatisfaction with gods who had been conceived in earlier and simpler circumstances"². The relaxation of the necessity of constant struggle against the non-Aryans, the wealth and leisure which accrued from the conquest of India and the enervating climate of the country turned the attention of the Aryans to philosophy and speculation. Secondly, the tradition of priestly learning which reflected over tradition and sought to discover a new meaning in it, led to a maturer, more critical and more abstract mode of thought and understanding. The new class of hermits which had now arisen amidst the Brāhmaṇas and lived by repairing to the forests and tending the sacrificial fires, was strongly inclined towards an esoteric interpretation of the ritual, and their speculations have been preserved in the few Āraṇyaka texts which have come down to us³. And lastly, the class of munis and śramaṇas (discussed in the preceding Chapter) who for a long time had wandered on the fringe of Vedic society became more

¹*Ibid.*, p. 95.

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*

influential and presented a profound challenge to the Vedic thought when the Aryan tribes had crossed the Sadānīra and settled in what is to-day eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar¹. A somewhat similar situation arose when in the medieval age Hindu thought had to face the challenge of Islam and in modern times when India met European learning. That is why these epochs are regarded as the formative periods of Indian culture and thought.

The advance of the Upanishads on the Saṁhitās and the Brāhmaṇas consisted in "an increased emphasis on the monistic suggestions of the Vedic hymns, a shifting of the centre from outer to the inner world, a protest against the externalism of the Vedic practices and an indifference to the sacredness of the Vedas"². The Upanishads develop the ideas of the Saṁhitās to a higher level. For example heaven looms large in the Saṁhitās and performance of sacrifice is described as the chief means to attain it. The Upanishads also take into consideration the desire of man for prolonged enjoyment but point out that even the joys of heaven are not eternal. The eternal bliss comes from the realization of Brahman or Ātman which is within the reach of man. Similarly they point out the shortcoming of the cult of sacrifice. Instead of common sacrificial cult in which offerings are made, a number of extraordinary fires are pointed out such as heaven with the sun as its fuel, the solar rays as its smoke, the moon as its cinder, and so on³, the aim being to withdraw the mind of the aspirant from external things and direct it inwards. The Upanishads declare that the soul will not attain salvation by the performance of sacrifices. Perfection is inward and spiritual, not outward and mechanical. We cannot make a man clean by washing his shirt. God is to be worshipped by meditation, and not by external ceremony.

However the Upanishadic thinkers did not denounce the cult of sacrifice completely. They knew that their protest would become ineffective if it expected a revolutionary change. That is why they asked for a change in the spirit of the sacrificial cult without usually denouncing it outrightly. In some passages we are asked to meditate on the horse-sacrifice. By describing it in detail the Upanishads show that they are not indifferent to the sacrificial religion. But they emphasize that sacrifices are for the realization

¹*Ibid.*

²Radhakrishnan, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

³*Br. Upa.*, I.1.1.

of self. Life itself is a sacrifice (*ātma yajña*). The *Chhāndogya* (V.19-24) insists on inner sacrifice. The *Kaushītaki* refers to the *antara agnihotra* of Prataṛdana. Sacrifice is not feasting but renunciation. We are advised to realize that our every action is a sacrifice to God, so let our life itself be one great sacrifice. Fire ritual is necessary but only for the unenlightened; it is no more than a 'straw raft'. For those who know the reality of existence, it alone will not do. However, sometimes the cult of sacrifice is described not only as superficial, but is decried as well. In the section on the Śauva Udgītha a procession of priests going to a sacrifice is likened to a procession of dogs to march (*Chh. Upa.*, I.12.4, 5). In the *Muṇḍaka* (I.2.1 and I.2.6) the efficacy of sacrifice is taught but elsewhere in the same text (I.2.12) the sacrificers are seriously deprecated. Such contradictory statements are found in other Upanishads also.

From the above discussion it is clear that there is no consistency in the Upanishads regarding their attitude towards the cult of sacrifice. Realizing the inefficacy of rituals to secure immortality an extreme section of thinkers abandoned them completely. Others, who were more moderate in their thinking, sought to synthesize it with the newer vogue of Brahmavidyā. It was the beginning of the *Jñānakarmasamuchchayavāda*—the doctrine of the synthesis of *jñāna* with *karma*. The majority of the orthodox priests however continued to cling to the old belief with only slight modification. They now conceded the supremacy of the theory of *karma* but included the sacrificial acts among the most righteous acts. No wonder if modern scholars fail to agree on their assessment of the Upanishadic attitude to the cult of sacrifice, for some such as N. Dutt believe that 'the performance of sacrifices continued to be the core of the religion',¹ while others including Ranade opine that 'The spirit of Upanishads is, barring a few exceptions here and there, entirely antagonistic to the sacrificial doctrine of the Brāhmaṇas.'²

The attitude of the Upanishads towards the sacredness of the Vedas, that is the Samhitās and Brāhmaṇas, was thus not very favourable. Like the later-day rationalists they adopted rather contradictory attitude towards the earlier Vedic texts. At some places they concede their supernatural origin. For example in the *Chhāndogya* (III.5.4) the Veda is considered to be the nectar and the Upanishads are held to be the nectar of nectar. Similarly the

¹Dutt, N., *Early Monastic Buddhism*, p. 12.

²Ranade, *Constructive Survey of Upaniṣadic Philosophy*, p. 6.

Br. Upa. states: "Just as when fire is laid with damp wood, clouds of smoke spread all around, so in truth from this Great Being, has been breathed forth the *R̥gveda*, the *Yajurveda*, the *Sāmaveda*, the hymns of the *Atharva* and the *Āngirasas*, the narratives, the histories, the sciences, the mystical problems, the poems, the proverbs, and all expositions—all these have been breathed forth from Him."¹ But at other places it is explicitly stated that the Vedic knowledge is much inferior to the true divine insight. "The lower (*aparā*) knowledge", the *Muṇḍaka* declares, "is that which the *Ṛk*, *Sāma*, *Atharvaveda*, *Ceremonial*, *Grammar* give . . . but the higher (*parā*) knowledge is that by which the indestructible Brahman is apprehended."² In the famous dialogue between Nārada and Sanatkumāra in the *Chhāndogya* the latter considers the entire range of literature and wisdom studied by the former as *nāma eva*—merely a study of names and nomenclature. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* (IV.1.2) Yājñavalkya dubs the Vedic literature and other sciences as only *vāchaiva*. The *Taittirīya Upanishad* also declares the Vedas to be insufficient to pierce the ultimate reality. The *Kaṭha* declares that even by much knowledge of the Vedic texts (*bahusrutena*) one cannot know the supreme secret. In the *Chhāndogya* Śvetaketu studies the Vedas for full twelve years but still he fails to answer the queries of his father regarding the ultimate reality and of Pravāhaṇa Jaivali about five eschatological problems. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* Janaka, who had studied the Vedas, fails to answer the question regarding the fate of soul after death. It is thus apparent that though the Upanishads claimed themselves to be the end of the Vedas (*Vedānta*) and occasionally conceded their divine origin, actually they regarded the Vedas (that is the *Samhitās* and *Brāhmaṇas*) as quite inferior in comparison to themselves.

The Quintessence of the Philosophy of the Upanishads

The main contents of the principal Upanishads are philosophical speculations. Though the traditional view holds that all the Upanishads are revealed texts and teach the same doctrine, yet there are extremely wide differences in their interpretation. Firstly, the nature of the problems discussed in the Upanishads as well as the style of these texts make them liable to many interpretations. Secondly, all their doctrines are of no equal importance. Some are merely flashes

¹*Br. Upa.*, II.4.10.

²*Muṇḍaka*, I.1.4-5.

of thought; some are only adumbrated; some are merely mentioned; some are slightly elaborated and some are repeatedly discussed.

According to the most widely accepted view the Upanishads give the greatest emphasis on the idealistic monism or monistic idealism. The monistic ideas of the Upanishads developed out of the ideas found scattered in the Saṁhitās and the Brāhmaṇas. The philosophers of the Upanishads were earnestly interested in the enquiry into the nature and realization of ultimate reality that lies behind the world of creation. "What is the cause? Brahman? Whence are we born? Whereby do we live? And on what are we established? Overruled by whom in pains and pleasures do we live our various conditions, O ye theologians?"¹, the *Śvetāśvatara* asks. The Upanishadic thinkers expressed their ultimate finding in the identity of Ātman which is the individual self—and Brahman, the highest principle which expresses itself in the motley of creation (*śṛṣṭi*) and which receives all things back at the time of dissolution (*pralaya*).

The problem of identifying the self of man was an ancient one. In Greece Socrates had underlined the necessity of 'know Thyself'. In the Upanishads a frequently asked question is "What is the nature of the self or Ātman?" The conception of world-soul or Ātman developed from that of the world-man². In the *RV* the word Ātman meant life-breath. Many Brāhmaṇa texts interpret the Ātman in terms of body and it is quite obvious that Dehātmavāda was at one time the dominant view. Vedic ideas about the self, thus show a remarkably continuous progress from Dehātmavāda to Nirguṇ-ātmavāda or Anirvachanīya. The Upanishadic thinkers felt that the self of man can neither be the body or senses or the internal organs or psychic energy and nor can it be regarded as a mere by-product of matter. Sensations, feelings, conceptions, and other mental modifications have a finite and ephemeral nature only. The self as we know it in the waking and dream states is ever-changing and therefore it cannot be the real self. According to the *Māṇḍūkya Upanishad*³ the self in the waking state (*viśva*) enjoys gross objects while in the dreaming state (*taijasa*) it enjoys subtle objects. In the state of sound sleep (*prājña*) there is no object, neither gross nor subtle, and hence no subject; the subject-object duality is transcended. The

¹Hume, *Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, p. 394.

²*The Vedic Age*, p. 499.

³Cf. *CHI*, I, p. 357.

fourth state (*turīya*) of the self is a state of pure consciousness where, like the deep sleep, there is no subject-object duality, but unlike it there is enjoyment of positive bliss. It is an indescribable, unknowable transcendent state of absolute oneness¹. In this state the self shines in its own light as the ultimate subject without reducing itself to a mere abstraction. The method of determining the real nature of the Ātman after a critical review of its behaviour in the various states of walking, dreaming, etc. became quite favourite with the later Vedānta texts and is often used as the proof for establishing the *alīpta* or *nirguṇa* character of the Ātman.² According to the *Kaṭha Upanishad* objects are the roads, the body is the chariot, the senses are the horses, the mind is the reins, the intellect is the charioteer, the ego is the enjoyer and the Ātman is the Lord sitting in the chariot. Objects, senses, mind, intellect, reason—all exist for the self and serve its purpose. It is the self that is immanent in them and gives them life and meaning. But these cannot be identified with the self, for it transcends them all. This was the theme of the teaching imparted to Nachiketā by Yama. The self is immortal, self-proved and self-luminous and can only be directly realized by transcending the empirical subject-object duality.

In the *Chhāndogya* however the true nature of Ātman is explained not as the spirit that roams in dreams, not even as the soul in the profound dreamless sleep but as the immortal and intelligent spirit of man.³ In the same Upanishad a sage exclaims: "This my Ātman in my innermost heart is smaller than a grain of rice, or a barley corn, or a mustard seed, or a millet grain . . . This my Ātman in my innermost heart is greater than the earth, greater than the sky, greater than the heavens, greater than all spheres. In Him are all actions, all wishes, all smells, all tastes; He holds this All enclosed within Himself, . . . this my Ātman in my innermost heart is this Brahman. With Him, when I depart out of this life, shall I be united."⁴ The famous story of Uddālaka Āruṇi and his son Śvetaketu shows how in that age the knowledge of the Vedas, without learning the doctrine by which that which is unheard becomes heard, unthought becomes thought, unknown be-

¹See, Belvalkar, *loc. cit.*, p. 53.

²*Chhāndogya*, VII.7-12.

³See, Belvalkar, *loc. cit.*, p. 53.

⁴*Chhāndogya*, III.14 (*HIL*, I, p. 250).

comes known, was regarded as futile.¹

From the objective side the ultimate reality is called Brahman. Like the early philosophers of Greece the Vedic thinkers first postulated some primordial substance as the ultimate reality behind the external world. Some of them found the *arche* of all things in water, some in fire, some in air, and some in *ākāśa*. Some sought the origin of all things in an undifferentiated state or chaos, others in void, and still others in neither *sat* nor *asat*. Sometimes a number of these ideas were combined and a series of emanations constructed.² Usually a sentient principle or deity is accepted as creator. At first many gods or one god functioned as efficient causes, though during the Middle Vedic Age the idea of one deity definitely emerged. But gradually the creator ceased to be merely an efficient cause. In the *Chhândogya* Uddālaka Āruṇi tells Śvetaketu³ : “In the beginning there was being alone, one without a second. Out of that non-being did being arise. But how, indeed, could being arise out of non-being?” So the Upanishads are usually in favour of pantheism—creation being an evolution or manifestation or limitation of an original, unique and pure being that is Brahman.⁴

The word *Brahman* is derived from the root ‘*Bṛh*’ which means ‘to grow’ or ‘to evolve’. In the *RV* Brahma (neuter) meant sacrifice. In the oldest Brāhmaṇas it signifies ‘universal holiness’ as manifested in prayers, sacrifice and priest. From this it acquired its Upanishadic meaning of ultimate reality which evolves itself as this world. Brahman is that which spontaneously bursts forth as nature and soul. It is the ultimate cause of this universe. In the *Chhândogya*, it is described as ‘*Tajjalān*’—as that (*tat*) from which the world arises (*ja*), into which it returns (*la*), and by which it is supported and lives (*an*). In the *Taittirīya*, Brahman is defined as that from which all beings are born, by which they live, and into which they are re-absorbed. The empirical trinity of knower, known and knowledge has been fused into a transcendental unity of Brahman. This Brahman, the Supreme Reality,

¹For a detailed study of Advaitism of Uddālaka Āruṇi cf. Mishra, R. S., ‘The Integral Advaitism of Āruṇi as Expounded in the *Chândogya* Upaniṣad’, *Bhāratī*, 1961–62, pp. 106–134.

²Pande, G. C. in *History of the Punjab*, p. 102; *Origins*, p. 296.

³*Chhândogya*, VI.2.

⁴For the Upanishadic account of creation, see Belvalkar, *op. cit.*, p. 47 ff.

underlies and yet transcends all. Brahman is the self-luminous, the immortal, the support of all the worlds and the highest, leaving nothing beyond it. Matter is the body of Brahman; Brahman is the soul of matter. The individual souls are its body; it is their soul.¹

Thus we observe that the same reality is called from the subjective side as 'Ātman' and from the objective side as 'Brahman'. The two terms are used as synonyms. The Absolute of the Upanishads manifests itself as the subject as well as the object and transcends them both. In expounding the Upanishadic view the *Brahmasūtras* (1.1.2) begin by declaring that Brahman is that from which the universe proceeds, in which it has its being and to which it returns (*janmādyasya yataḥ*). After thus defining Brahman, the *Sūtras* distinguish it from the Prakṛti of the Sāṅkhya by pointing out that Brahman is sentient while Prakṛti is insentient. The Universe has no identity of being apart from the spirit. This is the doctrine of Brahṁādvaita or Ātmādvaita.² This identity of the subject and the object in a transcendental principle was the crowning achievement of Upanishadic philosophy. It was arrived at by the Upanishadic sages centuries before Hegel and at least a couple of centuries before Plato. To quote Deussen: "It was here that for the first time the original thinkers of the Upanishads, to their immortal honour, found it when they recognized our Ātman, our inmost individual being, as the Brahman, the inmost being of universal nature and of all her phenomena."³ If one single doctrine were to be selected from the old Upanishads as representing the quintessence of their philosophy, it would be 'that thou art' (*tat tvam asi*). The great sayings (*mahāvākyas*) of the Upanishads are: 'I am Brahman', 'Ātman is Brahman', 'I am that', 'I am the non-dual Bliss', etc. The individual self is not individual, but universal.

The doctrine of Brahṁādvaita was beset with many difficulties. How can plurality emerge out of a pure unity? If Brahman alone is real, can the creation of the plural world be also real? The Upanishads contain many utterances relevant to such questions but they are not always logical. Sometimes they speak of a real creation like a spider producing a web out of it. Elsewhere they declare that Brahman alone is real, everything else is simply name and

¹Venkatarama, M. K. Iyer, 'The Grandest Discovery of the Upanishads', *Vedānta Kesari*, LII, No. 2., pp. 112-16.

²Pande, in *History of the Punjab*, p. 103.

³*The Vedic Age*, p. 499.

form.¹ That is why by knowing Brahman everything is known. Just as when clay is known, everything made out of clay becomes known (for it is only 'name and form', the reality being only clay) similarly when Brahman, the ultimate cause, is known everything being a mere effect becomes known (for the effects are only names and forms, the reality is Brahman alone). The empirical and negative description of the Absolute by means of *neti neti* (not this, not this) negates all descriptions about Brahman, but not Brahman itself.² This diversity of views in the Upanishads produced a variety of interpretations in later times and led to the rise of different Vedāntic schools though it cannot be denied that the main Upanishadic tendency was in favour of *advaita* or monism. Some scholars believe that the doctrine of *Māyā* or *Avidyā* was borrowed by Śaṅkara from Buddhism; some others maintain that it was a fabrication of the fertile brain of Śaṅkara. Both these views are not tenable. The fact is that the theory of *Māyā* is present in the Upanishads themselves; Śaṅkara only elaborated it.

Religion of the Upanishads

The Upanishadic philosophy is rightly regarded as the source of all Indian philosophy. According to Bloomfield, "There is no important form of Hindu thought, heterodox Buddhism included, which is not rooted in the Upanishads." Radhakrishnan says: "Later systems of philosophy display an anxiety to accommodate their doctrines to the views of the Upanishads." According to Deussen the Upanishadic *ṛshis* have thrown, "if not the most scientific, yet still the most intimate and immediate light upon the last secret of existence" and that there are in them "philosophical conceptions unequalled in India or perhaps anywhere else in the world". Schopenhauer declared "the Upanishadic philosophy has been the solace of my life and it will be the solace of my death". The *Brahmasūtra* claims to be an aphoristic summary of the Upanishads. The *Gītā* was regarded the milk milked out of the Upanishad-cows and is particularly influenced by the *Kaṭha* and the *Īśa*. The various *āchāryas* of Vedānta—Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Nimbārka, Madhva and Vallabha—regarded the Upanishads as the first *Prasthāna* and interpreted them in such a way as to make them suit

¹Pande, *op. cit.*

²Cf. Blackwood, R. T., 'Neti, Neti—Epistemological Problems of Mystical Experience', *Philosophy: East and West*, XIII, No. 3, pp. 201-9.

their own respective theories. Jainism derived its idealism from the Upanishads. Buddhism derived its idealism, monism, absolutism and the theory of momentariness of all worldly things, the theory of distinction between the empirical and the absolute standpoints, and the theory that Nirvāṇa can be attained by right knowledge alone, from the Upanishads. Sāṅkhya derived from them the doctrine of Prakṛti (from the *Śvetāśvatara*), the theory of the three guṇas (probably from the three colours in the *Chhāndogya*), the doctrine of puruṣa, the theory of the relation of mind, intellect and soul (from the *Kaṭha*) and the doctrine of *Liṅgaśarīra* (from the *Praśna*). Yoga is mainly based on the *Śvetāśvatara*. Thus the Upanishads contributed something or other to the evolution of almost every philosophical system of India.

In the Upanishads Brahman is described in two ways. It is called cosmic, all-comprehensive, full of all good qualities—*Saprapaṅcha*, *Saguna* and *Saviśeṣa*. And it is also called acosmic, qualityless, indeterminate, indescribable—*Nishprapaṅcha*, *Nirguna*, *Nirviśeṣa* and *Anirvachanīya*. This distinction is the basis of the famous distinction made by Śāṅkarāchārya between God and the Absolute. The former is called lower Brahman (*apara Brahman*) or *Īśvara*, and the latter higher Brahman (*para Brahman*) or the Absolute. God is the personal aspect of the Absolute and the Absolute is the impersonal aspect of God. But Rāmānuja has opposed this distinction. To him the Absolute is the personal and the immanent God, and matter and selves alike form His real body.

In any case, at the religious level the Upanishads usually advocate monotheism, the worship of one god—the *tadvanam* in the *Kena*¹ and the *tajjalān* in the *Chhāndogya*. In some Upanishadic texts the cosmological argument for the existence of God as creator is found; there are also some incipient references to the ontological argument for theism. The monotheistic idea of the Upanishads arose from the very nature of the early Vedic gods. It appears to have developed first into the notion of a primordial person who created the universe. Several sūktas of the *Rgveda Samhitā* attest to this. Already in the 10th maṇḍala of the *Rgveda* the idea of one God, creator of the universe, is clearly expressed. According to the *Nāsadiya Sūkta* the many gods, so many regulative forces of Nature, are posterior to creation, while the one God is its source.

¹*Kena Upa.*, 31.

He alone knows and supervises it. According to the Purusha Sūkta the whole cosmos is nothing but a part of the body of Purusha. In the Brāhmaṇas the idea of Prajāpati, Hiranyagarbha and Viśvakarman finds frequent mention. In the Upanishads the multiplicity of the gods is traced to a single principle, *prāṇa*, which seems to stand for the dynamic power of the cosmos and is inseparable from Ātman or Purusha as the ultimate sentient principle. The *devatās* are nothing but the prāṇic functionaries and limited aspects of the Divine. Later on the *Gītā* declared that "even those devotees who, endowed with faith, worship other gods, they too worship Me alone though not in accordance with *vidhi* (rules)."¹ The *Kenopaniśhad* explicitly asserts that Brahman is the power behind the gods. Without His aid Agni cannot burn a blade of grass, nor can Vāyu move it. The *Īśāvāsya* declares that the whole world is dwelt by God who is the innermost as well as the outermost of all principles. The *Kaṭha* declares that Ātman can be attained only by His own grace, and again, that the Supreme person, lying beyond all principles, is still concealed in everything. In the *Muṇḍaka Upa.* also there is reference to supreme personal god.

The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* contains the famous dialogue between Vidagdha Śākalya and Yājñavalkya where the former asks the latter: "Yājñavalkya, how many are the gods?" The answer given is: "Three hundred and three, three thousand and three". When the question is repeatedly asked the number of the gods is gradually reduced to thirty-three, six, three, two, one and a half and, finally, one². It is then explained by Yājñavalkya that the large figure mentioned first is simply the glorification of thirty-three gods, namely eight Vasus, eleven Rudras, twelve Ādityas, Indra and Prajāpati. The six gods are Agni, Pṛthivī, Vāyu, Antariksha, Āditya and Dyaus. The three are three worlds. The two are Anna and Prāṇa. The 'one and a half' god is the wind that blows. The one god is Prāṇa, that is Brahman.³

The highest development of Upanishadic theism is reached in the *Śvetāśvatara*. It declares that the ultimate principle is neither Time, nor Nature, nor Destiny, nor Chance, nor Matter, nor the individual soul and nor their combination. The ultimate principle is God (*Īsa, Deva*) whose power is inscrutable and who is accessible

¹*Gītā*, IX.23.

²*Br. Upa.*, 3.9.

³Pande, in *History of the Punjab*, p. 97.

only through *dhyāna yoga*. He not only creates the Universe but gives deliverance from sin and suffering by bestowing grace (*prasāda*) in response to supreme devotion (*parā bhakti*; VI.23). The Lord is called Rudra-Śiva and Maheśvara here and Viṣṇu in the *Kaṭha*.

Here it may be noted that the Upanishadic monotheism tended to undermine the popular foundation of Vedic religion. Now the various *devalokas* were subordinated to the psychic Brahmaloḥa. It was in line with their general attitude to the cult of sacrifice and the authority of the Saṁhitā and Brāhmaṇa texts as sources of divine knowledge. However, the Upanishadic thinkers, despite their main emphasis on *dhyāna yoga* or meditation tended to strengthen the devotional aspect of theism which is found only in latent form in the Saṁhitās and the Brāhmaṇas but became the dominant element in Indian religions of the post-Vedic age. Actually as we will see in detail in the chapter dealing with the rise and growth of devotional sects, the germs of Bhakti are traceable even in the *RV*.¹ In the Upanishads the idea of Bhakti becomes clearer. Bhandarkar² long ago pointed out that the idea of Bhakti may be traced to the Upanishadic concept of *upāsana* (fervent meditation) itself which cannot but magnify the being meditated upon and gives it a glorious form so as to excite love and admiration. He also pointed out to the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* in which the Ātman is described as dearer than a son, wealth and everything. This approach is quite nearer to the idea of Bhakti—only a personal god is substituted by impersonal Ātman. Thus the Upanishads prepared the background for the rise of the later devotional worship.

The Upanishads also prepared the background for the rise of sectarian cults. For example the existence of the cult with Rudra as some sort of sectarian god is clearly traceable in the *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad*.³ At one place it describes Rudra as the Great God (Maheśvara) among gods (Īśvaras) and as supreme deity (*parama devatā*) among gods (*devatānām*) and also as the creator of Brahmā.⁴ It is also said that Rudra presented the Vedas to Brahmā.⁴ It suggests, if not proves, that in the days of the *Śvetāśvatara*

¹Cf. Sircar, 'Antiquity of the Bhakti Cult', *The Bhakti Cult and Ancient Indian Geography*, p. 36 ff.

²Cf. *infra*, the discussion on the origin of Bhakti.

³*Śvetāśvatara*, VI.7.

⁴*Ibid.*, VI.18.

Upanishad Rudra was regarded as the greatest god by a class of his sectarian devotees.

However, it must be remembered that the Upanishads always keep theism subordinate to absolutism. According to Radhakrishnan dualism between man and God is viewed with an amount of metaphysical disfavour. S. N. Dasgupta has also shown that if the fundamental notion of the Upanishads is to explain the many as some kind of illusion and to hold that the one alone is real, it becomes difficult to accommodate any theism. It is true that we find in the Upanishads references to principles which are theistic in nature, but all discussion in these texts ultimately winds up with the note that the conception of reality as an undifferentiated unity is the highest; all else is a fall from it. Therefore theism has only a secondary place in the Upanishadic thought.¹

Other Aspects of the Upanishadic Thought

The Upanishadic thought is important for the development of *mysticism* also. The traces of mysticism are traceable even in the *Rgveda*. The Vedic seers realized the divine truth in the form of *mantras* as a matter of mystical experience. The fourth maṇḍala of the *RV* contains a legend about Vāmadeva according to which he was endowed with knowledge even when he was in the womb of his mother. It has been suggested that the sage must have had some mystical experience which raised him above the level of the masses.²

The appeal of the Upanishads also lies in categorically defining the nature of truth, rather than establishing it in terms of logic. But the absence of logic does not minimize their value, for human soul in pursuit of truth transcends conceptual thinking. Long before Plato, Yājñavalkya anticipated the importance of intuition. As observed by Radhakrishnan, "Spiritual things require to be spiritually discerned . . . Man has the faculty of divine insight or mystic intuition by which he transcends the distinctions of intellect and solves the riddles of reason. The chosen spirits scale the highest peak of thought and scale the reality."³ By this intuitive

¹Cf. Mookerjee, S., 'The place of Theism in the Upanishads', *Nagpur University Journal*, XV, No. 1, p. 76 ff.

²Rahurkar, V.G., 'Vāmadeva's Contribution to Vedic Mysticism', *Vishveshvaranand Indological Journal*, I, No. 2, pp. 267-74.

³Radhakrishnan, S., *Indian Philosophy*, I, p. 176.

realization "the unheard becomes heard, the unperceived becomes perceived, and the unknown becomes known."

But intuition has different phases or stages since it does not always arise from the same part of our being. Generally spiritual experiences are classified into (a) the experience of the Absolute and (b) the experience of the Cosmic Unity. But as pointed out by Mohendranath Sircar these are supra-mental and supra-sensational experiences. They represent mystical experiences of higher order. Besides these mystical experiences the Upanishads also take into account vital and psychic intuitions. We find therefore different kinds of *upāsanā* meditations, prescribed in the Upanishads.¹

The Upanishadic *upāsanā* purport aimed at engendering higher mental attitudes with regard to daily activities, social conducts and religious preoccupations. This aspect of inner transformation was worked out in detail mainly by the Kṛishṇa-yajñischoolers.² Literally the term *upāsanā* means "sitting near" or "approaching an ideal mentally". According to the *Śrīāntarāra upāsanā* it is a kind of mental process relating to the Saguna Brahman.³ But this definition is not comprehensive enough, for in the Upanishads we have not only *Brahma-upāsanā* but also *īdābrahma-upāsanā*. In the *Ṛitūddāra-upāsanā* in the well-known meditation on the five fires *pañcāgni* *śivā* the whole world is thought of as a group of factors in a cosmic sacrifice. In the *Chāndīogya* is found the beautiful conception of meditation on life as sacrifice.

According to Sankara the object of meditation may be any object or any deity or Brahman. Besides, it is mental process and aims at a knowledge of the object through identification.⁴ According to the *Pañchānāṁ* (X, 74-82, "knowledge is determined by object but *upāsanā* is dependent on the subject". The *Pañchānāṁ* also emphasizes the element of faith in meditation. Knowledge does not presuppose any faith. Sometimes *nidāh-upāsanā* is regarded as identical with *upāsanā* but Suresvara in his *Tratīka* has shown that *nidāh-upāsanā* is not ordinary meditation; it is meditation on a

¹ *Chāndīogya*, VIII, 37. *Upan.*, II, 45.

² *CSL*, I, p. 367, cf. Chaudhary, K. P. S., "Vedā Mysticism", *Upanishadic Quarterly*, XXX, No. 1, pp. 37-48.

³ Swami Gambhīrananda, "Upanishadic Meditation", *CSL*, I, p. 378.

⁴ Quoted in *CSL*, I, p. 377.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 378.

very high order which falls just short of direct realization of self.¹

The Upanishads have for their ideal the becoming one with God. Whatever *ethics* we have in these texts is subsidiary to this goal. Duty is a means to the end of highest perfection.² It is often argued that Upanishadic philosophy precludes the possibility of the development of ethics. If all is one how can we have moral relations? If man is divine by nature where is the room for ethical endeavour? According to Deussen when the knowledge of Ātman is gained every moral action is bound to be deprived of meaning.³ But as argued by Radhakrishnan the sense of other-ness and multiplicity essential for ethical life is allowed by the Upanishads. Further, God in man is present as potential or a possibility. That is why Upanishadic ideal of ethics is self-realization. The Upanishads insist on the inwardness of morality and attach great importance to motive in conduct. They give us a code of duties without which the moral ideal will be an uncertain guide. Restraint, truthfulness, right dealing, non-injury, liberality, and mercy are virtues to be cultivated. Ascetic morality has been praised at various places.⁴

Upanishads as Link between Vedism and Śramaṇism

The Upanishads on the one hand present a natural development of Vedic thought and on the other 'a half turn' towards Śramaṇic asceticism.⁵ The Upanishadic doctrines in the main represent a continuation and development of Middle Vedic religion but when we suddenly come across at places with belief in transmigration and emphasis on the fundamental values of asceticism, it becomes obvious that here we have to do with Śramaṇa influence.⁶ For example the second *adhyāya* of the *Chhāndogya* men-

¹*Ibid.*

²Radhakrishnan, *op. cit.*, pp. 201-9.

³Deussen, *Philosophy of the Upanishads*, p. 362.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 210 ff. For a detailed study of the Upanishadic morality vide S. P. Singh, 'Ethics of the Upanishads', *Magadha University Journal*, Gaya, I, No. 1, pp. 26-37; S. Shridevi, 'Ethical Thoughts in the Upanishads', *Indian Journal of Parapsychology*, I, No. 1, pp. 14-20.

⁵Pande, G. C., *Śramaṇa Tradition, its History and Contribution to Indian Culture*, p. 4.

⁶For the antiquity of Śramaṇism see *supra*, p. 95 ff. Also see Jain, Bhagchandra, 'The Antiquity of Śramaṇa Cult', *World Buddhism*, XV, No. 1, pp. 3-6.

tions that there are three sections of dharma—sacrifice, sacred study and liberality and identifies them respectively with tapas, brahmacharya and total gifting to the preceptor. Of these the first two remind one of Śramaṇism. In the fourth *adhyāya* it is said that one who knows Brahman does not really care for wordly things and that human life is full of desires, transgressions and diseases, and so death is no worse. Further it mentions a Devapatha or Brahmopatha. Those who follow it do not return to the human whirlpool. According to G. C. Pande it is obviously a reference to the doctrine of Rebirth¹ which is here related with sin and ignorance. In the seventh *adhyāya* of this text Nārada declares that he is suffering misery from which he seeks deliverance through self-knowledge. Here *brahma jijñāsā* is connected with sorrowfulness of life. In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* when Yājñavalkya is about to leave home life, he is made to declare that the quest for immortality (*amṛtatva*) is different from the quest for wealth (*viitta*). Spiritual life leads to an end where all dualistic consciousness is lost. The psyche dies with body; only the 'great being' (*mahābhūtam*) remains. This remarkably anticipates the doctrine of Nirvāṇa as understood by the Viyñānavādin Buddhists.²

A significant Śramaṇic doctrine was the doctrine of Rebirth or Transmigration (*Samsāra*) in accordance with the law of Karman. The doctrine of Karman implies that whatever action is done by the individual leaves behind it some sort of potency which has the power to ordain for him joy or sorrow in future according as it is good or bad. When combined with the doctrine of Rebirth, it implied that when the traits of actions are such that they cannot be enjoyed in this life, one has to take another birth in order to enjoy them. The act passes away as soon as it is done, but its moral effect is treasured in potency which fructifies in future.³ Some scholars have seen the origin of the doctrine of Rebirth in accordance with Karman in the eschatological speculations of the Brāhmaṇas. This has rightly been questioned. There are absolutely

¹Pande, G. C., *op. cit.*, p. 7.

²*Ibid*, p. 10.

³For a detailed history of the doctrine of Karma in the Vedic age, vide S. P. Duby, 'The Concept of Karama in the Vedic Literature', *Bhārati*, 1963-64, p. 105 ff. For a psychological justification of the doctrine of Rebirth see Banerjee, H. N. 'The Concept of Rebirth in Indian Tradition', *Indian Journal of Parapsychology*, VI, No. 3, pp. 49-71.

no traces of the doctrine of transmigration in the *RV*. In the *RV* focus of attention was on earthly life, the world of the dead being regarded as merely shadowy. While operation of a moral law or *ṛta* in the universe was recognized, it was regarded as dependent on the will of gods who enforced it and the will of men who recognized it and sought to follow it. As regards the *Brāhmaṇas* it is true, as Keith has pointed out, that in these texts the notion of *punarṁṛtyu* or death in the afterworld is found.¹ But, as has been shown by M. Chakravarti, the usual attitude of the *Brāhmaṇas* towards afterlife does not assume a belief in the doctrine of *Samsāra*, the recurring cycle of death and birth. In the *Brāhmaṇas* the sacrificer is reborn after death into the midst of gods and enjoys an immortal existence imagined after the manner of the worldly life.² On the other hand, as argued by Prof. G. C. Pande, the doctrine of transmigration presupposes a belief in an immortal conscious principle (*ātman*), recognition of the law of Karman and a deep-seated urge for Mukti. The doctrines of Karman and Rebirth have been called primitive ideas or original Vedic ideas or ideas which developed gradually within the Vedic schools of thought. According to Prof. G. C. Pande however these ideas appear to have intruded into the Vedic thought from a pre-existing stream of non-Vedic ideology which was represented by the Munis and Śramaṇas (cf. Ch. 5, p. 91 ff.). By the Later Vedic Age the Vedic thinkers had become prepared to receive these ideas, and so we find some sudden references to them in the Upanishads. However from these references it is also clear that these ideas were new for them.³ For example in the symposium at the court of Janaka Ārtabhāga asks Yājñavalkya—what happens to man after death? To answer this Yājñavalkya took Ārtabhāga aside and taught him the doctrine of Karman. It suggests that at that time the doctrine of Rebirth in accordance with Karman was regarded as a strange, even secret, doctrine in the Brāhmaṇical circles.

However the acceptance of the doctrines of *Samsāra* and Karman caused a veritable spiritual revolution in the Vedic society. The early Vedic religion was life-affirmation; the post-Vedic attitude is much more of life-negation or *nivṛtti*. This change came about

¹Keith, A. B., *Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas and Upanishads*, p. 5.

²Chakravarti, Moni, 'Metempsychosis in the Saṁhitās and Brāhmaṇas of the *Rgveda*', *ABORI*, XLII, 1961, pp. 155-62.

³Pande, G. C., *Origins*, p. 286 f.; *Śramaṇa Tradition*, pp. 12-13.

mainly through the change in the conception of life which the doctrines of Samsāra and Karman implied. If the moral quality of an action is the sole and irrevocable determinant of future, man becomes the arbiter of his destiny and priests and sacrifices cease to be indispensable. Bound by this law even gods become no more than the souls born in a certain station. Explaining the philosophy of Karman Yājñavalkya states: "According as one acts, according as one conducts himself, so does he become, the doer of good becomes good, the doer of evil becomes evil. Desire is the source of Samsāra. In its absence even Karman does not bind." This is a typically Buddhist doctrine, also supported by the doctrine of nishkāma action of the *Gītā*.

That Yājñavalkya was fully aware of Munis, Śramaṇas and their ideology also becomes obvious from his dialogue with Janaka. In it the former, while explaining what may lead to Vimoksha, speaks of a state of deep sleep where a Chāṇḍāla is not a Chāṇḍāla, a Paulkasa is not a Paulkasa, a Śramaṇa is not a Śramaṇa and a Tāpasa is not a Tāpasa. Elsewhere he says that the Brāhmaṇas, the Munis and Parivrājakas all seek emancipation of soul from the round of birth and death through non-desiring (*atha akāmaya-mānah*). The Brāhmaṇas seek it through reciting the Vedas, sacrifice and liberality and the Muni-Parivrajakas through austerities and fasting. These references to Munis and Śramaṇas and the doctrines of Rebirth and Karman show that Yājñavalkya was conversant with the Śramaṇa doctrines and was influenced by them though his theistic affiliations clearly distinguish his philosophy from Śramaṇism.¹

The acquaintance with the doctrine of Samsāra becomes clearer in the metrical Upanishads. The second *adhyāya* of the *Kaṭha* mentions Munis directly and describes the process of human bondage and liberation. "When all desires of heart are removed then the mortal becomes immortal and attains Brahman here." According to G. C. Pande it suggests the possibility of jīvanmukti or Arhathood.

The greatest influence of Śramaṇism is found in the *Munḍaka Upanishad*, the very name of which suggests the influence of the Śramaṇas. It condemns sacrifices as 'frail boats' and declares that those who follow the ritualistic path and engage in charitable

¹Pande, *Śramaṇa Tradition*, p. 16.

works cannot become free from the cycle of death and birth. This Upanishad also refers to bhikshācharyā and also to Yatis who abandoned inner evils and practised truth, tapas, brahmacharya and right knowledge (*samyaka jñāna*). The *Īsopanishad* discusses the contradiction between the traditional Vedic philosophy of action, ritual and moral, and the Śramanic philosophy of renunciation. Like the *Gītā*, it reaches the conclusion that if action is done with the spirit of dedication and a sense of the presence of God, it does not bind the doer—*na karma lipyate nare*. Indeed action must not be abandoned; one should always remain engaged in action.

However it should be kept in mind that though the Upanishads are generally aware of the doctrines of rebirth in accordance with one's actions and renunciation, it cannot be maintained that these texts as a whole advocate other-worldly ideology. According to Prof. Pande, "The prevailing doctrine in the Upanishads is a manifestation of divine being and energy. The many gods of the earlier period were no doubt merged into one Great Being identified with the Self but the result was a spiritual view of the universe where . . . every finite object is nothing but a limited expression of Brahman. Creation and manifestation are held to be real, not illusory. It is true that occasional utterances denying duality or asserting unreality of Name and Form can be quoted on the other side. But . . . the realistic interpretation appears to be the correct one."¹ Thus it would seem that though the Upanishads give evidence of gradually increasing impact of Śramanic ideology, but their main emphasis was still on positive, active and robust outlook on life seeking a higher reality behind what we see.²

Problem of the Origin of Āśrama Institution

But the impact of the ascetic tendencies on the Vedic society in the Upanishadic age does not necessarily mean that the sannyāsa āśrama had become institutionalized in that early period. The scheme of the four stages or āśramas of an individual's life is regarded as an important feature of ancient Hinduism. Literally the word āśrama means 'a hermitage' or 'resting place', but technically it means a stage in the life of a Hindu. The scheme of four āśramas was essentially socio-religious in nature. It recognised four stages,

¹Pande, *Śramaṇa Tradition*, p. 21.

²*Ibid.*, p. 22.

namely, *brahmacharya* (the stage of a student of the Vedas), *gṛhastha* (the stage of a householder), *vānaprastha* (the stage of a hermit) and *sannyāsa* (the stage of an abandoner of all worldly concerns).¹ Some early scholars including Max Müller, Bühler and Jacobi believed that asceticism arose in the Vedic society itself. Jacobi has suggested that the Brāhmaṇa ascetic supplied the common prototype which was copied by the Buddhists as well as the Jainas. In support of this view it is argued that both the Jaina and the Buddhist rules of discipline for the mendicant resemble those found in the law-books of Gautama and Baudhāyana. But the weakness of this theory has been shown by S. K. Dutt and G. C. Pande². As argued by Pande the aforesaid resemblances consist in the main of rules of a very general character. The first four great vows of the Sannyāsin, for instance, may be said to belong to the universal repertoire of asceticism. In other words, if there was borrowing, it was not so much of particular regulations as of the ideal of the ascetic. Secondly, the word 'āśrama' does not occur in the Saṁhitās or the Brāhmaṇas. According to Kane also there is nothing in the Vedic literature expressly corresponding to the Vānaprastha³. The term āśrama itself is not very old. Its earliest use is found in the expression '*atyāśramibhyaḥ*' which occurs in *Śvetāśvatara Upa.* (VI.21). But according to Pande this expression seems to imply that mendicancy was as yet beyond the ken of the āśramas.⁴ According to Kane perhaps the earliest reference to the four āśramas occurs in a passage of the *Ait. Br.* (33.1) which states "What use is there of dirt, what use of antelope skin, what use of tapas? O Brāhmaṇa, desire a son; he is a world to be highly praised." But to find here a reference to the four āśramas appears quite speculative. Kane admits that even in the much clearer reference of the *Chhāndogya* (II.23.1) there was as yet no clear distinction between the third and the fourth āśramas. Some Upanishadic references discussed above undoubtedly show acquaintance with mendicancy, though it is doubtful if they imply a scheme of the four āśramas. As regards the Dharmasūtras, they are of uncertain date and even the supposedly oldest of them, Gautama and

¹Cf. Joshi, L. M., in *History of the Punjab*, p. 158.

²Dutt, S.K., *Early Buddhist Monachism*, p. 39 ff; Pande, *Origins*, pp. 322-24; cf. also Joshi, L. M., *op. cit.*, pp. 158-165.

³Kane, *History of Dharmasāstra*, II, Pt. I, p. 418.

⁴Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 322.

Baudhāyana, appear to be, in their present shape, works of a composite nature. According to Hopkins, the Sūtras cannot be earlier than the seventh and later than the second century B.C. It does not therefore appear to be safe to assume that the theories accepted in these works were well-established dogmas in the Brāhmaṇa circles prior to the 6th century B.C. when the Jainas were already an old and respected sect. It should also be remembered that the Brāhmaṇa society itself was opposed to the fourth āśrama (cf. *supra*, p. 102 f.). The whole sacrificial tradition with its material values was anti-asceticism. The passage of the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* quoted above is a good description of the values cherished by the Vedic society. It is true that in some early Upanishads a 'half turn' is found towards the ascetic ideal (*supra*), but even in them the main emphasis is on positive, active and robust outlook on life.¹ And "it may not be without significance that the Upaniṣad most vociferous in the denunciation of sacrifice and the advocacy of the 'Fourth Āśrama' is entitled the 'Upaniṣad of the Muṇḍakas'"². The fact that the theory of the four āśramas was not yet a finally settled theory in the age of the Dharmasūtras is obvious from the irregularity of the nomenclature adopted by them in this respect. Āpastamba speaks of gṛhastha, āchāryakula, mauna and vānaprastha. Gautama has brahmachārī, gṛhastha, bhikshu and vaikhānasa, while Vasishṭha and Baudhāyana speak of brahmachārī, gṛhastha, vānaprastha and parivrājaka³. According to Pande, originally the āśramas recognised in the Vedic tradition were the first two. Later on, possibly with the dawn of the age of the Upāsanās, the practice of repairing to the forests came into vogue which in course of time grew into a veritable institution⁴. All the while, outside the strictly Vedic pale, were wandering groups of ascetics, sometimes styled the Munis (see p. 93 ff.). When towards the close of the Upanishadic Age Brāhmaṇic values underwent a change and some sections within the Vedic society tended to accept the pessimistic world-view which the doctrine of saṃsāra entails, the institution of the fourth āśrama, namely sannyāsa, was postulated. In other words, the ideal of the

¹Pande, *Śramaṇa Tradition*, p. 22.

²Pande, *Origins*, p. 325.

³For the evolution of the āśrama theory in the Dharmasāstras, see Haripada Chakraborty, *Asceticism in Ancient India*, pp. 50-82.

⁴Pande, *Origins*, p. 326; cf. also Joshi, L. M., *Brāhmaṇism, Buddhism and Hinduism*, 1970, p. 45 ff.

ascetic appears to have come down to the Jainas and the Buddhists, not from the Brāhmanas but from the previously existing muni-
 samana sects. Further, it should also be conceded that the accep-
 tance of the ascetic idea in the Vedic society in the form of
 samnyāsa, āśrama, took place in the post-Upanishadic period though
 ascetic tendencies were recognised even in the Upanishads them-
 selves.

Chapter 7

Non-Buddhist and Non-Jaina Religio-Philosophical Sects of the Sixth-Fifth Centuries B.C.

The Thought-Ferment and its Causes

The period of the sixth-fifth centuries B.C. is regarded as “an age of far reaching religious reforming activity over the whole of the ancient world.”¹ In China, Greece and Iran as well as India there is found a remarkable intellectual and religious upheaval in this age. Fortunately, for India we have several independent testimonia—Buddhist, Jaina, Brāhmaṇical—which were clearly and critically set forth by Otto Schrader in 1902² and then in a more elaborate form by B. M. Barua in his classic work *Pre-Buddhist Indian Philosophy*. The factors which led to this ‘thought-ferment’, as S. K. Belvalkar has named it,³ are not easy to identify. The materialist historiographers such as Gordon Childe attribute it to a change in social being, while idealist historiographers like Bury find in it the progress of thought through its autonomous dialectics.⁴

As far as India is concerned it cannot be denied that important changes did take place in society in the age of the Buddha and the centuries preceding and succeeding it. By the close of the Vedic Age, the period of tribal ‘migrations’ was over, the age of money-economy and iron had dawned, the Second Urban Revolution had led to the growth of towns and commerce, the development of trade had resulted in the emergence of a class of fabulously rich merchants, and organisation of crafts into guilds had made an

¹Cambridge Ancient History, III, p. 499.

²Quoted by S. K. Belvalkar in *Gopal Basu Mallik Lectures on Vedānta Philosophy*, p. 84.

³*Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁴Cf. Pande, *Origins*, p. 310 f.

impact on the caste system. All these changes on the one hand awakened the spirit of enquiry and, on the other, made the sense of social distress more acute. But as pointed out by Prof. G. C. Pande social crisis "only indicates the need for fresh thinking without determining its nature. Social change is an occasion rather than a cause of spiritual change providing its antecedent rather than logical reference."¹

Some scholars find in the religious movements of the age of the Buddha a class affiliation and a revolt of the Kshatriyas against the Brāhmaṇas.² The facts that Jainism and Buddhism, the two most important religions of the period, were propounded by two Kshatriya princes and that they gave emphasis on the superiority of the Kshatriyas over Brāhmaṇas in their teachings lend colour to the theory. But as we have seen in the preceding chapter, the Kshatriyas were taking interest in religio-philosophical pursuits even in the Upanishadic age. In the fourth chapter of the *Gītā* (verses 1-2) there is a reference to the yoga tradition of the *rājaṛshis*. Then there are explicit references to the Brāhmaṇas joining the various non-Vedic or Śramaṇic orders. It is also not correct to attribute this intellectual activity only to the Śramaṇas as some have done,³ for the rise and growth of orthodox devotional schools of thought in this period, discussed in other chapters, were also to some extent the result of this thought-ferment.

Philosophies of the Age

In the age of the Buddha '*kammavāda*' and '*kiriyaivāda*' with their diametrical opposites '*akammavāda*' and '*akiriyaivāda*' seem to have been the most discussed problems. Both the Jainas and the Buddhists claim to have been believers in *kammavāda* and *kiriyaivāda*. According to B. C. Law there is no difference between '*kiriyaivāda*' and '*karmavāda*' and both denote the doctrine of action.⁴ But it is more likely that some difference was maintained between the two terms.⁵ Roughly these terms signified that the miseries of man are not caused by Time, Destiny, Chance or Soul but by his own actions, because human actions contain a binding moral force the

¹*Ibid.*, p. 311.

²Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, pp. 138-43; *The Vedic Age*, pp. 468-69.

³Mishra, G. S. P., *The Age of Vinaya*, p. 36.

⁴B. C. Law, *Indological Studies*, II, p. 285.

⁵Mishra, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

results of which cannot be escaped. This doctrine was thus opposed to 'Sassatavāda' (that is, the doctrine that the ultimate reality is *sāsvata* or eternal) and 'Adhichhasamuppāda' (that is, the hypothesis of fortuitous origin) both leading to the conclusion that no action can be called moral or immoral, for, either it does not occasion any change or it is not a free act. In the *Mahāvagga* Nigaṅṭha nāṭaputta calls Buddha a believer in *akiriyavāda*. Sometimes this passage is dismissed as having no import and occasioned only for the sake of accusation. But, as pointed out by G. S. P. Mishra, the accusation becomes clear if we take notice of the distinction between the conception and definition of action (*kiriya* or *kamma*) put forward by the two. According to the Jainas, who stressed the physical nature of action, every action is bound to bring about a result which has a bearing on what a man becomes. For example if a man commits an act of *hiṃsā* it will necessarily procure sin for him. It is immaterial whether he does it knowingly or unknowingly. On the other hand, the Buddha emphasized the psychological aspect of human action. According to him, an action was no action unless it was accompanied by will and consciousness and, for that reason, man was not affected by the results of those actions which were not intentional. As the Jainas did not accept this position Nigaṅṭha nāṭaputta accused Buddha of *akiriyavāda*.¹

Beside *akiriyavāda*, *uchchhedavāda* was equally despised by the Buddhists and the Jainas. It was a materialistic-nihilistic approach towards ethical and cosmological problems. The fundamental point of this philosophy was that nothing but what is corporeal is real. Soul is not something distinct from the body and that there remains no soul, no life, no *kamma* after the disintegration of the bodily components. With death everything is annihilated (*uchchheda*).

Among other philosophical theories of the age of the Buddha reference may be made to *Kālavāda*. It is referred to in the *Atharvaveda* and the *Mahābhārata* also. "Struck by irresistible tragedy of time and impressed with a sense of Fatalism one spoke of time with awe and in superlatives."² *Svabhāvavāda* seems to have had a point of contact with Sāṅkhyan as well as Gosālian views discussed below. It recognised the theory of development through immanent

¹Mishra, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-7.

²Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 338.

forces but denied free will¹. *Niyativāda* believed in *niyati* or Necessity which may mean either a natural (causal) or supernatural (fatal) or moral (*karman*) or logical necessity.² Opposed to it was *yadṛcchhavāda* which denied the principle of causality itself.³

Two other ideologies, not exactly philosophies, of the period were *tapavāda* and *vinayavāda*. *Tapavāda* promised final liberation by practising severe penances, which involved great suffering and pain to the body. The idea was prevalent among the Brāhmaṇa ascetics as well as some non-Vedic ascetics like the Ājīvikas and Nigaṇṭhas. The Buddha, who preached the doctrine of the 'Middle Way', did not share this belief. *Vinayavāda* preached that in order to attain the human end, one should be regulated and guided by some fixed rules and actions. That is why the Buddha, Mahāvīra and other teachers of this age laid down codes of conduct for their followers.

As regards the nature of world and soul and the *summum bonum* of life, several philosophies were prevalent in the age of this period. These views have been mentioned or discussed in detail in several Buddhist and Jaina suttas and some early post-Upanishadic Brahmaṇa texts. But most of them have been dealt with in a systematic manner in the first discourse in the *Brahmajālasutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*. The problems discussed in this sutta are as follows:

1. Four kinds of *Sassatavādā* (Eternalists).
2. Four kinds of *Ekachhasassatavādā* (Partial Eternalists).
3. Four kinds of *Antānantikā* (Limitists and Unlimitists).
4. Four kinds of *Amarāvikkhepikā* (Evasive Disputants).
5. Two kinds of *Adhichhasamuppanikā* (Fortuitous Originists).
6. Sixteen kinds of *Saññivādā* (Upholders of Conscious Soul after death).
7. Eight kinds of *Asaññivādā* (Upholders of Unconscious Soul after death).
8. Eight kinds of *N'evasaññināsaññivādā* (Upholders of neither Conscious nor Unconscious Soul after death).
9. Seven kinds of *Uchchedavādā* (Annihilationists).
10. Five kinds of *Diṭṭhadhammanibbānavādā* (Believers in the attainment of Nibbāna in this life).

¹*Ibid.*, p. 339.

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*, p. 340.

All of these views¹ have been described in the Buddhist texts, both Hīnayānist and Mahāyānist, as wrong (*michchhādiṭṭhi*) and are attributed to people's desire to adhere to the heresy of individuality (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*) consisting in regarding the body or any particular element of it as soul.²

Regarding the object of the exposition of these problems into the Buddhist texts Buddhaghosha and later Mahāyānist scholars state that they were necessary for the exposition of Suññatā, by which Buddhaghosha meant only Puggalasūññatā while the Mahāyānists meant both Pudgalaśūnyatā and Dharmasūnyatā.³ According to some modern scholars however the object of the Sutta is to give a brief summary of the non-Buddhist doctrines prevalent in North India in the age of the Buddha. But according to N. Dutt the Sutta has no such presumption.⁴ He points out that the doctrines of the five heretical teachers and of Mahāvīra as also the philosophical views found in the Upanishads are beyond the purview of this Sutta. According to Dutt its main aim is to draw up a list of the possible theories about the world and soul that might haunt the minds of recluses (*samaṇa-brāhmaṇas*) who by means of intuition or meditation acquired certain powers but could not reach the highest state. "The so-called sixty-two views appear to be a systematic exposition of the experiences of a recluse or a thinker and have very little to do with the then existing opinions. There may be a few agreements between some of the sixty-two views and the philosophical tenets embodied in the Upanishads but that does not go to establish that the Sutta was composed with any reference to them, the causes of agreement being more or less accidental."⁵ According to G. C. Pande, however, though it "is unquestionable that the sutta under consideration owes much to Buddhist systematisation yet the acceptance of Dr. Dutt's view must be qualified by the following facts: (a) Some of the views mentioned in the Brahmajālasutta can be shown to have been actually held by the non-Buddhist thinkers; (b) some views were, according to the sutta itself, believed because of reason (*Takka*), not special mystical experience; and, finally, (c) a good deal of the 'experiences of a Buddhist monk' were the

¹Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

²*Ibid.*, p. 38.

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 35 f.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 36.

same as of some or the other non-Buddhist thinkers.”¹

In any case one may agree with N. Dutt when he says that the *Brahmajālasutta* has served two important purposes: it disabuses our minds of many deep-rooted notions about the world and soul, and cautions us against interpreting the doctrine of Buddha in the light of our pre-conceived notions. For example, it may be pointed out that the notion of ātman as a permanent and immaculate entity, existing within our body, unaffected by our deeds (*karma*) is likely to distort the true import of the *attā* or *puggala* of the Buddhist texts. Similarly the doctrine of nihilism (*uchchhedavāda* or *natthatta*) may influence our interpretation of *anattā* or *suññatā* doctrine. As a typical instance N. Dutt quotes the *Majjhima Nikāya* where an eternalist (Sassatavādin) hears Buddha’s teaching about the attainment of Nibbāna by the destruction of passion, desires, wrong views, etc. and wrongly concludes that the Buddha was an annihilationist (*uchchhedavādin*).²

Śramaṇas and Brāhmaṇas

The religious sects of early Buddhist age may broadly be grouped as Brāhmaṇical and non-Brāhmaṇical, the former being referred to as *āstika* and the latter *nāstika*. *Āstika* or Brāhmaṇic does not denote theism. It denotes the systems which recognize the Vedas and their branches as supreme authority. For example Sāṅkhya is usually regarded as an atheistic philosophy, yet it is a Brāhmaṇical system, because it accepts the authority of the Vedas (*Veda prāmāṇyam*). Buddhism and Jainism are regarded as *nāstika* or non-Brāhmaṇical because they do not accept the authority of the Vedic texts. Manu defines *nāstika* as a person who challenges the authority of the Vedas (*nāstiko Vedanindakaḥ*). According to another view *āstika* is one who believes in the existence of the future world, etc. According to this interpretation, the Buddhists and the Jainas are not *nāstikas*. Nāgārjuna, the famous Buddhist scholar, uses the term in this sense when he says, “A *nāstika* is doomed to hell”. It will thus be a misnomer to dub the Buddhists and the Jainas as *nāstikas*. They should rather be called *avaidikas* (non-Vedic sects).

The Buddhist and Jaina literatures appear to speak of all the non-Brāhmaṇical systems as Śramaṇas in the frequent expression ‘*samaṇa vā brāhmaṇa vā*’. In that age it was a common practice

¹Pande, *Origin*, p. 352.

²Dutt, *op. cit.*

that a person who intended to lead a homeless life and thought that he could not realize the Truth by his personal efforts, went to some religious teacher for instruction. Such teachers gathered around them a large number of disciples as is obvious from the instances of the Jaṭila teachers of Urvela and Sañjaya of Rājagaha. In the *Sumaṅgalavilāsini*¹ Samaṇas are distinguished as those who are not Brāhmaṇas by birth but have renounced the worldly life while Brāhmaṇas are those who are born in Brāhmaṇa families and who are more interested in religion and philosophy than in secular affairs. The terms Brāhmaṇa and Śramaṇa are found in combination also in the works of Pāṇini², Patañjali³ and Megasthenes⁴ and in the inscriptions of Aśoka.⁵ According to Patañjali the Śramaṇas and Brāhmaṇas belonged to rival groups. In the Buddhist texts *paribbājakā* and *tapassino* are generally referred to as Samaṇas. In the *Papañchasūdanī* an Ājīvika saint is described as a Samaṇa.⁶ The Jainas and the Buddhists usually employ the term Samaṇa for all the non-Brāhmaṇa ascetics.

The attitude of the Brāhmaṇas and the Śramaṇas towards ascetic life was basically different. Their differences emanated from their general outlook towards social and moral problems. The early Vedic literature contains the first expressions of Indian moral consciousness. Here we find emphasis on will, choice and action and on the necessity of directing them in accordance with the cosmic law or Ṛta (cf. p. 69). The concept of Ṛta or Dharma gradually crystallized into three concrete socio-ethical orders—the varṇa organisation, the order of *āśramas* and the order of ritual observances, both *gṛhya* and *śrauta*.⁷ We have already discussed how the varṇa organisation evolved and how the Vedic society which originally recognised only the first two stages in the life of an individual accepted the third stage of repairing to the forest as a result of the decline of the rituals and increase in the popularity of *upāsana* (p. 129 ff.). The recognition to the fourth *āśrama* was given quite late and very grudgingly in order to accommodate those who

¹Dutt, N., *Early Buddhist Monasticism*, p. 62.

²Agrawala, V. S., *India as known by Pāṇini*, p. 383 f.

³*Ibid.*

⁴McCrinkle, *Ancient India as Described by Megasthenes and Arrian*, p. 65.

⁵*RE*, XIII.

⁶Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

⁷Pande, G. C., *Śramaṇa Tradition*, p. 29.

had begun believing in the other-worldly pessimistic ideology of rebirth in accordance with one's *karmans* and whose number was gradually increasing. Similarly the Vedic society earlier subscribed only to the *trivarga* doctrine—the doctrine that the goal of human life is to pursue *kāma* and *artha* in accordance with *dharma*. The addition of the concept of *moksha* as the highest goal of life to the doctrine of *trivarga* leading to the emergence of the doctrine of *chaturvarga* or *purusharthas*, was obviously a development when the Upanishadic thinkers accepted the attainment of Brahma as the *summum bonum* of life.

However from the practical point of view the notion of obligation of giving in response to what one has received from society and gods continued to constitute the key-stone in the arch of Vedic social ethics.¹ In contrast to this Śramaṇism cut man loose from the sense of dependence on gods and also struck a blow on the doctrine of social obligations. It replaced gods by the force of *karman*; what man receives he does not owe to gods but to his past actions. Further, as man cannot avoid moral consequences of his actions, he must eschew egoism, violence, etc. which are, according to the Śramaṇic view, the main evils, and pursue morality. Hence it is in the corpus of monastic rules of the various ascetic religions and sects that one can find concrete shape and form of their ideal of asceticism. These rules tended to regulate food, drink, clothes, dwelling, begging of alms and religious practices of monks down to minutest details. Even for the lay-men and lay-women the ascetic sects formulated such rules though these were much less vigorous in nature. For example, the Jainas distinguished the *mahāvratas* of the monks from the *aṇuvratas* of the laity. Similarly, the *Sigālovādasutta* of the *Dīghanikāya* of the Buddhists describes the *gihivinaya* or the disciplinary rules for the Buddhist laity. In the description of the duties of the house-holders the Śramaṇic sects laid comparatively greater emphasis on social obligations.

The Brāhmaṇas regarded the Vedas as their sacred code and permitted one to become a Sannyāsī only after he has passed through the other three preceding stages or āśramas which provided him the opportunity to clear off all his obligation to the society. Also according to this theory only a *dvija* could become a *parivrājaka*.² The Śramaṇas on the other hand generally did not give much

¹Kane, P. V., *HD*, II, Pt. 2, pp. 942-46.

²*Ibid.*

consideration to age or caste. The Buddha maintained that just as after merging in the ocean the rivers lose their identity, in the same way a man, be he a Brāhmaṇa, Kshatriya, Vaiśya or Śūdra, who has sought refuge with his Order, forsakes his former name, gotra or jāti.¹ The mendicants usually lived in forests and maintained the least possible contact with society, going to the villages and towns only for begging alms or when invited by the people. They wandered from one place to another. When once the Buddha remained at the same place during all the three seasons it caused a social resentment and denunciation. However during rainy season the mendicants lived at one place. It was called the *Varshāvāsa*. *Varshāvāsa* (rain-retreat period) and *pravāraṇā* (a notice of the end of *Varshāvāsa*) had become established customs. According to the *Mahāvagga* the followers of each ascetic sect assembled together on the eighth, fourteenth and fifteenth day of the fortnight and indulged themselves in religious discourses to which the lay devotees came to listen.² The ceremony was called *Uposathā* (*Upavastha*) and had a significant place even in the Brāhmaṇical ritual. On the suggestion of Bimbisāra it was introduced in the Buddhist Saṅgha.

The ascetic sects usually had the same basic outlook towards non-injury, non-worldliness, etc. but differed from each other in respect of their clothes, food, alms-bowl and detailed rules of monastic life. They wore various types of clothes while there were some who renounced all clothes and preferred to live nude. The Buddhists were granted the use of three clothes. Mahāvīra had renounced all clothes for himself but permitted his followers to wear one single robe owing to which they were called 'ekasātakas' by Gosāla. With regard to alms-bowl the Buddha permitted to use those made of iron or clay. On the other hand, the Ājīvikas condemned the use of an alms-bowl and received their alms in hands. Rules regarding the nature of the acceptable food, too, varied from sect to sect. The Brāhmaṇa ascetics did not accept sweets and could take only those parts of plants which became detached spontaneously. The Ājīvikas could accept cold water, unboiled seeds and specially prepared food but the Jainas forbade all the three. A Buddhist monk, however, could take anything received in alms only once a day and at the right time. Views differed also with regard to the

¹Mishra, G. S. P., *The Age of Vinaya*, p. 27; *Infra*.

²*Ibid.*, p. 41.

expounded his views thus: "To him who acts or causes another to act, mutilates or causes another to mutilate, punishes or causes another to punish, causes grief or torment, trembles or causes another to tremble, kills other creatures, takes what is not given, breaks into houses, commits dacoity or robbery or tells lies, to him thus acting, there is no guilt . . . no increase of guilt would ensue . . . In giving alms, in offering sacrifices, in self-mastery, in control of senses, and in speaking truth, there is neither merit nor increase of merit."¹ Thus Pūraṇa appears to have been an amoralist believing that a person neither earns merit by pious acts such as gifts, sacrifices, or by abstinence from evil acts, and nor demerit by killing, stealing, adultery or speaking falsehood. It may mean just *akiriyā* ('one never really acts') or that the body enjoys or suffers according to its deeds but not the soul; one might do whatever one pleases without becoming sinful or virtuous.² The Jaina Sutras also attribute no-action theory to Pūraṇa. However, according to Aiyaswami Sastri, this probably does not represent the correct view of Kassapa, for no system of thought in India, except the materialistic Chārvāka, is known to deny any merit or demerit to actions.³ According to Barua, Pūraṇa was an advocate of the theory that the soul was passive (*nishkriya*), no action could affect it, and it was beyond good and bad⁴. That is why Śīlāṅka, a Jaina commentator, identifies the doctrine of Akāra-kavāda with the Sāṅkhya view.⁵ But as pointed out by N. Dutt neither Sāṅkhya and nor Vedānta teaches non-existence of karmāic effects. It is the body or Prakṛti which functions and reaps the fruits of its deeds in this life and in future existences. Further neither of these two schools denies Saṃsāravāda; hence they could not have fully supported Pūraṇa Kassapa's view.⁶

Pūraṇa Kassapa was a supporter of *ahetu-vāda* (no-cause theory) also. In the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*⁷ the Buddha states that no *hetu* (cause) and no *pachchaya* (condition) are accepted by Pūraṇa Kassapa for

¹Rhys Davids, *Dialogues of the Buddha* (Sacred Books of the Buddhists), I, p. 69 f.

²Pande, *Origins*, p. 347.

³*The Cultural Heritage of India (CHI)*, I, p. 390.

⁴Barua, B. M., *A History of Pre-Buddhist Indian Philosophy*, 1921, p. 279.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶Dutt, N., *Early Monastic Buddhism*, p. 28 f.

⁷*CHI*, I, p. 391.

one's becoming either defiled or purified. Abhaya also reports that Kassapa accepts no cause for *ñāṇa* (knowledge) and *dassana* (insight).¹ Hence Barua believes that Pūraṇa was a supporter of *adhichchasaṃuppāda* (fortuitous origin) or *ahetuvāda* referred to in the *Brahmajālasutta*.²

In the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, two Lokāyatika Brāhmaṇas state to the Buddha that Pūraṇa Kassapa claimed to be always in possession of *ñāṇadassana* (introspective knowledge), while walking or staying etc., and that he perceives the finite world through infinite knowledge (*anantena ñāṇena antavantam lokam jānam*), while they attribute to the Jainas the theory of perceiving the finite world through finite knowledge.³ Elsewhere the Buddha describes Kassapa, as possessing the power of telling that a particular dead person was reborn at a certain place.⁴

Pakudha Kachchāyana

According to the Buddhist texts, Pakudha Kachchāyana (Prakruddha Kātyāyana) was one of the six heretic teachers (*titthiyas*). He was also a leader of some religious body. Buddhaghosa informs us that Pakudha was his personal name and Kachchāyana his family (*gotra*) name. The term '*pakudha*' has been traditionally interpreted as *prakruddha* or *kakudha* which means the same thing. Assuming *Kakuda* to be the original and correct form meaning 'a man having a hump on his back', Barua connects Pakudha Kātyāyana with Kabandhī Kātyāyana, one of the pupils of Pippalāda of the *Praśna Upanishad*.⁵ But Kabandhī Kātyāyana is described as a *Brahmanisṭha* in the Upanishad. Buddhaghosa records that Kachchāyana never touched cold water. He never even crossed the river or a marshy pathway, lest his vow should be transgressed.⁶

¹*Ibid.*

²*Ibid.* Contra G. C. Pande (*Origins*, p. 348) who remarks, "the assumption of Dr. Barua about Adhiccasaṃuppāda is false, since the Sāṅkhya thinkers were not disbelievers in causality. Events may "have nothing to do with 'soul' and yet may not be fortuitous in origin."

³*CHI*, I, p. 391.

⁴*Ibid.* Ānanda, the disciple of the Buddha, wrongly ascribes to Pūraṇa Kassapa Makkhali Gosāla's doctrine of six classes of human beings probably because Gosāla also had the title Pūraṇa (*CHI*, I, p. 391, n. 12).

⁵Barua, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

⁶Quoted in *CHI*, I, p. 392.

The philosophical ideas of Pakudha Kachchāyana are known from *Sāmaññaphalasutta* and the *Sūtrakṛtāṅga*. The *Sāmaññaphalasutta* represents him as a pluralist and a semi-materialist. He believed that a being is composed of seven elements (*Kāya*) existing immutably in emptiness (*vivara*)—earth, water, air, fire, pleasure (*sukha*), pain (*dukkha*) and soul (*jīva*). These seven elements are neither created nor moulded. They are barren and fixed as a rock and do not produce anything and do not interact on one another. They neither move nor change nor hinder one another so as to cause pain or pleasure or indifference. Hence, there is no killer nor instigator of killing, no hearer nor preacher, no learner nor teacher. If a sword passes through the body of a being, it does not destroy it; it only slips through the interval between the elements forming the body.¹ According to G. C. Pande the concept of *vivara* was used to explain apparent motion, but it was not regarded as a substance; it was understood as mere 'non-resistance' hypostatized.²

The *Sūtrakṛtāṅga*, on the other hand, presents *Ātmashashṭhavāda* (which resembles the doctrines of Pakudha) as a system of six categories omitting pleasure and pain and adding ether or space (*ākāśa*) in their place.³ The Buddha criticised the doctrine of Pakudha as a kind of Eternalism (*Sassatavāda*) and Annihilationism (*Uchchhedavāda*).⁴ As pointed out by H. Ui if this *Sassatavāda* (Eternalism) is developed, 'the resultant must be the atomic theory'. Hence it is likely that this *Sassatavāda* is the same as *Aṇuvāda* (atom-theory).⁵ According to Barua also Pakudha was Empedocles of India for, according to both, the four elements are root-things and the formative principle is two-fold: 'love' and 'hatred' for Empedocles, and 'pleasure' and 'pain' for Kātyāyana.⁶

Sañjaya Belaṭṭhiputta

Sañjaya, son of Belaṭṭhi or Vairāṭi, was another religious leader of the sixth century B.C. He was probably an elder contemporary of the Buddha. He is said to have presided over a band of 250 disciples. He is probably identical with Parivrājaka Sañjaya, teacher of

¹Rhys Davids, *Dialogues of the Buddha*, 1, p. 74.

²Pande, *Origins*, p. 348.

³*Ibid.*

⁴Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

⁵Quoted in *CHI*, I, p. 392.

⁶Barua, *op. cit.*, pp. 283-84.

Keśakambalin because he put on a blanket of human hair. In the *Mahāvagga* the Buddha forbids his own disciples to wear *keśakambala* because it was a garment worn by the heretics.

Ajita believed that a human being is made of four elements (*chātummahābhūtika ayaṃ puriso*). When he dies, the earthy in him relapses to earth, the fluid to water, the heat to fire, the windy to air, and his faculties (*indriyāṇī*, that is the five senses and the mind) into space (*ākāśa*). Ajita denied the existence of after-life. It is the fools who speak of the existence (of the soul, etc.). A person's earthly existence ends on the funeral pyre. When the body dies, both the foolish and the wise perish alike. Nothing survives after death (*bhasmībhūtasya punarāgamaṇa kutaḥ*).¹

The ethical and religious teachings of Ajita were a corollary to his radical materialism. He believed that there is no merit in sacrifice or offering. No fruit results from good and evil deeds. No benefit results from the service rendered to mother and father. There is no demerit if one commits evil deeds. He believed that no one has reached perfection by following the right path, and there is none who, as a result of knowledge, has experienced this world as well as the next.²

This doctrine of Ajita is clearly related with Bārhaspatya school of thought, founded by Bṛhaspati. The Bārhaspatya school is also called 'Chārvāka' in the *Sarva-darśana-saṅgraha* of Mādhava and 'Lokāyata' in the *Shaddarśana-samuchchaya* of Haribhadra. Whether 'Chārvāka' was a personal name or epithet, it is difficult to say. It is certain however that the doctrines of this school were a complete denunciation of the Vedas, their authors and the religion they teach. Thus it is said that the Vedas are the work of men-cheats, hypocrites and flesh-eaters and that their language is utter gibberish. Reference is also made to certain unclean customs connected with the horse-sacrifice.³

The Chārvākas sought to propagate that one should seek his own happiness by whatever means he can in this life. The performance of acts that are supposed to bring fruits in the next life is an exercise in futility. As everything ends with death, there is no point in performing sacrifices and other supposedly moral acts. This doctrine was vehemently criticised by the Buddha as *uchchhedavāda* or

¹CHI, I, p. 398; Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*

annihilationism, that is the doctrine that a being disappears for ever after death with the dissolution of his body. A somewhat similar account of the *nāstikas* or Chārvākas is given in the *Sūtrakṛtāṅga* in which is stated that the five gross elements produce Ātman. On the dissolution of the elements, however, the living beings ceases to exist. . . 'there is neither virtue nor vice, there is no world beyond'.¹

Dhīshāṇa, to whom is attributed this type of doctrine in the *Padma Purāṇa*, asserts that there is no God. The variegated world exists by itself. However, like Ajita he admitted only four elements and not the fifth, ākāśa.²

The Lokāyata or Lokāyatika was not unknown to the Buddhist authors also. The following conversation between a Lokāyatika Brāhmaṇa and the Buddha has been recorded in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* :³

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| The Brāhmaṇa: | Does everything exist (<i>sabbam atthi</i>)? |
| The Buddha: | To say that everything exists is the first view of the worldling (<i>lokāyatam</i>). |
| The Brāhmaṇa: | Does not everything exist (<i>sabbam na'tthi</i>)? |
| The Buddha: | To say so is the second view of the worldling. |
| The Brāhmaṇa: | Is everything one and identical (<i>sabbam ekattam</i>)? |
| The Buddha: | To say so is the third view of the worldling. |
| The Brāhmaṇa: | Is everything separate (<i>sabbam puthuttam</i>)? |
| The Buddha: | To say so is the fourth view of the worldling. |

Therefore the Buddha preached the doctrine of *Pratītyasamutpāda* (i.e. the law of causation) avoiding the above extremes.

It is to be noted here that Ajita had postulated no solution for the phenomenon of knowledge. The Chārvākas, however, attempted to solve it in this way: when the four elements constitute the body, the spirit (*chaitanya*) comes into existence automatically as liquor is produced by fermentation of rice and molasses.

The Chārvākas, therefore, believed that perception is the only source of knowledge. That which cannot be perceived by the senses,

¹Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*

does not exist. But this is too gross a proposition to stand scrutiny. As pointed out by the critics of this philosophy, when a Chārvāka goes out of his home on any occasion, his wife does not see him for a time. Does it mean that she becomes a widow during this period?

Pāyāsi-Paēsi was probably another materialist thinker of the age of the Buddha, though his chronological position is somewhat doubtful.¹ He also disbelieved in soul and agreed with Ajīta in denying that anything real could correspond to 'the current transcendental ideas'.²

Makkhali Gosāla: The Ājīvika Sect

Of the five prominent non-Buddhist non-Jaina heretical sects that arose in or before the sixth century B.C. one alone, the Ājīvika,³ enjoyed a long history of about two thousand years before it became extinct. It was probably founded by Nanda Vachchha and headed by Kisa Saṁkicchha after him. It acquired strength under Makkhali Gosāla who was a contemporary of the Buddha and Mahāvīra. The cult spread at one time from Avanti to Aṅga. Though both Jainism and Buddhism denounced Gosāla and his teachings, they quietly absorbed some of the tenets and practices of his school. The *Sāmaññaphalasutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* mentions Makkhali Gosāla as one of the six teachers each of whom was the leader of an order (*gaṇāchāriyo*), the founder of a sect (*titthakāro*), revered as a saint (*sādhu sammato*), and a homeless wanderer of long standing (*chira pabbajito*).

Gosāla is said to have been born somewhere near Śrāvastī. He left home for some unknown reason and became a homeless wanderer. His career as a wanderer covered about 24 years. He spent the first six⁴ of these with Mahāvīra at Paṇiyabhūmi. At that time he was a follower of Pārśvanātha. He parted company with Mahāvīra on account of doctrinal differences and went to Śrāvastī

¹Pande, *Origins*, p. 351.

²*Ibid.*

³The word is spelt as 'Ājivaka' also. Cf. the term *Samayagājīva* of the Buddhists. For the etymology of the term cf. A. L. Basham, *History and Doctrines of the Ājīvakas*, pp. 103-3. He has discussed the views of Lassen, Burno and of Hoernle also. Also see Barua, *Ājīvakas*, p. 11.

⁴According to the *Bhagavatī Sūtra* six years, but according the *Kalpa Sūtra* only one year. See, Barua, *Ājīvakas*, p. 7.

where he attained Jinahood and became the leader of the Ājīvika sect. He is said to have expired sixteen years before Mahāvīra. In the *Bhagavatī Sūtra*, he is stated to have been a disciple of Mahāvīra at Nālandā, but it is highly unlikely.

The name of this teacher is variously spelt: Makkhali Gosāla in Pāli, Maṅkhaliputta Gosāla in Ardha Māgadhī, Markali in Tamil and Maskarin in Sanskrit. The Chinese tradition records his name as Maskari Gosāliputra and explains that Maskari is his gotra name and Gosāli is his mother's name. According to Pāṇini¹ *maskarin* was a wanderer who carried a *maskara* (bamboo staff) about him. Many other fanciful derivations of the name are suggested in ancient literature.²

Hoernle remarks that the name 'Ājīvikas' was given to the followers of this sect by their opponents. By his conduct Gosāla laid himself open to the charge that he practised religious mendicancy not as a means of gaining salvation (*moksha*), but as a means of gaining livelihood. The Buddha is said to have denounced Gosāla as one of those who lived in inconsistency (*abrahmacharyāvāsa*) and as a bad man (*mogha purisha*). Rhys Davids opines that Ājīvikas were those who claimed to be strict in earning their means of livelihood. According to Charpentier Gosāla's father Makkhali was a mendicant bearing a picture board with the representation of Śiva. It is likely that the Ājīvikas earned their bread by showing pictures and not by mere begging. That astrology was almost a profession with the Ājīvikas is proved by an old tradition preserved in a Jātaka and the *Divyānadāna*. This tradition agrees also with their belief in fatalism.

No trace of Ājīvika texts has been preserved, but scattered quotations from them are found in the Buddhist and Jaina literatures. From the tradition preserved in the *Bhagavatī Sūtra*, it may be presumed that the scriptures of the Ājīvikas consisted of ten Puvvas (eight Mahānimittas and two Maggas) like the fourteen Pūrvas of the Jains.³ The dialect adopted as the literary medium for their scriptures was closely allied to Ardha-Māgadhī. The South Indian tradition mentions as their scripture a text called the *Navakadir* (Nine Rays; a collection of nine works?) which most likely embodied the teaching of Maskarin. This was probably a Tamil version

¹VI.1.154.

²Cf. *CHI*, I, p. 393 f.

³Barua, *op. cit.*, pp. 43, 47-51.

of an original Prakrit work. An idea of the Ājīvika philosophy may be formed with the help of the scattered references found in these and other texts.¹

The *Bhagavatī Sūtra* gives the following account of the philosophy of Gosāla. Once an experiment was made by Gosāla together with Mahāvīra with a sesamum plant which being uprooted and destroyed reappeared in due time. From this Gosāla concluded that beings were subject to re-animation (*pautta parihāraṃ parihanti*) and not death and destruction. He added to it the doctrine that all beings were subject to a fixed series of existence from the lowliest to the highest and this series was unchangeable (*niyati saṅgatibhāya*) and every existence had its own unalterable characteristic as heat is of fire or coldness of ice. According to the *Sāmaññaphalasutta* all beings and souls are without force, power, and energy of their own. They get transformed by their fate (*niyati*), by the necessary conditions of the class to which they belong (*saṅgati*), and by their individual nature (*bhāva-pariṇatā*). They experience pleasure and pain according to their position in one or other of the six classes of existences. All those who reach the final beatitude will have to pass through 84,00,000 great Kalpas, and then seven births as a deity, seven as a bulky (insensible) being, seven as a sensible being, and seven with changes of body through re-animation.²

Makkhali Gosāla denied the effect of deeds (*karman*) and energy (*vīrya*). He upheld fatalism of extreme type. He maintained that human effort is useless (*n'atthi purisakāre*), that a being is totally helpless; he can neither help himself nor others and nor he can attain perfection (*vimutti*) by his efforts. He must transmigrate from one existence to another, and it is only after repeated existences that he attains emancipation (*suddhi*). The consecutive existences of a being including the periods and types of existences are unalterably fixed (*niyata*). The several existences of a being may be compared to a ball of yarn uncoiling itself, the ultimate end of the yarn being *suddhi* or *vimutti* or the end of existences of a being³. That is why Ajātaśatru is said to have characterized this philosophy as *Samsāravissuddhi*, which according to G. C. Pande is very just

¹For Ājīvika doctrines see Hoernle in *ERE*, I; Barua, *Pre-Buddhist Philosophy of India*, Ch. XXI.

²*CHI*, I, p. 395 f.

³Dutt, N., *Early Monastic Buddhism*, p. 29.

characterization.¹

According to the Ājīvikas there are eight kinds of results determinable at the stage of embryo: acquisition, loss, obstruction by impediments, migration to other place, suffering misery, enjoying pleasure, losing what is obtained, and birth and death. The *Bhagavatī Sūtra* mentions only six of them omitting the third and the fourth.

From the Tamil texts, we learn that the Ājīvikas believed in five kinds of atoms: earth, water, fire, air, and life. Of these only life is endowed with knowledge, others are not. They are beginningless, eternal, and indivisible. They can severally assemble together and assume varied forms, such as mountain, bamboo, diamond, etc. Only a man of divine vision can perceive single atoms. The life-atom, which is imperceptible, becomes embodied through its own *karman*; when it enters into a body, it takes all the qualities of the body as its own.²

According to the *Mañimekhalai* (4th cent. A.D.), the Ājīvikas believed that there are six classes of beings—black, blue-black, green, red, yellow, and white. The final stage is Release (*vīdu*), which is extremely white.³ Buddhaghosha has made an attempt to explain in detail the various stages of existence envisaged in Gosāla's doctrines.⁴ In the Jaina literature also the various states of existence distinguished by colour as black, dark, blue, green, red, golden and white have been dealt with in connection with the doctrines of the Ājīvikas. The distinctions made by colour, though not intelligible now, must have been a prominent feature of the philosophy of this sect.⁵

There are two kinds of released persons, *sambodhaka* and *maṇḍala*. The former always remain in the highest stage of life, while the latter come down on the earth to impart sacred knowledge to the world. In case all jīvas attain moksha, the spring of saṁsāra will dry up, so the Ājīvikas propounded the theory of *maṇḍala-moksha* according to which jīvas that have attained *moksha* may come to saṁsāra in order to keep the latter moving.⁶

¹Pande, G. C., *Origins*, p. 342 f.

²*CHI*, I, p. 396.

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Sumaṅgalavilāsinī*, pp. 161–4.

⁵Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

⁶*CHI*, I, pp. 396–97.

In the Jaina *Bhagavatī Sūtra* reference is made to the fact that the Ājīvikas had shifted their centre of activities to the Puṇḍra country at the foot of the Vindhya mountains, and that in their pantheon were included many Vedic and non-Vedic gods. The worshippers of two of these, Puṇṇabhadda (Pūrṇabhadrā) and Maṇibhadda (Maṇibhadra), are referred to also in the Buddhist *Niddesa*, though as distinct from the Ājīvikas. Maṇibhadda and Puṇṇabhadda have been regarded as Yakshas by modern writers, but there is no doubt that the *Niddesa* distinguished them from the latter class of supernatural beings. The Pawaya inscription (1st cen. B.C.) on the pedestal of a statue, shows that a class of Maṇibhadra-bhaktas existed at one time and that Maṇibhadra was given the usual honorific title of *Bhagavat*.¹

It is generally believed that the Ājīvikas adhered to a severe form of asceticism. Gosāla's reputation for asceticism is shown by several Jātaka stories and the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*² and other texts. During initiation they remained nude and pulled out their hair (though they were not always tonsured).³ The early Buddhist texts at several places refer to the fact that the Ājīvika monks lived naked.⁴ They had lay devotees as well. The *Nīlakeśī*, a Tamil Jaina text, states that Gosāla exhorted his disciples to abide by strict moral observances, and that they observed *śīlas* though they denied their efficacy. According to another South Indian text the Ājīvikas worshipped the aśoka tree as god, denied the authority of the Vedas, practised severe asceticism, kept their body dirty (for want of daily bathing), gave up household life, covered their nakedness with mat-clothing, and carried in their hand a bunch of peacock feathers.⁵ The *Bhagavatī Sūtra* says that they abstained from eating five kinds of fruits and also from eating roots, etc.⁶ The *Sthānāṅga Sūtra* also describes the various kinds of austerities practised by the Ājīvikas. People of all castes and also women were allowed to enter the Ājīvika order. The *Sāmaññaphalasutta*, however, states that in the opinion of Gosāla no spiritual development can take place by moral observances. It is rather difficult to make out why the Ājīvikas should enjoin the

¹Cf. Bhattacharya, H. D., in *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 463 f.

²Chakraborti, H., *Asceticism in Ancient India*, pp. 452, 455.

³*Ibid.*, pp. 453-4.

⁴Mishra, G. S. P., *The Age of Vinaya*, p. 52 f.

⁵*CHI*, I, p. 394 f.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 395.

moral observances and in the same breath deny their efficacy. According to N. A. Sastri it is likely that following the time honoured fashion Gosāla approved the pursuance of the moral and religious observances, even though in his opinion they were ineffective in doing any good.¹

It is not unlikely that the term '*niyati*' was introduced into Indian thought by the Ājīvikas. Manu and the compiler of the *Hitopadeśa* tried to disabuse the minds of the people of this faith in fatalism, though Bhartṛhari praised it in his *Nītiśataka*.

The Ājīvikas, it seems, attained great popularity in the Maurya age. Aśoka dedicated two cave dwellings to the sect. There is a tradition that king Bindusāra consulted Piṅgalavatsa (Janasāna in Pali chronicles), an Ājīvika monk, for finding out which of his two sons, Aśoka and Vītāśoka, would succeed him to the throne. Aśoka's mother was very likely a follower of the Ājīvikas. Aśoka's grandson Daśaratha also dedicated a few caves to the Ājīvika monks. Chāṇakya is said to have escaped from the hands of the last Nanda in the guise of a naked Ājīvika monk. The sect is referred to by Patañjali (c. 150 B.C.) and in the *Milindapañha* (c. first century A.D.). It continued to exist in the Middle Country till the fifth century A.D. There are references to the sect in Varāhamihira's *Bṛhatsaṃhitā* and Bāṇa's *Harshacharita*. In the former, it is mentioned under the name of Ekadaṇḍin (one-staff man), while in the latter, under the name of Maskarin. In the *Mahāvamsa* (X.102) it is mentioned as one of the flourishing religions in Ceylon during the reign of King Pāṇḍukābhaya (377-307 B.C.). It must have continued to exist in South India till as late as the thirteenth or fourteenth century A.D. The Jaina works of South India prove beyond doubt that the Ājīvikas were well-known to the Jaina authors of the late Chālukya, Yādava and Pallava periods as a sect of the Buddhists.² Some Pallava inscriptions refer to the Ājīvika-tax, which according to some was levied from the Ājīvikas while others feel that it was levied from others to feed the Ājīvika monks. The *Śīlapaddikāram* refers to the existence of the Ājīvikas at Madurā. However their extreme asceticism, love of solitude,³ disdain of comfort and love of austerities of all kinds repelled from them all but an infinitesimal minority. Their fatalistic creed that things gain perfection even

¹*Ibid.*

²Cf. Basham, *op. cit.*

³*Sūtrakṛtāṅga*, II. 6.

through non-performance of actions, and that 'there is a process of natural and spiritual evolution through ceaseless rounds of births and deaths', was an anathema to the Kriyāvādins who believed that moral action was an indispensable condition of individual and social perfection. The orthodox Hindus showed the same disfavour towards the Buddhists as towards the Ājīvikas. According to Kauṭilya neither class was to be entertained at *śrādhās* and sacrifices. The *Vāyu Purāṇa* describes the Ājīvikas as unrighteous people and as confuser of varṇa and āsrama. It describes them as a sort of secret society using wine and meat in their religious ceremony.

Brāhmaṇas and Brāhmaṇical Religion in the Age of the Buddha

By the age of the Buddha apart from the Purohita or Ṛtvika Brāhmaṇas, who formed the class of professional priests, there had emerged other classes of Brāhmaṇas also. Firstly there were those Brāhmaṇa householders who enjoyed the revenues of villages given to them by kings. These Brāhmaṇas were very rich and are described as Mahāśāla. They occasionally celebrated costly sacrifices and usually ran academies where students from neighbouring areas came for learning the Vedic lore. They are criticised by the Buddha as being mere reciters of the Vedic hymns and for teaching the ways and means for attaining Brahmaloḥa which nobody has seen.

Then there were Brāhmaṇa Paribbājakas (Parivrājakas) who according to the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad* took *pravrajyā* with the object of attaining Him. But in the Upanishads the line of demarcation between the Parivrājakas and the Sannyāsins is not well-defined. In the Pali works Parivrājakas are described as wanderers. Probably Jaṭilas, mentioned in the Buddhist texts, were a category of the Parivrājakas. The *Vinaya* presents the Jaṭilas as an important sect with whom the Buddha had very good relations. They lived in large groups, had group-leaders, engaged themselves in austerities and performed sacrifices. They were called Aggikā Jaṭilikā. According to G. C. Pande they were colonies of Vānaprasthas. Probably they alone represented the orthodox priestly section of the ascetics and were not small in number. As their name suggests, they kept long hairs on their head. Megasthenes, who divided the philosophers of the Maurya period into Brachmanes (Brāhmaṇas) and Sarmanes (Śramaṇas), speaks of a Śramaṇa class called 'hylobei'. They lived in the woods, where they subsisted on leaves of trees and wild-fruits and wore garments

made from the bark of trees. They abstained from sexual intercourse and wine.¹ They are generally identified with the Jaṭilas. They were grouped by Megasthenes with the Śramaṇas probably because of their austerities. The *Mahāvagga* speaks of Uruvelā near Gayā as a great Jaṭila settlement. Uruvelakassapa, Nadikassapa, and Gayākassapa, the three Jaṭila teachers, were followed by a large number of disciples. The Jaṭilas were taken by the people in great reverence and on the occasion of their religious sacrifices people used to come with articles of food, etc.

The Jaṭilas are expressly called Karmavādins and Kriyāvādins and, on that ground, were granted an exception from *parivāsa* training that the followers of other sects desiring admission to the Buddhist saṅgha had to undergo. According to G. S. P. Mishra², however, it was a posthumous ruling occasioned on account of great Jaṭila influence in the Buddhist saṅgha. Obviously, the conversion of these Jaṭila teachers was a great achievement of the Buddha. According to the *Chullavagga* the whole activity of the First Buddhist Council was controlled by Mahākassapa, the former Jaṭila leader. The reference to the *ayyāgāra* of Uruvelakassapa shows that he was permanently settled at the place. The *Pachittiya* contains an explicit mention of a permanent settlement of a Jaṭila named Ambatittha at Bhaddavāttika. Probably Isipattana (Ṛshipattana) acquired this name because it had several such settlements.³

The system of hermit life was quite old in the Brāhmaṇa society. In the Āraṇyaka literature of the pre-Buddhist period we find references to a class of Brāhmaṇas (and others also) who retired to forest and were known as Vānaprasthas. They studied the Vedic texts and performed sacrifices (actually, or by means of meditation). There is, however, no indication that they performed *tapas* also. Actually the victory of mendicancy over forest-dwelling was won quite late in the Brāhmaṇical society. In the *Mahābhārata* we find that forest colonies preponderate over the Parivrājakas.⁴ According to Śaṅkarāchārya the hermits dwelling in the forests were distinguished by the practice of *tapas* or physical austerities, whereas the

¹McCrimble, *Ancient India as Described by Megasthenes and Arrian*, pp. 101-102.

²Mishra, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

³*Ibid.*, Ch. on Monasticism.

⁴Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 329.

wandering mendicants were characterised by the practice of self-control, etc. According to G. C. Pande, however, the difference which prevailed between the two in earlier times consisted in the fact that the hermits continued to perform Vedic ritual while the mendicants gave it up. But this difference was important only for the Brāhmanical ascetics. Gradually in the Brāhmaṇa society itself Vānaprastha āśrama came to be regarded only as a preparation for Sannyāsa, and fell into disuse.

From the above account it is clear that by the age of the Buddha the Brāhmanical religion had long passed the phase when it was a simple religion of harmony between gods and men. Now a sharp contrast had developed between its *pravṛtti mārgī* (this-worldly), that is formalistic and ritualistic, form and the new esoteric and ascetic direction given to it in the Upanishads. In the Upanishads the doctrine of the efficacy of the ritual is often replaced by that of *jñāna* (knowledge) and *dhyāna* (meditation) and devotion and the moral rather than the ritual part of action is emphasized. In the *Gītā* and some other portions of the *Mahābhārata* ritualism emerges as the second best in its struggle against the ideologies of renunciation, meditation and devotion. These changes led to the acceptance of *Moksha* as the *summum bonum* of life and was added to the doctrine of Trivarga. The scheme of the Chaturvarga or Purushartha thus became complete, and the Vedic religion became truly a synthesis of *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti* ideals. This transformation found its social reflection in the formulation of the theory of the Four Stages of Life in the Dharmasūtras (see pp. 129–32).

Yaksha Worship and Other Popular Cults

A man's religious faith expresses itself in accordance with the bent of his mind. According to the *Gītā* the faith of each is shaped by his own mental constitution (*sattvānurūpa sarvasya śraddhā bhavati Bhārata*).¹ "Men of Sāttvika disposition worship the Devas; those of Rājasika disposition worship the Yakshas and Rākshasas and others of Tāmasika disposition worship Bhūtas and Pretas (spirits and ghosts)."² Another factor that determines the nature of religious faith is cultural environment of a people. In India with her bewildering cultural diversity belief in innumerable gods, semi-gods, spirits and demons peopling the air everywhere has always been

¹*Gītā*, XVII.3

²*Ibid.*, XVII.4.

and still is a characteristic feature of popular religion.¹ As remarked by Wheeler, in India "the crudest animism and demonism still underlie the semi-philosophical and ethical concepts of the educated few... the symbols of the higher thought are the awesome physical realities of the peasantry".² In the age of the Buddha, as in any other age of Indian history, probably each clan or family was supposed to be guided and protected by some special god who was worshipped by its members.³ Trees were generally regarded as abodes of spirits and gods. Sometimes a tree itself was identified with the god and worshipped. The *Vinaya* records a story of a tree-god (*rukkhadevatā*) who requested a monk, who was felling its abode, the tree, not to do that.⁴ The *Mahāvagga* refers to a tree-god living on a Kakudha tree. These gods and semi-gods were believed to be benevolent by nature. They tried to keep people on the right track if they cherished some undesirable notions.⁵

Often connected with trees were the Yakkhas and Yakkhīs (or Yakkhiṇīs) whose worship was widely prevalent. The term *Yakkha* was almost a popular synonym for *Devatā*.⁶ According to Coomaraswamy Yaksha worship represented, at the popular level, a continuation of pre-Aryan religion.⁷ The Yakshas granted worldly desires, progeny and wealth.⁸ Usually they are said to have the character of local deities or patron saints, but sometimes they are described as malevolent. They even took possession of men's persons inducing in them symptoms of frenzy.⁹ They usually lived on trees, in buildings and forests or at the cross roads.

The Yakkhīs or Yakkhiṇīs (Yakshiṇīs) sometimes appear to tempt men and resemble the Apsarās (*achchharā*). Apsarās were female spirits considered to be of a great beauty and physical charm. Petas (*pretas*) and petanis (*pretanīs*) were probably spirits of dead persons haunting the air and the dreadful objects in the world. Sometimes they are said to have lived on the trees. The *Chullavagga* speaks of

¹Pande, G. C., *Origins*, p. 318.

²Wheeler, M., *The Indus Civilization*, p. 83.

³Mishra, G. S. P., *The Age of Vinaya*, p. 43.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 44.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶Coomaraswamy, A. K., *Yakṣas*, I, p. 36.

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 21-2.

the Great Ocean (*mahāsamuddo*) being the abode of *timis*, *timīngalas*, *asuras*, *nāgas*, and *gandhabbas* and distinctly says that the *asuras* sport there. These beings are said to be of tremendous size amounting even to five yojanas.¹ The *piśāchas* were believed to be dreadful in form and figure and malevolent in nature. The *Mahāvagga* lays down that if at a certain place of rain-retreat the monk is troubled by the *piśāchas*, he could leave the place without any fear of a break in *Varshāvāsa*. The *gandhabbas* (*gandharvas*) were however spirits seeking the opportunity of rebirth.

Besides the deities mentioned above the people worshipped various animals such as elephants, horses, cows, dogs and crows.² The *Gītā* also refers to popular worship of the manes, spirits (*bhūtas*), etc. and a large number of celestial, tree and animal gods.³ "A vague and variable polytheism which merged imperceptibly into polydemonism constituted popular theology."⁴

Apart from these lowly gods and demons there were gods belonging to a higher rung of the ladder. The hierarchy of these gods given in the *Vinaya* is as follows: *bhummā devā*, *chatum-mahārājikā devā*, *tāvātimsā devā*, *yāmā devā*, *tusitā devā*, *nimmānarātī devā*, *paramittavasavattī devā*, and *brahmakāyikā devā*.⁵ *Bhummā devā* were the gods who inhabited the earth while the *chatum-mahārājikā devā* presided over the four quarters. The latter attended on the Buddha. An illustrious light emanated from their bodies due to which they looked like masses of fire. *Yāmā devā* acted in the night and *tusitā devā* lived in the *tusita* heaven. The *Mahāvagga* refers to *antarahitā devatā* who, according to G. S. P. Mishra, appears to be personification of one's intuition.⁶ The *Vinaya* also presents Māra as a wicked god who like Kāma of the Hindu pantheon leads the saintly people away from the right path. According to Basak⁷ the conquest of the Buddha over Māra signifies the withdrawal of all desires. Māra was a personification of psycho-physical difficulties and conflicts that the seeker of the Truth had to face in

¹Mishra, *op. cit.*

²Law, B. C. *India as Described in the Early Texts of Buddhism and Jainism*, pp. 195, 197-8.

³*Gītā*, IX. 25; X, 21-38.

⁴Pande, *Origins*, p. 319.

⁵Mishra, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁷Basak, R. G. *Lectures on Buddha and Buddhism*, p. 55.

his way to the attainment of the cherished goal. His army (*mārasenā*) may therefore be taken to comprise various undesirable instincts, ideas and feelings that haunt the mind of a seeker of Truth.¹

Brahmā and Sakka are two other important gods mentioned in the early Buddhist texts. Brahmā was different from the impersonal Brahman of the Upanishads. He seems to be the deity in charge of the good interests of the human beings and other creatures for, when the Buddha thought not to preach the *dhamma* to the worldly people, Brahmā descended on the earth from Brahmāloka to persuade the Buddha to propagate the religion.

The god Sakka is referred to as '*Sakko devānāmino*' which shows that he was considered the highest among the gods.² It is interesting to note that the Vedic term Śakra (Pali Sakka) which was merely an epithet of Indra was converted into a proper name and the proper name, 'Indra' (Pali Inda) itself was reduced to an epithet.³ He appears like 'a great mass of fire' (*mahā aggikkhandho*) on account of the light that issues from his body. According to some the "Buddhist Sakka is a development of the Vedic god Indra with an emphasis on the moral side of his nature"⁴. But Sakka was not a deity separate from Indra; he was the same. There is also nothing specifically ethical in the Buddhist Sakka as an advancement on what we find in the Vedic Indra.⁵

Because of the wide popularity of the doctrine of karman,⁶ the belief in the existence of an intermediate life where the soul of the dead person is taken to enjoy or suffer the fruits of his deeds on the earth was widely prevalent and played an important role in popular eschatology. We meet a vivid picture of hell both in the Buddhist and Jaina literatures, though such a picture is lacking in the earlier Vedic texts. While hell was a place for punishment and unbearable torture, heaven was a place where the person was attended by all the pleasureable sensual objects. The Buddha narrated to his lay devotees *sagga kathās* (stories of heaven) to induce them to act righteously.

Mahas or popular festivals were held in honour of "Indra or

¹Mishra, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

²Cf. the discussion on Indra in the Ch. on Early Vedic Religion (p. 62 ff.).

³Cf. Keith, *Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas and Upanishads*, p. 338.

⁴*University of Ceylon Review*, III, No. 1, April 1945, p. 40.

⁵Mishra, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

⁶Pande, *Origins*, p. 321.

Stands of Dicks, of Vithal, or deities of no special importance, or . . . in honour of a tomb or a shrine or a tree, or a hill, rock cave, or a well, or a rock, or a river, or a herb, or a tree, or a snake, or a bird." On such occasions "Brahmins and Sanyasis, as well as mages and jugglers were entertained with food and gifts. Mixed company and licensed rough crowd were fast and unknown. The companies recruited for some of these occasions were 'Brahmin literature and which originally is said to have had significance'.

¹ "Agrestic," *S. T. Chinn-Rajendra Prasad Varma*, 1916, 204-205, 204-206.
² *S. T. Chinn-Rajendra Prasad Varma*, 1916, 204-205, 204-206.
³ *S. T. Chinn-Rajendra Prasad Varma*, 1916, 204-205, 204-206.

Jainism upto Mahāvīra

Jainism before Pārśvanātha

In the age of Mahāvīra Jainism was known as Nigaṇṭha Dhamma (Nirgranthism). It was called as such because it laid great stress on non-possession and on renunciation of the house (*āgāra* or *gṛha*) which was considered a knot (*grantha*). It was also known by the general name Śramaṇa dharma (Sramaṇism), a term which was applied to all non-Brāhmaṇical sects. It believed that the conquest of the evil tendencies of attachment and hatred was the real end. As the promulgators of this ideal were regarded as Jinas (victors), their followers were given the name Jaina and their religion came to be known as Jainism.

The Jainas claim a great antiquity for their religion.¹ They believe that Mahāvīra, the contemporary of the Buddha, was their twenty-fourth Tīrthaṅkara (the founder of faith). A list of the names of all the Tīrthaṅkaras is given in a subsequent section of this Chapter.² The *Kalpasūtra* of Bhadrabāhu gives us the life-history of each Tīrthaṅkara or Jina³. Ṛshabhadeva or Adinātha stands first in this list. He is mentioned even in the *Vishṇu* and the *Bhāgavata Purāṇas* as a great saint-king belonging to a very remote past. Further, as we have seen in Chapter 5, in the *RV* itself there are found traces of the existence of religious thinkers known as Munis and Śramaṇas who may be regarded as the precursors of the Jaina faith. H. L. Jain even claims to have found a mention of Ṛshabhadeva in the *RV* (see p. 97). According to later tradition he was a son of Marudevī and Nābhi, queen and king of Kosala. After deep and long medita-

¹See Jacobi, Intro. to *SBE*, 45; Acharya Shri Tulsi, *Pre-Vedic Existence of Śramaṇa Tradition*, Calcutta, 1964; Jain, R. C., 'The Pre-Aryan Shramaṇic Spiritualism', *Muni Hazarimal Smṛti Grantha*, Beawar, 1965, pp. 12-26; Mehta, M. L., 'Antiquity of Jaina Culture', *Munisri Mishrīmalji Mahārāja Abhinandana Grantha*, Jodhpur, 1968, pp. 1-9.

²See section on the Jaina divinites, p. 180.

³*SBE*, XXII.

tion he received *Kevala jñāna* or the highest knowledge. He is said to have led a community of 84,000 śramaṇas, 300,000 nuns and other lay-devotees. He renounced his kingdom in favour of his sons and embraced the life of an ascetic.

According to the Jaina tradition, at the time of the Mahābhārata war, the Order was led by Neminātha, the twenty-second Tīrthaṅkara who is said to have belonged to the same Yādava family as Kṛṣṇa. If the Mahābhārata war was fought in the 9th century B.C., a theory to which we are inclined to subscribe¹, Neminātha may also be assigned to that period. It imparts some strength to his historicity² because Pārśvanātha, the 23rd Tīrthaṅkara is usually placed in the eighth century B.C. The historicity of other Tīrthaṅkaras who preceded Neminātha is as yet a matter entirely of the Jaina faith.

Pārśvanātha

Jainism gathered particular strength during the eighth century B.C. under Pārśvanātha.³ He is said to have been the son of Vāmā, wife of Aśvasena, king of Banaras. He was the people's favourite or 'beloved of men' (*Purisādāniya*). He lived for 30 years as a householder. Then "after fasting 3½ days without drinking water, he put on a divine robe and together with 300 men . . . entered the state of houselessness." On the 84th day of his deep meditation he obtained *Kevala jñāna*. Subsequently, he had "an excellent community of 16,000 śramaṇas with Āryadatta at their head", numerous others with separate heads and 2,000 female disciples. Pārśva died at the age of 100 'on the summit of Mount Sammeta' (Parasnath or Pareśanātha here, near Gomoh railway station) about 250 years before Mahāvīra's death. This gap between him and Mahāvīra, usually regarded as true, places him in the 8th century B.C.

The religion of Pārśva was called '*chāujjāma dhamma*' (*chāturyāma dharma*) enjoining four vows of abstinence from violence (*pañcāvāya* or *himsā*), untruth (*mushāvāya* or *asatya*), stealing (*adinnādāna* or *steya*) and possession (*bahiddhādāna* or *parigraha*).

¹Cf. Goyal, S. R., 'Mahābhārata aur Dāśarājña Yuddhon kī Tithiyān', *Purākalpa*, Varanasi, 1974, IV, No. 1, pp. 5-18.

²It however does not mean that the details of his life as given in the Jaina texts are necessarily correct.

³See, Muni, Devendra, *Bhagavāna Pārśva: eka Samīkshātmaka Adhyayana*, Poona, 1969; cf. also Shastri, Permanand Jain, 'Bhagavāna Pārśvanātha', *Anekānta*, XVIII, No. 6, 1966, pp. 269-74.

According to Jaina scholars though the vow of chastity (*maithuna-viramaṇa* or *brahmacharya*) is not explicitly stated, yet it is implied in the 4th vow of *aparigraha*. These four vows show that Pārśva based his order of monks on moral principles and his first vow of non-violence suggests that he raised his voice of protest against animal sacrifices of the Vedic Brāhmaṇas. According to the *Āchārāṅga* Mahāvīra's parents, who were worshippers of Pārśva, 'repented, confessed and did penance according to their sins, and on a bed of Kuśa grass rejected all food their bodies drying up by the last mortification of the flesh which ends in death.' This shows Pārśva's leanings towards repentance and self-mortification. He apparently taught that self-control (*saṁyama*) results in the cessation of karman and penance leads to its annihilation.

From the *Kalpasūtras* we learn that Pārśva had organised his Church by brining all his disciples under four classes (monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen) each headed by a Gaṇadhara. Pushpachūlā was the chief controller (*gaṇinī*) of the nunnery. The mention of nuns and laywomen suggests that he did not neglect women.

The belief in the historicity of Pārśva is confirmed by the Jaina canon which not only gives us some idea of his doctrines but preserves anecdotes about his followers. The account of Keśī, one of his disciples, in the canonical books is quite realistic. He is said to have converted King Paēsi to the faith of Pārśva. He also held a disputation with Goyama (Gautama Indrabhūti), the chief disciple of Mahāvīra. Several other disciples of Pārśva¹ are said to have expressed a desire to exchange the religion of the four vows of Pārśva for the one with five vows of Mahāvīra. As noted above, even the parents of Mahāvīra are said to have belonged to the lay-following of Pārśva. Moreover, Jacobi has conclusively shown that a Buddhist Sūtra (*Sāmaññaphalasutta*) mistakenly attributes to Mahāvīra the religion of the four vows, which really belonged to Pārśva. Such a mistake could only have occurred if Pārśva actually had some following at that time. The conversation between Keśī and Goyama (Gautama) in the *Uttarādhayana* testifies to the friendly relations between the followers of Pārśva and Mahāvīra and points out that, in spite of some minor differences, the two

¹According to *Vyākhyāprajñapti* 9.32 Gāṅgeya, a follower of Pārśva, accepted the *pañchamahāvratas* of Mahāvīra. Such other followers of Pārśva were Ārya Kālāsavesiyaputta, Peḍhalaputta, etc.

ance of *ahimsā* devolving from the postulations of forms of life such as *prthvirkāyas*, *vāyu-kāyas*, *tejaḥ-kāyas* and *vanaspati kāyas*. These last elements, usually termed animistic, are the proof and measure of the antiquity of Jainism. Williams also believes that the ideals from which they evolved was particularly popular in Gujarat and were associated with a system of number magic in which the figure four was of paramount importance and the cult of sacred mountains, one of which, namely Girnar, was closely linked with Neminātha.¹

Life of Mahāvīra

Mahāvīra was born in a suburb of Vaiśālī, called Kuṇḍagrama, now known as Basukuṇḍa. His original name was Vardhamāna. The more popular name Mahāvīra is said to have been bestowed on him by the gods. He has also been given a number of epithets like *Nāyaputta* 'a scion of the Nāya clan', *Kāsava* on account of his gotra, *Vesāliya* after his place of birth, and *Vedehadinna* after his native country. The Nāya clan to which he belonged is known as Nāta (or Nāta) in Pali and Jñātṛ in Sanskrit. His parents were Siddhārtha, a wealthy nobleman, and Triśalā, also called Priyākāriṇī and Videhadattā, sister of Cheṭaka, the Licchhavi chief. According to the Śvetāmbara tradition his embryo was transferred from the womb of the Brāhmaṇa lady Devānandā,² wife of Rshabha, to that of Kshatriyāṇī Triśalā since a Brāhmaṇī or a woman of any other low family was not worthy to give birth to a Tīrthaṅkara. As the *Kalpasūtra* states the king of gods on learning of the descent of Mahāvīra into the womb of Devānandā reflected, "It never has happened, nor does it happen, nor will it happen that Arhats, Chakravartins, Baladevas or Vāsudevas, in the past, present or future should be born in low families, poor families, indigent families, beggars' families or Brāhmaṇical families."³ In the Canon Mahāvīra himself speaks of Devānandā as his mother and of the role of Hariṇegamesi in the transference of the embryo. A sculpture

¹Williams, R. 'Before Mahāvīra', *JRAS*, 1966, Pt. 1-2, pp. 2-6.

²For an interpretation of the dream of Devānandā see Gupta, S. K., 'Devānandā's Dream: An Interpretation of its Symbolism', *Jiyñāsā*, Jaipur, 1, No 3-4, pp. 128-47.

³Jacobi, *Jaina Sūtras*, I, p. 225.

from Mathurā also represents this scene.¹

At the normal age Mahāvīra was married to Yaśodā (daughter of King Samaravīra of Vasantapura or of King Jitaśatru of Kaliṅga) who gave birth to a daughter called Aṇojjā or Priyadarśanā. She was married to his sister's son Jamāli, whose name is not found in older sources. It may have been due to the ignominious role he played in the first schism of the Jaina Church.

As he did not wish to grieve his parents, Mahāvīra renounced the world only after their death and that too after taking the permission of his elder brother Nandivardhana. He was at that time 30 years old. After entering the life of houselessness he wore clothes for a year and a month and then walked about naked. For more than 12 years he neglected his body and practised extreme self-mortification. The *Āchārāṅga* gives us a beautiful picture of the way in which he performed his meditation and spent his days in austerities, and also of the treatment he received from the unfriendly people of the neighbouring countries. He was born with three types of knowledge. During the 13th year outside the town Jṃbhikāgrāma on the bank of the river Ṛjupālikā, not far from an old temple, in the field of the householder Sāmāga, under a śāla tree he obtained the fourth type of knowledge or Omniscience (*Kevala jñāna*).

An important event of Mahāvīra's life was his meeting with Gosāla Maṅkhaliputta, the head of the Ājīvika sect. According to the one-sided account of the *Bhagavatīsūtra* Gosāla became a pupil of Mahāvīra in the second year of his monkhood and remained with him for six years. Then came a breach between the two on the point of rejuvenation (*supra*) and may be, also on other points. Gosāla proclaimed himself a Jina and lived in Śrāvastī. The two met again sixteen years later and again quarrelled. Gosāla died soon after, some 16 years before Mahāvīra.²

Whether Mahāvīra had been a pupil of Gosāla or *vice versa* is a debatable question, but there are parallelisms between the Ājīvika and the Jaina doctrines. According to Jacobi it is quite probable that some rigid Jaina rules for monks came from the code of the

¹According to the Śvetāmbaras the birth-place of Mahāvīra is Lachhwar or Lachhwad in the southern part of Monghyr Distt. The Digambaras, however, give this honour to Kuṇḍalapura near Nālandā.

²*AIU*, p. 414.

excellent community of 14,000 Śramanas with Indrabhūti at their head, several thousand nuns with Chandanā as their leader and innumerable lay-votaries and hundreds of sages to preach his tenets.¹ The *Kalpasūtra* states that he had nine Ganas and eleven Ganadhāras. His eleven Ganadhāras were Indrabhūti, Agnibhūti, Vāyubhūti, Āryavyakta, Sudharman, Mandikaputra, Mauryaputra, Akampita, Acālabhīratī, Metārya and Prabhāsa, each of whom had a large body of Samanas whom they had taught. All these eleven Ganadhāras are said to have died at Rājagṛha after 'fasting a month without drinking water'. The *Kalpasūtra* mentions 14 other disciples and numerous śhāvikas who had preached Jainism in different channels (śākhās). Sudharman, the fifth of the eleven Ganadhāras, became the head of the Jaina church after Mahāvīra and was in turn succeeded by his chief disciple, Jambu.²

The *Urdhvasaṁskāra* tells us of ten chief lay devotees of Mahāvīra: (1) Ānanda and his wife, (2) Kāmadeva, (3) Chulampiya, (4) Saradeva, (5) Chulasayaga, (6) Kundakoliya (who met Gosāla but remained unshaken in the faith of Mahāvīra), (7) Saddālaputta, (8) Mahāsayaga, (9) Nandinīpāyā and (10) Sālikupya.³

At the age of 72 Mahāvīra died at a place called Majjhimā Pāvā (which may suggest that, contrary to his usual practice, he resided inside the town on account of his illness) in the house of a ruler of the name of Sasupāla (Satthivāla). This place is said to be the modern Pāvāpurī (Panna District). We are told that on the night of his death the kings of the over-riens, the Mallas and the Licchāvikas, celebrated the lamp festival in his honour.⁴

The date of Mahāvīra, like that of the Buddha, occupies a very important place in ancient Indian chronology. Generally speaking, two dates of Mahāvīra's death hold the field. They are (1) 527 B.C. (supported by Eoernie, Guerinot, etc.) and (2) 467 B.C. (accepted by Jacobi, Carpenter, etc.). The former is based on the tradition recorded by Merutunga, the famous Jaina author, who flourished in the fourteenth century. According to him Mahāvīra entered Nirvāna 470 years before the commencement of the Vikrama era (that

Chakravorty, H., *Ascetism in Ancient India*, p. 124.

¹Ibid., p. 125.

²Ibid.

³Chatterji, *AIU*, p. 415.

is in $57+470=527$ B.C.).¹ The second date, i.e. 467 B.C. is based on a tradition recorded by Hemachandra (1088–1172 A.D.), who says that 155 years after the liberation of Mahāvīra Chandragupta Maurya became king (*Sthavirāvalīcharita*, *Parīśiṣṭaparvan*, VIII. 339). However elsewhere² we have given reasons to believe that Mahāvīra died three years earlier than Buddha's nirvāṇa in 483 B.C. His death therefore took place in 486 B.C. and birth in 558 B.C.

Jaina Tenets: Jīva and Ajīva Tattvas

From a study of the evolution of the Jaina Canon (*infra*, Ch. 9) it is obvious that not much of the discourses of Mahāvīra has survived in its original form. But the remarkable conservatism of Jainism makes it possible that the fundamentals of the creed, as it is found in the present Canon, 'are very old indeed and essentially those of Mahāvīra.'³ Like Buddhism, original Jainism believed in *dukkha-vāda*, theory of *karman* and *saṃsāra* (transmigration). Further like Buddhism it rejected the authority of the Vedas and attached no importance to the cult of sacrifices. But here the similarities between the two end (*infra*, p. 191 f.), for the detailed teachings of Mahāvīra follow the course of pluralistic realism. His religion was primarily a teaching of severe discipline, founded on the philosophical basis of the primordial duality and opposition of *jīva* (spirit) and *ajīva* (matter). His philosophy might be summed up in one sentence: The living and the non-living by coming into contact with each other, forge certain energies which bring about birth, death and various experiences of life; this process could and must be stopped, and the energies already forged destroyed by a course of discipline leading to salvation.⁴ This statement involves seven propositions: first, there is something called the living (*jīva*); secondly, there is something called the non-living (*ajīva*); thirdly, the two come into contact with each other (*āsrava*); fourthly, the contact leads to the production of some energies (*bandha*); fifthly, the process of contact could be stopped (*saṃvara*); sixthly, the existing energies could also be

¹Cf. Muni Shri Nagrajji, *The Contemporaneity and the Chronology of Mahāvīra and Buddha*, Calcutta, 1964.

²Cf. our Chapter on the chronology of the early Magadhan empire and the dates of the Buddha and Mahāvīra in the *Māgadhā Sāmrājya kā Udaya*, ed. by Goyal and Gupta, p. 148 ff.

³Cf. Jain, J. L., *Outlines of Jainism*, 1916.

⁴Jain, H. L., in *CHI*, I, p. 403.

exhausted (*nirjarā*): and lastly, salvation (*moksha* or *mukti*) could be achieved. These seven propositions are called the seven *tattvas* or realities by the Jainas.¹

The first two of these seven propositions—that there is a *jīva* or soul and that there is an *ajīva* or non-soul—exhaust between them all that exists in the universe. The soul or *jīva* by itself, is imperceptible, but its presence may be known by the presence of its *guṇas* (qualities) in a material body. Its essential characteristic is consciousness, which is accompanied by sense activity, respiration, and a certain period of existence in a particular body. There is an infinite number of such souls in the universe both of immobile (*sthavara*) and mobile (*trasa*) kinds. They retain their individuality throughout and acquire the shape of the body in which they reside.

Consciousness being the characteristic of a soul, knowledge is inherent in every living being,² but its stage of development differs. It may be knowledge derived through senses (*mati jñāna*) or through scriptures (*śruta jñāna*), or of objects remote from one in time and space (*avadhi jñāna*), or of others' mind (*manaḥ paryāya jñāna*) or supreme knowledge (*kevala jñāna*).

Jīvas are by nature perfect, possessed of the qualities of infinite perception, infinite knowledge,³ infinite power and infinite bliss. There is no God or Supreme soul over and above them. But with the exception of only a few of them they have fallen into the grip of matter and are being forced by it through a round of existence as *saṃsārī* or living beings.⁴ The soul's subjection to *pudgala* or matter is the result of its own activities. Affected by affection, aversion or infatuation the soul generates a sort of magnetic energy and attracts to itself the infra-atomic particles of matter called *karman*. *Karman*, the immaterial principle of other Indian religions, is thus

¹*Ibid.*

²Cf. Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 356.

³"That in its pure state soul possesses infinite knowledge formed one of the leading dogmas. The 'pure' knowledge (*Kevalajñāna*) of the soul, it was supposed, mirrored the entire universe within itself. . . . In it all knowable forms belonging to all time become, as it were, revealed in a single flash, which is, however, not to say that it was a mere momentary knowledge." (Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 356 f.).

⁴Jain, K. C., 'Soul in Jainism', *Munishrī Mishrimalji Mahārāja Abhinandana Grantha*, pp. 71-75.

conceived of as a matter in Jainism. However, the Jainas hold that even in the state of bondage soul's power of action is not wholly lost, though its exercise in the absence of true knowledge only leads to more bondage. It was a cardinal principle with the Jainas that though man's own actions are responsible for his troubles yet he is capable of working out his own salvation. This is what is meant by their calling themselves Karmavādins and Khyāvādins.¹

The second reality or *tattva* is *aḥira*, the lifeless substance, whose chief characteristic is that it lacks consciousness. It is of five kinds: *puḍgala*, *dharma*, *adharmā*, *ākāśa* and *kāla*. Together with *jīva*, these five categories of *aḥira* constitute the six real substances (*dravyas*) that exist in the universe.

Puḍgala denotes matter or material objects in general. It is the physical basis of the universe just as the *jīva tattva* is the psychological. The elements of nature—earth, water, fire, and air—are all great manifestations of matter. It is uncreated, indestructible, and real; so, the material world is not a figment of imagination but is substantially real, real independently of the perceiving mind. The test for assessing the realistic aspect of any philosophical system is the question: 'Does the world exist outside the perceiving mind or not?' If the answer is that it exists independently of one's own perception, it is symptomatic of the realist position; if not, it indicates an idealist philosophy. The basic definition of *puḍgala* which stands for matter in Jainism is "that which can be experienced by the five sense organs." Hence the Jaina philosophy is a realist philosophy. Each sense organ is capable of giving the perceiver one type of knowledge of the external world; the sum-total of the knowledge thus derived represents the various aspects of the world.

According to Jainas a second definition of matter is arrived at from the etymology of the word *puḍgala*. The term *puḍ* refers to the process of combination and *gala* stands for dissociation. Therefore matter is that which undergoes modifications by combinations and dissociations. The exact significance of this definition can be gathered by analysing the Jaina view of the ultimate constituents of matter. When any object is divided, the parts obtained by division can be further divided; but the process of division cannot be indefinitely continued; for sooner or later a portion is reached when no further division is possible. This is truly the ultimate

¹Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 357 f.

statement of matter, referred to by the term *anu* or *paramānu* (atom) in Jain philosophy. The combination of such atoms gives rise to the molecules referred to as *skandha*. It is the combination of molecules that is responsible for the different types of objects, possessing various qualities. It is also held that 'out of molecules composed of even a later number of atoms, some are visible and some invisible'. The visibility or general perceptibility of the molecules is dependent on the combined process of division and re-division.

Molecules or *skandha* are of six types: (i) *Blāṅka-bhāṅka*: This type of *skandha* is such a solid when split cannot regain the original, undivided form. (ii) *Pīṅka*: When split this type of *skandha* (such as iron) has the capacity to join together. (iii) *Blāṅka-sūksma*: This type of *skandha* appears gross but is really subtle. It can neither be split nor is capable of being pierced through or taken up in hand. Sun, heat, shadow, light, darkness, etc. are the examples of the type. (iv) *Sūksma-bhāṅka*: This type of *skandha* also appears gross but is also subtle. Sensations of touch, smell, colour and sound are typical examples of this type. (v) and (vi): Both of these are extremely subtle and beyond sense-perception. The particles of *luzman* are cited as their example.

The Jain view of Reality as Identity and Change is clearly reflected in its atomic theory. The changes we experience in the objects are due to the different modes of combination of atoms, but underlying all the changing modes is the fact that there is the identity of the ultimate constituents, the atoms. The atoms themselves do not change, only the modes of their combinations undergo that change, producing the various objects.¹

The second kind of *añā* is named *dharma*. It is quite imperceptible, though it fills the entire universe of life and matter (*lokākāśa*). It has none of the characteristic qualities of life or matter, but forms the medium of motion, which is possible only through its existence.²

Adharma is the necessary counterpart of *dharma*. It also pervades the whole universe and serves as a medium of rest, 'like the shade of a tree helping the wayfarer to stop for rest.' It will thus be seen that *dharma* and *adharma* are two non-physical, inactive conditions of movement and rest respectively, conceived as real substances. They

¹Jain, J. L., *ibid.*

²CHI, I, p. 405.

are different from righteousness and unrighteousness, for which the Jainas use the terms *puṇya* and *pāpa*.

The fourth *ajīva* substance is *ākāśa* (space). Like *dharma* and *adharma* it is non-material. Its nature is to provide space for the existence of all other entities. However, unlike the other substances, it is infinite. Only a part of it, called the *lokākāśa*, is occupied by other substances. The other part, which is void, is called *alokākāśa*. *Dharma*, *adharma* and *ākāśa* are, thus, mediums or conditions of motion, rest and subsistence respectively and all the three are interpenetrating.¹

The fifth and last *ajīva* substance is *kāla* (time). It also pervades the whole *lokākāśa* in the form of single, independent, minute points that never mix together to form a composite body. It brings about changes or modifications in all the other substances and affords them extension in time, which, by itself, is beginningless and endless.² These five varieties of *ajīva*, together with the *jīva*, form the six substances (*dravyas*) that exist in the universe.

Other Five Tattvas: Theory of Moksha

The third *tattva* in the Jaina philosophy is the contact of the soul with matter (*āsrava*). The Jainas do not postulate the existence of a God or Supreme being creating, destroying and recreating the world. *Jīvas* exist in the world from time eternal in association with matter. The *jīva* is always surrounded by a large volume of fine matter called *karman*. This invades the *jīva* and settles down on it whenever the *jīva* is found to be affected by the activities of the body, mind or speech. This contact leads to the formation of what is called the *karmāṇa śarīra* (body of subtle *karman* matter), corresponding to the *liṅga* or *sūkshma śarīra* (subtle body) of the Sāṅkhya philosophy which accompanies the soul throughout life as well as in its migrations from one body to another.³ That the *karmāṇa śarīra* is formed of the actual matter is proved by the fact that it has both weight and matter.

¹*Ibid.*

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*, p. 407; for a detailed study of the Jaina theory of *karman* Cf. Mittal, K. K., 'The Jaina View of Karma', *Bulletin of the Institute of Post-Graduate (Evening) Studies*, Delhi, 1965, pp. 102-6; Jain, Bhagchandra, 'The Jaina Theory of Karma as Reflected in Pāli Literature', *Nagpur University Journal*, XVI, No. 2, 1966, pp. 168-76.

Bandha or bondage is the fourth reality in Jaina religion. The *karmāṇa śarīra* binds the soul in eight different ways. One may, by special efforts, shorten or prolong the effects of karmas. He can also destroy or render ineffectual the existing bondages. This is the subject of the next two realities *saṁvara* and *nirjarā*. *Saṁvara* is the prevention of fresh inflow of the karmas by systematic control of mental and physical activities and *nirjarā* is the destruction of existing karmas by certain austerities. Karmas might exhaust themselves by fructifying and leave the soul free. But this natural process must be hastened by deliberate effort. The best way of annihilating karmas is to practise *tapas*. Mortifying the physical self is an attack on karmas. It expels them from the soul before the time of their natural exhaustion. Jainism thus greatly underlines the value of asceticism and extols the practice of self-torture, fasting and even starving oneself to death.¹ As pointed out by Winternitz there is a remarkable contradiction between this exaggerated love of death on the part of Jaina saints and their exaggerated fear of killing any living being. Perhaps here one may recognise "a distinctly psychopathological element in much of self-torture and self-abnegation that goes by the name of asceticism."² Yet it must also be admitted that according to the Jaina view what is outwardly death of a saint is really the last stage of his attainment of freedom.

When one succeeds in destroying the existing karmas by austerities, the soul realizes its inherent qualities of supreme knowledge and unlimited happiness. It attains salvation (*Moksha* or *Mukti*), and becomes a perfect being—*siddha*. *Moksa* is the seventh *tattva* or reality. Liberated from the bondage of matter, the *jīva* 'at once rises to the top of the universe, above the highest heaven, where it remains in inactive omniscience and bliss through all eternity'. It

¹In certain conditions Jainism permits "voluntary religious suicide". "According to Jainism, dying is as much an art as living. A layman is expected not only to live a disciplined life but also to die bravely a detached death. There are elaborate rules about voluntary death (*sallekhanā*), which has been practised not only by the Jaina monks but also by pious laymen; and we have innumerable inscriptions commemorating the detached deaths of pious Jainas. This voluntary death is to be distinguished from suicide, which Jainism looks upon as a cowardly sin. When faced by calamity, famine, old age, and disease, against which there is no remedy, a pious Jaina peacefully relinquishes his body, being inspired by a higher religious ideal." (A. N. Upadhye).

²ERE, II, p. 63.

recovers its pristine purity and power and exists in the state of *Siddhahood* (perfection) “without caste, unaffected by smell, without the sense of taste, without feeling, without form, without hunger, without old age, without death, without body, without Karma enjoying an endless unbroken calm.”¹

The Ratna Traya

The quientessence of the Jaina theory of *moksha* is contained in the *triratna* concept of *Samyagdarśana*, *Samyak jñāna* and *Samyak charitra*. *Samyagdarśana* is considered to be the prime cause of *moksha* because it paves the way to right knowledge and right conduct. The *Yasastilaka* tells us that “it is the prime cause of salvation just as the foundation is the mainstay of a palace, good luck that of beauty, life that of bodily enjoyment, royal power that of victory, culture that of nobility and policy that of government”. The *Uttarādhyanasūtra* explains that right knowledge remains unattainable in the absence of right belief and rightness of conduct is out of the question without right knowledge. *Samyagdarśana* itself is defined as faith in the seven *tattvas* viz., *jīva*, *ajīva*, *āsrava*, *bandha*, *saṁvara*, *nirjarā* and *moksha*. The Jaina argument is that a person who has faith in the seven *tattvas* (right faith) gains right knowledge (*Samyak jñāna*)—right in the spiritual sense and not merely in the epistemological sense.

Right knowledge or *Samyak jñāna* as spiritual knowledge enables the individual to appreciate the nature of the *jīva* in its proper perspective which in turn enables him to adopt the practical steps leading to *moksha*. This is right conduct (*Samyagcharitra*). Thus the integrated nature of the ethico-spiritual discipline leading to liberation was realized by the Jaina philosophers. This is evident from their belief that none of the three *ratnas*—right faith, right knowledge or right conduct—can be pursued meaningfully and effectively in isolation. Faith, knowledge and ethical living—all three are regarded as important and significant for attaining salvation. The Jainas, however, insist that in the absence of faith the other two do not work. Modern psychology has also proved that ‘faith’ has in it the key to any cure.

¹See Venkatarama Iyer, M. K. ‘*Jīvanamukti*—The case for and against it’, *Vedantakesarī*, LI, No. 1, pp. 153–58.

Theories of God and Pañcha Parameshthins

As observed earlier the Jaina philosophy is opposed to *Sṛṣṭivāda*. According to the Jainas there is no creation of the world, nor is there any Creator necessary to explain the nature of the world. Thus there is no place in Jainism for God as creator and distributor of prize for good conduct and punishment for bad deeds. By a God Jainism understands a liberated soul as well as the Tīrthaṅkara, Omniscient Beings, who provide the highest ideal to which every soul can aspire. In this sense a God is an example to inspire and guide. Thus the Jaina conception of God is basically different from that of Hinduism. But Jainism lacks neither devotional fervour nor ceremonial rituals. The Jainas offer prayers to the liberated souls whom they look upon as Gods, worship them in the concrete form of images and meditate on them¹. The different types of devotion recognised in Jainism are *stuti*, *vandanā*, *pratimā pūjana*, *nāma-smaraṇa*, *bhājana-kīrtana*, *vinaya*, *vaiyavṛtīya*, etc.²

Thus the Jaina view agrees with the Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā in emphasizing the potency of *karma* as the basic principle of *saṃsāra* (relative world) but differs from it in maintaining the doctrine of Sarvajñas. It, however, resembles Vedānta in holding that every individual Jīva is potentially a Paramātman. According to the Jaina view after conquering all the karmas and destroying all the bonds or worldly attachments, the Self exists in its supreme purity as Siddha-parameshthīn endowed with the qualities of infinite perception, infinite knowledge, infinite bliss, and infinite power. Such a Parameshthīn with infinite qualities is the conqueror of *saṃsāra*, is the Jina, a God, and serves as the ideal to be aimed at by all persons who desire to escape from the cycle of transmigration.

After the Siddha-parameshthīns, the Jainas recognize the Arhat-parameshthīns. They represent a lower stage in liberation than the Siddha-parameshthīn because they are still attached with a body. Otherwise there is no difference between the two.³ They are important from the human point of view, because it is in this stage of Arhathood that the Arhats or Tīrthaṅkaras periodically reveal, for

¹Cf. Upadhye, A. N., *op. cit.*

²Cf. Sogani, Kamal Chand, 'The Concept of Devotion in Jainism', *Vishveshvaranand Indological Journal*, III, 1965, pp. 80-92.

³Sogani, K. C., 'The Concept of Arhanta (Arhat) in Jainism', *Munishrī Mishrīmālji Mahārāja Abhinandana Grantha*, pp. 10-14.

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¹*Ibid.*

²*Ibid.*

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The Jaina Divinities

The Jainas worship the images¹ of their Tīrthaṅkaras, gods and many subsidiary divinities. The Jaina gods and divinities are the various categories of superior beings. The Jaina texts like *Āchāra Dinakara*, *Uttarādhyayanāsūtra* and *Abhidhāna Chintāmaṇi* give a classification of gods and goddesses and show that many of them were adaptations from the Brāhmaṇical pantheon. The principal Jaina divinities are the 24 Tīrthaṅkaras or Jinas. Each of them is characterised by his respective cognisance, which is usually carved in the centre of the pedestal of his image. They also have their individual Upāsakas and Śāsandevatās, who are sometimes described in the texts as the attendant Yakshas and Yakshiṅīs. The main order of the Jaina divine hierarchy can be shown thus in a tabular form²:

<i>Name of the Jina</i>	<i>Cognisance</i>	<i>Upāsaka</i>	<i>Śāsandevatā</i>
1. Ādinātha	Bull	Gomukha	Chakreśvarī
2. Ajitanātha	Elephant	Mahāyaksha	Ajitalalā
3. Sambhavanātha	Horse	Trimukha	Duritāri
4. Abhinandanātha	Monkey	Yakshanāyaka	Kālikā
5. Sumatinātha	Krauñcha bird	Tumburu	Mahākālī
6. Padmaprabha	Lotus	Kusuma	Śyāmā
7. Supārśvanātha	Svastika	Mātaṅga	Śāntā
8. Chandraprabha	Moon	Vijaya	Bhikuṭī
9. Suvidhinātha	Makara	Ajita	Sutārakā
10. Śitalanātha	Śrīvatsa	Brahmā	Aśokā
11. Śreyāṃśanātha	Rhinoceros	Yakshet	Mānavī
12. Vāsupūjya	Buffalo	Kumāra	Chañḍā
13. Vimalanātha	Boar	Shaṅmukha	Viditā
14. Anantanātha	Falcon	Pātāla	Aṅkuśā
15. Dharmanātha	Thunderbolt	Kinnara	Kandarpā
16. Śāntinātha	Deer	Garuḍa	Nirvāṇī
17. Kunthunātha	Goat	Gandharva	Balā
18. Aranātha	Nandyāvarta	Yakshet	Dhāriṇī
19. Mallinātha	Pitcher	Kubera	Dharaṇapriyā
20. Munisuvrata	Tortoise	Varuṇa	Naradattā
21. Naminātha	Blue lotus	Bhṛkuṭī	Gāndhārī
22. Neminātha	Conchshell	Gomedha	Ambikā
23. Pārśvanātha	Snake	Pārśva	Padmāvati
24. Mahāvīra	Lion	Mātaṅga	Siddhāyikā

¹One of the earliest stone images in round found in India, from Lohanipur in Patna belonging to the Maurya-Śuṅga period is regarded as the image of a Tīrthaṅkara.

²As given in the *AIU*, p. 427.

The above table shows that there are some overlappings and repetitions in the nomenclature of the individual Yakshas or Upāsakas (No. 7 and 24 and 11 and 18) and in one instance the name of a Śāsanadevī occurs also as that of an Upāsaka (No. 8 and 21). There is no doubt that this elaborate grouping was the result of gradual growth and became stereotyped at a later period.

The subsidiary deities of the Jainas have been variously classified. Among them are included Hindu deities such as Śrī-Lakshmī, Gaṇeśa, Kubera, etc. and also the Navagrahas, the Digpālas, the Vidyādevīs and the Mātṛkās. The Vidyādevīs are sixteen in number. They include Rohiṇī, Prajñāpti, Kālī, Mahākālī, Gauri, Mānavī, etc. and are headed by Sarasvatī.

Theory of Knowledge: Saptanaya and Syādvāda

The Jainas admit five kinds of knowledge: *mati* (knowledge by means of senses and mind, including *smṛti* and *tarka*), *śruti* (knowledge by testimony), *avadhi* (knowledge of things even at a distance of time and place, that is by clairvoyance), *manaḥparayāya* (direct knowledge of the thoughts of others as in telepathy) and *kevala* (perfect omniscience unlimited by space, time or objects). The first three kinds of knowledge are liable to error, while the last two cannot be wrong. The first two kinds of knowledge are indirect or *paroksha*, the rest are direct or *pratyaksha*. Chaitanya or consciousness is the essence of *jīva* and the two manifestations of chaitanya are perception (*darśana*) and intelligence (*jñāna*). In *darśana* details are not perceived, while in *jñāna* they are. In self-consciousness the subject and object of knowledge and knowledge itself are the different aspects of a single unity. In perfect condition the soul is pure *jñāna* and *darśana*. He is free from doubt, perversity and indefiniteness.¹

The knowledge is of two forms—*pramāṇa* (knowledge of a thing as it is in itself) and *naya* (knowledge of a thing in its relation). The doctrine of *nayas* or standpoints is a peculiar feature of Jainism. According to one scheme there are seven *nayas* (*sapta naya*) and all these lead to fallacies (*ābhāsas*) when each of them is taken separately and is treated as absolute or entire.

When we take a coordinated view of things, we are said to be resorting to *naigamanaya*. When we are inclined towards generaliz-

¹For details see Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, I, p. 294 ff.

ation and emphasise common features it is *saṅgrahanaya*; and when we are inclined towards particularization, it is *vyaḥhāranaya*. When a specific point or period of time is of the essence it is *rjusūtranaya*. It is, therefore, narrower than *vyaḥhāranaya*. *Śabdānaya* is based on the differentiation made according to the usage of language and grammar. When the derivative significance of words is overlooked and conventional meaning is accepted, it is *samabhirūḍhanaya*. And finally, when words are used exactly in their original derivative sense and significance, it is *evambhūtanaya*. The first three of these seven *nayas* (*saptanaya*) are grouped under *dravyanaya* and the last four under *prayānanaya*.

The Saptanaya theory is based on the fact that all philosophical disputes arise out of a confusion of standpoints. The Jinas illustrate it by the story of the six blind men who each laid hands on a different part of the body of elephant and tried to describe the whole animal on its basis. It was he who saw the whole that realized that each of them had only a portion of truth. The most important use of these standpoints is of course the *Anekāntavāda* or *Syādvāda*, which comes to this that we cannot affirm or deny anything absolutely about any object. Every proposition is true but only under certain conditions. We may make seven assertions, seemingly contradictory but perfectly true, about a thing: It is (*syād asti*); It is not (*syād nāsti*); it is and is not (*syād asti-nāsti*); it is indescribable (*syād avaktavya*); it is and indescribable (*syād asti cha avaktavyam cha*); it is not and is indescribable (*syād nāsti cha avaktavyam cha*); it is, is not, and is indescribable (*syād asti nāsti cha avaktavyam cha*). A man is the father, and is not the father, and is both—these are all perfectly intelligible statements, if one understands the point of view from which they are made. In relation to a particular boy he is the father; in relation to another boy he is not the father; in relation to both the boys taken together he is the father and is not the father. Since both the ideas cannot be conveyed in words at the same time, he may be called indescribable; still he is the father and is indescribable; and so on. Thus, the philosophy of Anekānta is neither self-contradictory nor vague or indefinite; on the contrary it represents a very sensible view of things in a systematized form.¹ This is equivalent to saying that knowledge is only probable.

¹CHI, I, p. 406; cf. Amar Chand, 'Jaina Darśana men Saptabhaṅgīvāda', *Anekānta*, XVII, No. 6, 1965, pp. 152-58.

It, however, does not mean that it only implied agnosticism or metaphysical nihilism. The negative result of such a theory of knowledge is apparently agnosticism, but even out of this the Jainas evolved a philosophy.¹

Whether Syādvāda and Saptanaya dialectics were already postulated in the age of Mahāvīra is a debatable question. Jacobi feels that the theory was formulated by Mahāvīra himself but according to G. C. Pande as the early texts are silent on the Saptabhaṅgī dialectics it will perhaps not be unreasonable to infer that this remarkably complex and subtle theory was a later development. It is true that the *Bhagavatī* and *Pannaṇā* refer to the sevenfold Naya, but these texts contain a good deal of later material.² In fact, as Jacobi has elsewhere himself pointed out, the Jainas do not associate any doctrinal innovation with Mahāvīra.³

Jaina Ethics: Path to Salvation

The Moksha-mārga (path to salvation) of Jainism consists of *Samyag-darśana* (right faith), *Samyak jñāna* (right knowledge), and *Samyag-charitra* (right conduct), known as *triratnas* (the three jewels—cf. p. 177). These are basically different from the Bhakti-mārga of the Bhāgavatas, Jñāna-mārga of the Vedāntins, and Karma-mārga of the Mīmāṃsakas. Unlike these religious schools, which lay all the emphasis either on *bhakti*, or *jñāna*, or *karman*, as means of salvation, the Jainas believe that all the three must co-exist in a person, if he is to attain salvation. Just as a medicine can cure a malady only when one has faith in its efficacy and knowledge of its use and actually does take it, the path of *moksha* must consist of all these three elements.⁴

The most important vows of a Jaina are five, namely, he shall not do violence to other living beings (*ahiṃsā*); he shall speak the truth (*satya*); he shall not commit theft (*asteya*); he shall not commit adultery (*brahmacharya*); and he shall set a limit to his greed for worldly possessions (*aparigraha*). Their observance presents many difficulties in the day-to-day life of householders. For example, as the critics of Jainism have argued, “there are living beings in water and on land and in the sky. When the whole world is teeming with life how will the medicant be free from violence”? (*Jale jantuḥ sthale*

¹Ghatage, *AIV*, p. 424.

²Pande, *Origins*, p. 353.

³*Ibid.*, p. 354.

⁴*CHI*, I, p. 430.

janturākaṣe Jantureva cha|Jantumālākule loke katham bhikshura-himsakāḥ).¹ Hence, for the Jaina householders the *vratas* have been prescribed in a less rigorous form, and for this reason they are called *aṇuvratas*. In their more rigorous form prescribed for the ascetics they are called the *mahāvratas*. The *aṇuvratas* are minor code of morals and are of limited application while *mahāvratas* are the major code of morals and are applied without limitation. It is not that the partial observance of *ahiṃsā* by a householder will cause no karmāic bondage, but it will be of a minor type, its intensity being proportionate to the intensity of the passion of the man committing it and to the grade of life injured.

Of the five principles *ahiṃsā* or non-violence is considered to be the most important. Actually the most important characteristic of Jainism is its insistence on the strict observance of the principle of non-violence. The term *ahiṃsā* is sometimes interpreted as strict non-killing and both the terms—non-violence and non-killing—seem to connote a negative teaching without a positive content. But the Jains look upon *ahiṃsā* as positive doctrine also. They emphasise that any action calculated to inflict injury on a living being is *hiṃsā*. Piercing, binding, overloading, and starving the animals are all forms of *hiṃsā*, and should be avoided. Even thinking ill of others or contemplation of injury is mental violence.

For giving practical guidance in this matter, injury to others has been divided according to the mental attitude of the person into four kinds²—accidental (e.g. when injury is inflicted on living beings in cooking, walking, bathing, etc.) occupational (e.g. when a soldier strikes his enemy), protective (e.g. when one kills an attacking tiger or a dacoit) and intentional (when one kills simply for the sake of killing, as for meat-eating and rituals). The householder is required to abstain fully from the fourth kind and to the best of his

¹Pande, G. C., *Śramaṇa Tradition*, p. 43; Cf. Vyas, Nitin J., 'The Concept of Ahiṃsā in Jainism', in *Aruṇa Bhārati*, Prof. A. N. Jani Felicitation Volume, ed. B. Datta, Baroda, 1983, pp. 107-114; Aman, G. L., 'The Jain Conception of Ahiṃsā', *Munishri Mishrimalji Maharaja Abhinandana Grantha*, pp. 24-32; Jindal, K. B., 'Jaina Ethics: Its Ideal and Viewpoint', *ibid.*, p. 65ff.; Boolchand, 'Ahimsa: The Basic Social Ethics', *Munishri Hazarimal Smṛti Grantha*, p. 27ff.; Bhattacharya, H., 'The Vratas Other than Ahimsā', *ibid.*, p. 88-93; Jindal, K. B., 'The Doctrines of Jainism,' *ibid.*, pp. 30-45; Sogani, Kamal Chand, 'The Concepts of Parisaha and Tapa in Jainism', *ibid.*, pp. 45-62.

²CHI, I, p. 408 f.

ability from the other three, while an ascetic is expected to abstain from all the types of violence.

The Jainas were extremely critical of the Buddhists who allowed their monks to eat meat if they themselves did not kill the animals but got the meat in alms. The Jainas argue that but for the meat-eaters the butchers would not indulge in the act of killing the animals, and therefore meat-eaters are responsible (though indirectly) for killing. The Jainas were equally critical of the Vedic practice of sacrificing animals in their rituals which they regarded as violence committed in the name of religion.

The same kind of concession, as is allowed to a householder in the observance of *ahiṃsā*, is given to him in the observance of the other four vows. *Satya* or truth speaking is the second vow to be practised by all. It includes spreading false ideas, divulging secrets of others, back-biting, forging of documents, breach of trust, etc. In the case of the householder the strict observance of the principle is not insisted. *Ahiṃsā* being the most important vow to be observed all other vows are to be observed in such a way that the vow of non-violence is not broken. In a situation where truth-speaking may ensue violence or killing, as for example in revealing the place in which a man is hiding (to escape from the robbers who are intent on killing) deliberate uttering of falsehood is considered more ethical.

The vow of *asteya* (non-stealing) signified strict adherence to one's own possessions, not even wanting to take hold of the possessions of others. According to the Jaina morality it would be theft if one takes away secretly or by force what does not belong to him, appropriates to himself what somebody else has forgotten or has dropped, accepts what he knows to be stolen property and instructs another person in the methods of stealing.¹ All the evil practices observed in trade and commerce such as adulterating the materials and not giving others their money's worth, not weighing and measuring properly and indulging in black-marketing constitute stealing (*steya*). Therefore *asteya vrata* consists of avoiding such malpractices.

In the case of the ascetic the vow of *brahmachayra* (celibacy) signifies complete abstention from sex. Even thoughts entertained about sex were considered to be as undersirable and unethical as

¹*CHI*, I, p. 409.

the sexual act itself. The principle of co-ordination of thought (*mana*), word (*vachana*) and deed (*karman*) is applicable here as well. It is obvious however that in the case of the householder the vow cannot be interpreted in its literal and strict sense. Therefore observing the vow of *brahmacharya* in the case of the householder signifies only being completely faithful to one's wife (or husband). A householder should look upon all other women as his mothers, sisters, or daughters. He would be violating the vow of *brahmacharya* even if he talks obscenity.

The meaning of the vow of *aparigraha* (non-possession) is obvious in the case of the ascetic since he has necessarily to renounce all his property and wealth before joining the saṅgha. But the mere physical renunciation is not of much value. Because of their constant association with him, it is very likely that thoughts about his former possessions may still linger on in his mind. The ascetic has to combat the tendency to retrospect about what he no longer 'possesses' by trying not to have even thoughts about the things he has renounced. But in the case of the householder *aparigraha* only signifies putting a stop to his desires for more than what he needs since a strict adherence to this vow by householders would be detrimental to society. On the other hand, by adopting the right or ethical methods in his profession he will help the society to derive the maximum benefit out of his skill in producing wealth. If a householder ever happens to earn more than that, he must spend it away in charities, the best and recognized forms of which are distribution of medicines and religious books, giving support to teachers, making provision for saving the lives of people in danger, and feeding the hungry and the poor.

The five vows are thus the guide-posts for man who is in search of his own self. The integrated pattern observable in the ethical principles is evident from the fact that all the principles are ultimately to be referred to the vow of *ahimsā*. From the householder's point of view, the *aṇuvratas* are meant to give him practice in self-control and renunciation. This purpose becomes more pronounced in the next three vows called *guṇavratas*. They are *digvrata* (not to travel in any direction beyond a certain distance in one's own life time), *deśavvrata* (prescribing further limits to movement for a specific period) and *anartha danḍavvrata* (setting limits on one's own belongings and occupations for a particular period).

The next four vows¹ called *śikshāvratas* take him a step further. The first of these is *sāmāyika* (periodical contemplation and mental renunciation of worldly possessions). Physical discipline is then secured by the next two vows, *poshadhopavāsa* (observing complete fast, reading scriptures and contemplating upon the self) and *bhogopabhogaparimāna* (adhering to a programme of food and comforts in a restrictive manner, both as regards quantity and quality). The last of the *śikshāvratas* is *atithi-saṁvibhāga* (feeding out each day of what is cooked for himself, such righteous and holy persons as may turn up at his house at the proper time).

These five *aṇuvratas*, three *gunavratas*, and four *śikshāvratas*, in all twelve, constitute the chief vows of a householder, and a proper observance of them means right conduct (*Samyagcharitra*)². But right conduct has to be preceded by right faith (*Samyagdarśana*) and right knowledge (*Samyak jñāna*). A deep devotion to those who have attained perfection or are on the way to it as well as to their teachings, constitutes right faith while right knowledge is the knowledge of the seven *tattvas*. The Jaina householder is expected to get rid of the three types of superstitious ignorance and the eight kinds of arrogance. The three types of superstitious ignorance are the three *mūḍhas*—*loka-mūḍha*, *deva-mūḍha*, and *pāshaṇḍī-mūḍha*.³ The *loka-mūḍha* refers to the general superstitions among people (e.g. the belief that by bathing in the so-called sacred rivers, or climbing up the hills, or walking through fire one acquires sanctity). The *devā-mūḍha* refers to the belief of the people in the powers of gods and goddesses who are supposedly endowed with human qualities and human emotions, and to the propitiation of such gods and goddesses with the object of securing certain selfish ends. The third refers to devotion to certain false ascetics and acceptance of their teaching as gospel truth. Freedom from these three types of superstition is the primary condition of right faith.

As it is mainly due to the passions that the soul becomes bound by the karmas, so anger, pride, deception, greed, etc. must be counteracted by the ten best virtues (*daśa dharmas*)—forgiveness, humility, straightforwardness, contentment, truthfulness, restraint, austerity, purity, chastity, and renunciation. To cultivate necessary religious attitude one should constantly reflect on twelve religious

¹For details, vide *CHI*, I, p. 410.

²*CHI*, I, p. 409 f.

³*Ibid.*, p. 431.

topics (*anuprekshā*)—(i) everything is transitory; (ii) men are helpless against death; (iii) the cycle of existence is full of misery; (iv) the soul has to struggle all alone; (v) relatives and others are quite separate from oneself; (vi) the body is impure; (vii) *karman* is constantly inflowing; (viii) *karman* should be stopped by the cultivation of virtues; (ix) *karman* should be destroyed by penances; (x) the nature of universe; (xi) rarity of religious knowledge, and (xii) the true nature of religion.

One who has right faith should also be free from the eight types of arrogance. These eight types are: arrogance of (1) the possession of intelligence; (2) the ability to conduct a grand type of temple worship; (3) having being born in a noble family; (4) belonging to a high caste; (5) possessing physical or mental strength; (6) having magical powers; (7) *tapas* or *yoga*; and (8) the beauty of one's person.¹

The Jaina Saṅgha

All persons, irrespective of sex, caste or status, were allowed to enter the Jaina saṅgha if they were considered ethically fit. People renounced the world because of several reasons, specially when they became tired of the worldly life (*saṁsāra bhayodvignā*). The *Thāṇā. Sut.* gives us examples of people becoming monk to avoid troubles, mentions a pair of friends renouncing the world by mutual agreement (*saṅgārapavajjā*) and describes those who were induced by instruction (*akkhātapavajjā*). Some became monks to maintain themselves (*ihaloga*), or to get good food, or to get rid of debts (*moyāvaitta*), etc.

Recognition of the equality of all living beings is the chief feature of Jaina asceticism. The greatest temptation in this world are women; and so the monks are advised to avoid women and withdraw their mind from them. The true road to deliverance lies in right knowledge, right faith and right conduct (*ratna traya*) and austerities. He who sincerely performs all his duties by these methods, attains purity and gets rid of all miseries. The *karmas* must be annihilated by austerities, both external and internal. On the Jaina monks engaged in austerities were imposed severe restrictions of food, drink, clothes, sleep, etc. Mahāvira himself renounced bathing, cleaning the teeth, etc. and took on special penances.² External

¹*Ibid.*, p. 431.

austerity is of six kinds:¹ (i) *Anaśana* (fasting) (ii) *Avamodarikā* (abstinence), (iii) *Bhikshācharyā* (collecting alms), (iv) *Rasatyāga* (abstention from dainty food), (v) *Kāyakleśa* (mortification) and (vi) *Pratisanilīnata* (restraint of passions). Internal austerity are also of six kinds: (1) *Prāyaścitta* (expiation of sins); (2) *Vinaya* (politeness); (3) *Vaiyāvṛtya* (serving the guru); (4) *Svādhyāya* (study); (5) *Dhyāna* (meditation); and (6) *Vyutsarga* (abandoning of the body).

The essential duties of a monk are sixfold. They are, as mentioned in the *Uttarā. Sūt.* thus: (1) *Sāmyāyika* (moral and intellectual purity of the soul); (2) *Chaturviṃśatistava* (adoration of 24 Jinas) (3) *Vandanā* (paying reverence to the guru); (4) *Pratikramaṇa* (expiation of sins); (5) *Kāyotsarga* (a particular position of the body); and (6) *Pratyākhyāna* (self-denial).²

The standard of moral discipline and self-control was set by Mahāvira who preached five great vows (*supra*) to regulate the lives of monks and nuns. The first great vow of a monk is *ahiṃsā*. He must renounce all killing of living creatures, whether subtle or gross, whether movable or immovable.

The second great vow is that the monk must 'renounce all vices of lying speech' (*Savvāo mushāvāyāo viramaṇam*) and so he should speak after deliberation and should renounce anger, greed, fear and mirth.

The third great vow is that the monk must 'renounce all taking of anything not given' (*Savvāo adinnadānāo viramaṇam*). He should beg after deliberation for a limited ground; consume his food and drink with the permission of his superior, take possession of a limited part of a ground for a fixed time, renew the grant of a portion of some ground and beg for a limited ground for his co-religionists after deliberation.³

The fourth great vow is abstaining from sexual intercourse with gods or men or animals. (*Savvāo mehumāo viramaṇam*).

The fifth great vow is the renunciation of 'all attachments, whether small or great' (*Savvāo pariggahāo viramaṇam*). Attachment means 'pleasure in external object', that is, pleasure of hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting and feeling.

The *Uttarā. Sūt.* and *Dasavaikālīka* mention a sixth vow also,

¹For details see H. Chakraborty, *Asceticism in Ancient India*, p. 367 ff.

²*Ibid.*, p. 372.

³*Ibid.*, p. 375.

that is absention from eating at night (*Savvāo raibhoyanāo viramaṇam*).

The Jaina monks had to wander from place to place. However during their journey they could stay in lonely places fit for study. Later on to provide monks with houses some householders built special buildings. Rain-retreat (*varshāvāsa*) was regarded as compulsory for monks, for it helped them to abstain from injury to living beings. They were, however, allowed to tour in the rainy season in special circumstances.

The asceticism, practised by the Digambara school, is reflected mainly in its two texts, the *Pravachanasūtra* and the *Mūlāchāra*, which are generally attributed to Kundakunda and Vaṭṭakera respectively. Kundakunda is looked upon as a prominent leader of the Mūla-saṅgha. According to A. N. Upadhye he flourished at the beginning of the Christian era.

The Digambaras had denounced the Jaina canon of the Śvetāmbaras, formed at Pāṭaliputra after the famine, and so Kundakunda composed 84 small treatises in Prakrit based upon whatever traditional texts he had inherited from the early teachers. A comparative study of the monastic rules of both the schools shows that the points of similarity between them are far larger than those of differences. The life of Digambara monks was, however, severer for they practised nudity and the principle of non-possession rigorously. Their requisites were very insignificant. They slept on bare ground instead of on a plank. They were more careful to avoid injury to living beings, though both the schools based their moral discipline on *ahimsā*. According to the Digambaras it is the mental condition, rather than the visible act, that is of importance. *Pari-graha* also does not so much consist in having physical contact with external objects as in being infatuated with them.

Interestingly nudity was discouraged for nuns by both the schools.¹ According to the Śvetāmbaras Śivabhūti founded a sect called Bodiya at Rathavīrapura, about 699 years after the demise of Mahāvīra. We know how he started nudity among men but he did not allow his sister Uttarā to observe it (*infra*). Kundakunda presents the Digambara view in this matter thus: "Women are forbidden from accepting severe type of asceticism, such as nakedness because they are constitutionally unfit: there is a growth of subtle

living beings in their organ of generation, between their breasts, in their navel and armpits; their mind is fickle and devoid of purity; they have monthly courses and they cannot concentrate undisturbed." So he prescribes that nuns should take meals once and have a garment which they retain even when they take meals. Thus Kundakunda does not exclude women from entering the Order but he prescribes moderate and less rigorous rules for them than were prescribed for monks. The Śvetāmbaras however were more liberal to women than the Digambaras because they thought that women could get liberation in this very birth while the Digambaras believed that women cannot get liberation without taking birth as men.

But in spite of these differences the texts of both the schools present almost the same monastic atmosphere. Even nudity is prescribed not only in the Digambara texts but also in those of the Śvetāmbara, though their commentators declare that it was meant for the Jinakappi monks alone.

Relation with Brāhmaṇism and Buddhism

It is the usual practice of Hindu philosophers to classify *darśanas* (philosophies) into two groups— Vedic and non-Vedic, otherwise known as *āstika darśanas* and *nāstika darśanas*. Under the former heading, usually Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Nyāya, Vaiśeshika, Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta are included while under the latter come the Jaina, Buddhist and Chārvaka. It is but a truism to say that the Jaina darśana is outside the Vedic fold, though it is also held by some Jainas that the Vedas, at least the portions that are now lost, advocated *ahimsā*, and the differences between the two arose when there was difference of opinion in the interpretation of the Vedas, as illustrated in the story of King Vasu found in Jaina literature as well as in the *Mahābhārata*¹.

Being the products of the same intellectual atmosphere the teachings of the Buddha and Mahāvīra naturally use similar expressions and display some common features². The belief in the past and future Enlightened ones, idea of the impermanence of the worldly pleasures, undesirability of *samsāra*, rejection of the authority of the Vedas and of the efficacy of the Brāhmaṇical rituals were common grounds between them. A pessimistic attitude towards life

¹Chakravarti, A., in *CHI*, I, p. 414.

²Pande, G.C., *Origins*, p. 542.

and world was shared alike by both. Both of them also subscribed to the doctrines of Saṁsāravāda and Kriyāvāda. Further, both emphasized the superiority of the ascetic over the householder, but attached 'due importance to moral and disciplined lay life as a preparatory or initial stage for liberation'. Jainism is a frankly atheistic creed recognising no Supreme or Universal Soul over and above the individual jivas and an atheistic strain is implicit in the Buddhist practical morality also. At least both of them deny the existence of an intelligent first cause. According to G. C. Pande "disbelief in a creator and controller of the world-process may be called a characteristic trait of Śramaṇa thought".¹ Further, both adored deified saints, possessed a clergy practising celibacy and emphasized non-violence.

Because of these striking similarities it was argued by some earlier writers that the two religions were actually one and that Jainism was an off-shoot of Buddhism. According to Barth there is such a great similarity between the Buddha and Mahāvīra that we are instinctively led to conclude that 'one and the same person' is intended. Further, according to him the similarities in the doctrines and history of their religions prove that one of two religions is a sect of the other². But scholars like Colebrooke, Jacobi, Bühler, Guerinot, etc. have conclusively proved that the two religions were different from each other. It is true that for many years the Buddha and Mahāvīra were contemporaries but there is no doubt that they were different persons. Further, despite above similarities their religions show remarkable individualities, enjoyed patronage of separate kings and were never confused as one by the Brāhmaṇical authors³. Emerging as distinct creeds in the sixth century B.C. they drifted farther apart in the subsequent periods. In contrast with the Buddha's Middle Way which took asceticism in the sense of self discipline, the Jaina doctrine attaches greater importance to ascetic practices. The austere discipline of mortifying the flesh, decried by Buddhism, acquires great importance in Jainism. Monastic disciplines of the two religions also show some important differences⁴. The divergence between the Jaina and Buddhist outlooks is reflect-

¹*Ibid.*, p. 543.

²Barth, *The Religions of India*, pp. 148-50.

³See Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, I, p. 291.

⁴Cf. Mishra, G. S. P., 'Some Reflections on Early Jain and Buddhist Monachism', *Jijñāṣā*, Jaipur, I, Nos. 3-4, p. 4-15.

ed in many other aspects of these religions. Thus, while Buddhism advocates the *anatta* (no-soul) theory (at least according to the traditional schools), belief in the existence of innumerable souls is one of the basic doctrines of Jaina philosophy. It credits even inanimate objects like stones, trees, mountains, etc., with souls of varying degrees of consciousness. Again, with respect to the world (*Loka*), the Buddhists held that we could neither speak of its eternity, nor of its annihilation, while the Jainas subscribed to the realistic view of the material world. Secondly, the Buddhist Nirvāṇa is defined as escape from existence while Jaina salvation assumes continued existence of disembodied soul in the state of perfection and bliss. The omniscience of the Kevalin has always been an important dogma with the Jainas. The Buddhists did not concede such a claim. Thirdly, the Jaina theory of *karman* is materialistic while the Buddhists regard *karman* as an immaterial psychological principle. The Buddhists stress the active aspect of *karman* as doing; the Jainas emphasize its mechanical aspect that comes forward in the *karmaphala*. The ideas about matter also differ considerably in the two religions and the emphasis on non-violence and non accumulation are not carried to the same extreme extent in Buddhism as in Jainism. The Buddhists regarded *ahiṃsā* as positive mental attitude of *mettā* and *karuṇā* while the Jainas emphasized its negative aspect. Further, the Buddha denounced nudity, so strongly emphasized by Mahāvīra, and asked his followers to keep themselves 'properly clad'. These differences gave rise to a state of considerable rivalry and opposition between the adherents of the two religions.

ways came much later. Some scholars like Zimmer have discussed the question whether, in point of time, the one or the other sect came first. But it seems to be more fruitful to analyse how and when the split came, for both the sects are recognised as reflecting the spirit of Jainism.

The Digambara version identifies two factors which might have effected the division. The first was 12 year famine that swept Magadha during Chandragupta's period (around 310 B.C.). To escape from the famine twelve thousand monks, under the leadership of Bhadrabāhu, went down to the South but continued to adhere strictly to the rule of nudity. However during their absence, the leading monks of North India met together at Ujjain where famine still persisted. They allowed monks to use *ardhapālaka*, i.e. a cloth to hide shame, while on tour for begging. But when the famine was over, the community was divided on the issue of the *ardhapālaka*. Those who advocated the wearing of *ardhapālaka* became the forerunners of the orthodox group of Śvetāmbaras. According to another version during the absence of Bhadrabāhu Sthūlabhadra officiated as the chief in the North and he relaxed the rule of nudity allowing the monks to wear clothes. After Bhadrabāhu returned from the South he could not, any longer, insist on even some of the monks observing the vow of nudity. Bhadrabāhu was not very happy with this situation. Secondly, during Bhadrabāhu's absence from Magadha, Sthūlabhadra had called a Council at Pāṭaliputra to collect and edit the sacred books. But the Council could produce only eleven Aṅgas and the twelfth Aṅga, which contained the fourteen Pūrvas, could not be produced (see the section on Jaina literature, p. 202) since Sthūlabhadra (who know the fourteen Pūrvas well) supplied only ten of them (having been forbidden by his *guru* Bhadrabāhu to teach the other Pūrvas to anybody). Thus the Śvetāmbara Canon came into existence and the twelfth Aṅga was recast. Bharabāhu didn't like this development either; he was annoyed at the Council having met during his absence and refused to recognize the Canon recast by the Council.

According to the Digambara tradition the final separation came because of Chandralekhā, the queen of King Lokapāla of Valabhīpura. It is said that when the ardhapālaka monks were invited by the king, he became displeased with them because they were neither naked and nor clothed. Hence the queen asked them to wear full clothes. Since then the ardhapālakas began to wear white clothes

and came to be called Śvetapaṭas or Śvetāmbaras.¹

The Digambara tradition about the split is supported firstly by the Śravaṇa Belgola inscriptions (c. 600 A.D.) which refer to the famine in Magadha and the migration of Bhadrabāhu. Secondly, Mahāvīra himself is reported to have told Goyama in the *Thaṇa. Sūt.*, 'I have laid down the practice of nudity.' Thirdly, according to Manmohan Chakravarti at Dhauri and in the early caves of Udayagiri and Khaṇḍagiri the Tīrthaṅkaras are represented nude.²

According to the Śvetāmbara tradition however the Jaina Church was divided into two sects 609 years after the death of Mahāvīra in 79 or 83 A.D. (or 142 A.D. according to another view) by one Śivabhūti, a resident of Rathavīrapura. Śivabhūti, who had started a sect named Bodiya, had been given a beautiful blanket by the king in whose service he had been at the time of his initiation. In order to free him of its attachment his *āchārya* tore it up in his absence. When Śivabhūti discovered what had happened, he was so angry that he declared that, if he could not have even one possession which he valued, he would keep nothing at all, but would wander in entire nakedness, and then and there he started a new sect, that of the naked Digambaras.³

Related to the story narrated above is the legend of Śivabhūti's sister who wanted to join the Saṅgha but was denied admission. Seeing that it was impracticable for a woman to go about nude, Śivabhūti told his sister that it was impossible for a woman to become a nun, or to obtain *moksha* without rebirth as a man. Though the story may or may not be a historical fact, yet the fact that the Digambaras strictly prohibit women joining the Order gives some plausibility to the legend especially in view of the story that Śevabhūti had refused to give consent for becoming a nun to his own sister.

The Śvetāmbaras argue that their account of the split is correct because (1) the Bhadrabāhu episode is not consistent. The Jaina tradition knows more than one Bhadrabāhus which renders the

¹In an inscription of Mṛgeśavarman Kadamba they are called Śvetapaṭas (*IA, VII, No. 37, pp. 37-38*).

²Cf. Jain, Muni Uttam Kamal, *Jaina Sects and Schools*, p. 40.

³*ERE, XII, p. 123*. According to Rapson the Śvetāmbaras existed well before 80 A.D. The list of the teachers and schools in the *Kalpasūtras* and the numerous inscriptions from Mathurā prove that the Śvetāmbara community not only existed but had become divided into smaller sects before this date.

identification of the Bhadrabāhu, the teacher of Sthūlabhadra doubtful. (2) In the old texts, where there is a reference to nudity, the idea is merely to emphasize non-attachment to worldly things. Therefore these references are merely symbolic.

Differences Between Śvetāmbara and Digambara Sects

By and large the differences between the Digambara and Śvetāmbara sects are not serious; the chief difference between the two being concerned with the question of nudity. The differences in the general philosophy of the two are not of fundamental character. This is evident from the fact that both the sects consider the *Tattvārthādhi-gama Sūtra* as an authoritative text. Its author was probably a Śvetāmbara but the Digambaras also regard it as one of their primary books. Despite this, the puritan spirit of the Digambaras appears so striking to a non-Jaina that he thinks that the two sects differ on fundamental principles. One may cite the following as the main points of difference between the two:

The Digambaras go about naked. The word Digambara (*dik+ambara*) means 'one who has space as his clothes'. By their nakedness the Digambaras impress upon the world that they belong to no group or community, but to the whole world. On the other hand, the Śvetāmbaras are 'white clad' (*śveta*=white + *ambara*=clothes). Their white garments signify their ideal of pūrit̄y.

Secondly, the symbols given by the two sects to their idols differ. The Śvetāmbaras depict the idol as wearing a loin-cloth and bedecked with jewels with glass eyes inserted in the marble, while the Digambaras represent their Tirthaṅkaras as nude and with down-cast eyes as if they are dead to the world. The mode of worship in the two sects is also different.

Thirdly, the Śvetāmbaras believe that Mahāvīra was born of a Kshatriyā lady, Trīśalā, though conception took place in the womb of a Brāhmaṇa lady, Devānandā. The change of embryo is believed to have been effected by God Indra on the eighty-third day after conception. We find references to the legend in at least three Jaina source-books, viz., the *Āchārāṅga*, *Kalpasūtra* and the *Bhagavatisūtra*. It is quite likely that the story was invented by the author of the *Kalpasūtra* as an occasion to express the prevailing sentiment of contempt for the Brāhmaṇas and was later on embodied in the *Āchārāṅga*. The Digambaras dismiss the whole episode as unreliable and absurd.

Fourthly, according to the Śvetāmbara biographies though Mahāvīra was of extremely philosophical nature in his childhood and wanted to renounce the world in his early years, in deference to his parents' wishes he did not do so. Even after their death he renounced the world with the permission of his elder brother. The Digambara version is that he renounced the world suddenly during his parents' life-time being disgusted with the ephemeral nature of things and that till then he, like any other prince, enjoyed all the luxuries of palace-life.

Fifthly, the Śvetāmbaras have recorded that Mahāvīra was married at a fairly young age and that he led a full-fledged householder's life till he was thirty, when he became an ascetic. The Digambaras deny the fact of marriage altogether. They quote verses from the *Paumachariya* and *Āvaśyaka Niryukti* wherein it is said that whereas the five Tīrthaṅkaras including Mahāvīra renounced the world when they were still *kumaras* the others did so after having ruled over their respective states. But it is certain that here Mahāvīra is not referred to as Kumāra in the sense of being a celibate.

Sixthly, the Śvetāmbaras maintain that only the fourteen Pūrvas were lost and that the first eleven Aṅgas are not extinct. The Digambaras believe that all the Pūrvas as well as the Aṅgas were lost. They refused to accept the achievements of the First Council which met under the leadership of Sthūlabhadra and, consequently, the recasting of the Aṅgas.

Seventhly, the lists of non-Canonical works of the two sects differ considerably. The Śvetāmbaras did not allow laymen to read their scriptures, whereas the Digambaras permitted even the common man to have access to the sacred scriptures (which were composed in later ages).

Further, the Śvetāmbaras believe that a woman could become a Tīrthaṅkara and so they allow women into their ascetic order. They believe that the 19th Tīrthaṅkara Mallinātha was a woman. The Digambaras do not allow women to join the Saṅgha and maintain that women can attain the Tīrthaṅkara-status only after being born as men. When Śivabhūti's sister wanted to join the Digambara Saṅgha; she was told that no woman can attain *moksha*. They also do not believe that Mallinātha was a woman.

Lastly, a Śvetāmbara ascetic is allowed to have fourteen possessions including his loin-cloth, shoulder-cloth, etc.

to move from place to place. It is therefore not surprising that the laymen complain that sometimes there is too much of interference from the ascetics. The Digambara ascetic is allowed to have only two possessions, a peacock's feather and a brush and has to live entirely in the jungle.

Some other differences between the two sects are: The Śvetāmbaras use the term *Charitra* and the Digambaras of the term *Purāna* for the biographies of their great teachers. The lists of the heads of the two sects after Śivabhūti differ. The Śvetāmbaras arrange their philosophy under nine categories; the Digambaras arrange the same philosophy under seven categories. In the Śvetāmbara sect a Tirthaṅkara needs food till he dies; in the Digambara sect he does not need food after obtaining *Kevaljñāna*, that is between obtaining *Kevalajñāna* and physical death. A Digambara lay-devotee can have no private image in his house; a Śvetāmbara Jain may have.

The Yāpanīya Sect

Here a reference may also be made to the Yāpanīya sect which bore resemblance to but was different from the Śvetāmbara and the Digambara sects both. According to the *Darśanasāra* of Devasena it came into existence in 148 A.D. It was probably founded by Śrīkalaśa, a monk of Śvetāmbara sect at Kalyāṇanagara in the former Hyderabad State. The monks of this sect remained naked, adored Mayūrapichchhī, ate food in their palms, worshipped nude images but believed that women can attain *moksha* and that Kevalins should take food in morsels. Because of their mixed beliefs the monks of this sect were denounced as *Jainābhāsāh* (Jainas in appearance only). However, for some time it was quite popular in the South and kings of Kadamba, Rāshṭrakūṭa and other dynasties made donations to it. But later on it became extinct for some unknown reason.¹

Divisions and Sub-divisions of the Śvetambaras and Digambaras

The Disintegration of the Jaina Church did not stop with the division of the community between the Śvetāmbara and Digambara sects. Later on these two were divided into gaṇas, kulas, gachchhas, śākhās and other sub-orders. A gaṇa is a unit which consists of the

¹Jain, Muni Uttama Kamal, *Jaina Sects and Schools*, p. 133 ff; Roy, A. K., *A History of the Jains* 1984. pp. 127-29.

various *saṃbhogas*. The head of a *gaṇa* is called *gaṇin*. In later ages the *gaṇa* was also called *gachchha*, the term *gachchha* literally denoting the path of the monks following a particular set of rules. The *Chhedasūtras* attribute importance to *gaṇas* while the reference to *gachchhas* is found as early as the *Upaṅgas*, *Niryuktis* and *Prakīrṇakas*.

A *gaṇa* was an assemblage of many *kulas* which were chains in preceptor-disciple order of the various *āchāryas*.² Monks were also subdivided into *sākhās* which were groups of monks, may be of one *kula*, studying under specified teachers. They could also be grouped in the form of various *gummas* or followers of the various *upādhyāyas* appointed by the *āchāryas* of a *gaṇa*. The *gummas* could be divided into a number of *phaḍḍayas*, a *phaḍḍaya* being a group under a *gaṇavachchhedaka*. "Thus the hierarchy of teachers consisted of *Āchārya*, *Upādhyāya* and *Gaṇāvachchhedaka* and the groups led or controlled by them are known as *gaṇa* or *gachchha*, *gumma* and *phaḍḍaya* respectively. *Saṃbhoga*, *kula* and *sākhā* are classification on different principles."³

Muni Uttam Kamal Jain has given lists of Śvetāmbara and Digambara *gachchhas* known from epigraphs and literature. The list of the Śvetāmbara *gachchhas* known from the 'post-Mathura' inscriptions alone contains the names of 117 *gachchhas*. These were named after the provinces (e.g. *Sāvattthiyā gachchha*), or place-names (e.g. *Jirāpalliya gachchha*), or caste names (e.g. *Osvāla gachchha*, *Poravāḍa gachchha*), or the names of their founders (e.g. *Dharmaghosha gachchha*), or particular incidents (e.g. *Kharatara gachchha*) or peculiar religious rituals (e.g. *Vidhipaksha gachchha*), etc. Most of the *gachchhas* sprang up in Gujarat and Rajasthan. The tendency to start new *gachchhas* appears to have become pronounced from the ninth century A.D. though one *gachchha* (namely the *Bhāvaharsha gachchha*) is mentioned in an inscription of 52 A.D. Most of these ancient *gachchhas* are now extinct, though some are extant and some, like *Kharateragachchha* and *Tapagachchha*, are quite popular.

Evolution and History of the Sacred Jaina Literature

According to the belief of the Jainas their Āgamas or the scriptures

¹SBE, XXII.

²Jain, Muni Uttam Kamal, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

³*Ibid.*, p. 50.

(also known by the appellations Siddhānta, Paramāgama, Kṛtānta, Veda, Śruti, Śāstra, etc.) were revealed by the Sarvajña, or the Omniscient Being. In fact, they were handed down from generation to generation by a succession of teachers called gaṇadharas, beginning with Sudharman one of the chief disciples of Mahāvīra. Sudharman is said to have transmitted the Āgamas to Jambusvāmin who is referred to as the author of the Canon at the very outset.

As the Śvetāmbaras and Digambaras both postulate the original Canon to consist of the 12 Aṅgas, including the 14 Puvvas or Pūrvas as a part of the last Aṅga, one may accept it to be its original extent. But a constantly recurring phrase in the Śvetāmbara Canon itself makes the *Sāmāyika* (a work of the Prakīrṇaka group, see *infra*) the beginning and the *Bindusara* the end of the Canonical writings. This means that the earliest Canonical writings contained something less than the 12 Aṅgas and included at least some works which did not strictly belong to the Aṅga type.¹

There is a great difference of opinion between the Digambaras and Śvetāmbaras regarding the availability of the twelve Aṅgas as they developed in the post-Mahāvīra period. According to a widely accepted tradition during the reign of Chandragupta Maurya, on account of a terrible famine in North India, a large body of Jaina monks under the leadership of Bhadrabāhu, with his royal disciple Chandragupta, who had abdicated his throne and joined the party, migrated to the South for the purpose of obtaining support and sustenance during the period of the famine. When normalcy was restored, a Council was called by Sthūlabhadra, the leader of those who had stayed behind at Pāṭaliputra, early in the 3rd cent. B.C. which collected and fixed the eleven Aṅgas and ten Puvvas as the twelfth Aṅga under the name of *Diṭṭhivāya*. Sthūlabhadra could not incorporate the rest of the four Puvvas in the twelfth Aṅga because his teacher Bhadrabāhu had not allowed him to teach them to others. But when the disciples of Bhadrabāhu returned from the South they declared the Canon approved by the Pāṭaliputra Council as spurious. The disciples of Sthūlabhadra, however, did not accept this contention. It naturally led to a Schism in the Jaina Saṅgha—between the Śvetāmbaras and the Digambaras.

Many books of the Canon finalized in the First Council are now lost and the names of others remain obscure to us. The fact that

¹AIU, p. 421.

ditions were made to the Canon formulated in the First Council; apparent because some of its books are attributed to later writers like Śāmārya, Āryarakshita, Virabhadra and others. This process went along with the loss of the older texts. Because of these changes, the older classification of the Canon could not be maintained for long, though it may be admitted that a substantial part of the present Canon goes back to those days.¹

The ninth century after Vīra-nirvāna (i.e. the fourth-fifth century A.D.) was a period of great peril to the sacred books. It was caused by constant famines and loss of eminent teachers who had memorised the sacred texts in full. In the early part of this century, therefore, two attempts were made to reconstitute the Canon, one by Sthanḍīla at Mathurā and the other by Nāgajūna at Valabhī in Kathiawar. However not much of the new work is left to us though we have some variant readings recorded by later commentators, especially those attributed to Nāgajūna. A more useful and serious attempt at settling the sacred texts was made in what is generally called the Second Council at Valabhī. It was held under the able guidance of Devardhigaṇī in the sixth century A.D., probably during the reign of king Dhruvarens I of the Mūrtakya dynasty. This king is also praised as a Jaina convert in later tradition, though, according to Ghatage, the association of the Council with the king is doubtful.² The inscriptions of the Mūrtakya do not make any mention of the Council and nor do they betray the re-impulsion towards Jainism. Further, the Jaina tradition itself does not assign this event to the time of any particular king or dynasty. All these facts lead to the natural conclusion that the Second Council was mainly the work of the Jaina Church itself, though it may be accepted that Valabhī was a great centre of Jaina literature even then in that age.³

Be that as it may, according to the traditional account, in the Second Council at Valabhī the Jaina Canon took its present shape. Though much of its contents and the majority of its books existed before that time, the general arrangement and the classification of these books is the work of the Council. According to the arrangement now prevailing, the sacred texts are divided into six groups, called the *Angas* (Sūtras), *pratisūtras*, *Chakrasūtras*, *Mūlasūtras* and an unnumbered group of these names. *Āṅga* (Sūtra)

¹*Ibid.*, p. 422.

²*The Classical Age*, p. 422.

³*Ibid.*, p. 426.

old. This part of the Canon occupied an equally important position even in the order classification and at least the names of the Aṅga works are common to both the Śvetāmbaras and the Digambaras. They are: (1) *Āyāraṅga* (*Āchāra*), (2) *Sūyagadaṅga* (*Sūtrakṛta*), (3) *Ṭhāṇāṅga* (*Sthāna*), (4) *Samayāyāṅga* (*Samavāya*), (5) *Viyāhapaṇṇatti* (*Vyākhyāprajñapti*) or *Bhagavatīsūtra*, (6) *Nāyādhammakahāo* (*Jñāṭṭṛdharmakathā*), (7) *Uvāsagadāsāo* (*Upāsakadaśāka*), (8) *Antagadasāo* (*Antakṛddaśāka*), (9) *Aṇuttarovavāiyadasāo* (*Anuttaraupapātika daśāka*), (10) *Paṇhāvāgaranāim* (*Praśna-vyākaraṇa*), (11) *Vivāgasuya* (*Vipākasūtra*), and (12) *Diṭṭhivāya* (*Dṛshṭivāda*). Of these the 12th one, the *Dṛshṭivāda*, is now completely lost to us.

The antiquity of the list of the Aṅga texts, however, does not preclude the possibility of drastic changes in the form and contents of these books. But as we are ignorant of the contents of the original Aṅgas it is not possible to know the extent to which the present-day works of the same name retain their original contents. The older parts of the *Āchārāṅga* and *Sūtrakṛtāṅga* may well claim to preserve much original matter, and the same may be true to some extent of the *Bhagavatīsūtra*. We know even less of the Pūrva works. The traditional scheme places all the fourteen Pūrvas in the 12th Aṅga. From the name 'pavāya' applied to most of them, one may assume that they contained matter of a controversial nature, probably stating the views of the opponents and their refutations. Their place in the *Dṛishṭivāda* suggests similar contents¹.

Older than the other remaining groups of sacred texts are the twelve Upāṅgas ('subsidiary Aṅgas'). The name Upāṅga occurs in the introduction of the last five books of this group collectively called *Nirayāvaliyāo*. From this it appears that there was a time when this group consisted only of these books. From these and other works, all of which are to be found in the older *Aṅga-bāhira* section, a new class was formed, modelled after the Aṅga work, and was made to consist of 12 books in agreement with them. The identical number later gave rise to the theory that each Upāṅga is related with the corresponding Aṅga².

The group of the Prakīrṇaka texts is of indefinite extent. This is implied also by the term *prakīrṇaka* (miscellaneous) used for it. However according to Ghatage the main Prakīrṇaka texts are those

¹*AIU*, p. 422.

²*CA*, p. 416.

which dealt with the duties of the monks. To the older texts of this category were added others to conform to the traditional list of ten or sixteen.¹

The *Chhedasūtra* are older in date than the Prakīrṇakas. They represent the oldest form of the rules dealing with the corporate life of the monks in the monasteries. The Six *Chhedasūtras* are (1) *Daśaśrutaskandha*, (2) *Kappa* (*Bṛhat-Kalpa*), (3) *Vavahāra*, (4) *Nisiha*, (5) *Mahanisiha*, and (6) *Pañchakappa*. Tradition ascribes the authorship of the first three to Bhadrabāhu.² The older among them are written in prose. The name of this group is known to the *Āvaśyakaniryukti* in the form of *Chheyaganthas*.

A severe punishment consisting of complete annulling of the monkhood is called *Mūla*. Works which dealt with the basic principles of Jainism and which formed the beginning of the canonical study were put together and given the name *Mūlasūtra*. They are usually reckoned as four in number: (1) *Uttarājghayana*, (2) *Dasaveyāliya*, (3) *Āvassaya*, and (4) *Piṇḍañijjuti*. Winternitz ascribes the authorship of *Dasaveyāliya* to Sejjambhave, the fourth head of the Jaina Saṅgha after Mahāvīra, about a century after the latter's death³.

Besides these five groups of sacred texts there is a pair of texts, called *Nandi* and *Anuyogadvāra* and the commentaries called *Nijjutis* which are believed to have been written in a much later period, i.e. even after the 6th cent. A.D. The *Nijjutis* or *Niryuktis* were composed when the need of explaining parts of the Canon was felt by the Jaina community. Ten of them are often attributed to Bhadrabāhu. Prakrit commentaries in prose called *Chuṇṇis* (*Chūrṇis*) were also composed on many important Canonical books. They form a kind of methodological introduction for the study of the sacred writings and are left without a group name⁴.

According to the canonical texts and later tradition, Mahāvīra preached his religion in *Ardha-Māgadhī*, which is said to be the language of the Canon also. However the language of the available Canon is closely akin to the standard Prakrits called *Mahārāshṭrī* and Jaina *Mahārāshṭrī*. In later ages, the Jaina scholars preferred Sanskrit more and more to Prakrit. The older commentaries in

¹Cf. *CHI*, I, p. 419.

²Winternitz, *HIL*, II, pp. 462-4.

³*Ibid.*, p. 433.

⁴*CA*, p. 417.

Prakrit therefore soon gave place to Sanskrit *ṭikās*. In the classical age philosophical works of great merit were composed by Jaina scholars such as Siddhasena, Akalaṅka, Pūjyapāda and others who formulated Jaina doctrines in a more logical form.

According to the Digambaras, not only the *Diṭṭhivāya* (*Dṛshṭivāda*) was lost by the time of the First Council but the other eleven *Aṅgas* were also lost in course of time, and thus no part of the Canon is now available. They also do not recognise other works grouped as *Upāṅgas*, *Chhedasūtras*, etc., which are found in the present Canon of the Śvetāmbaras. However, with the loss of their Canonical books, the Digambaras keenly felt the need of some authoritative works taking the place of the lost Canon. This was fulfilled by the composition of independent treatises on their religion and philosophy. Kundakunda is one of the most famous Digambara authors. He lived in the early centuries of the Christian era. He had several books to his credit. Other important Digambara writers, who wrote in Prakrit, are Vaṭṭakera, Svāmī Kārtikeya, Yativṛshabha and famous Jaina patriarchs like Pushpadanta, Bhūtabali and Guṇadhara. Of the Digambara scholars who wrote in Sanskrit mention may be made of Samantabhadra, Pūjyapāda, Akalaṅka and Mānatuṅga.

*Spread of Jainism: North India*¹

The wanderings of Mahāvīra give us a fairly good idea of the original extent of Jainism. This included the kingdoms of Kosala, Videha, Magadha and Aṅga.² One of the *Chhedasūtras* preserves the memory of the earlier extent of the faith in the rule which allows Jaina monks to wander as far as Aṅga-Magadha to the east . . . Kauśāmbī to the south, Sthūṇa to the west and Kuṇāla to the north.³ The additional remark that a monk may also go to a country where the faith has acquired roots shows that Jainism was already spreading in the neighbouring regions.

According to traditional account, the further spread of Jainism was the result of different migrations, said to have been caused by

¹For the role of important Jaina personages in the history of India vide, Jain, J. P., *Pramukha Jaina Purusha aur Mahilāyen*, New Delhi, 1975; Joharapurakara, V. and Kāsabwal, K. C., *Vīra Śāsana ke Prabhāvaka Āchārya*, New Delhi, 1975.

²Ghatage in *AIU*, p. 417.

³*Kappasutta*, quoted in *AIU*, p. 417.

a famine of 12 years duration. This tradition is partially confirmed by other evidence and agrees well with historical facts.

One early migration led the Jaina monks to Kalinga, as is evident from the famous Hathigumphā inscription of Khāravela,¹ the Mañchapurī inscription of his queen² and the Śvetāmbara tradition. According to this tradition a dreadful famine in Magadha drove the monks as far as the sea-coast. The numerous caves dedicated to the Jaina monks on the Udyagiri and Khaṇḍagiri hills prove the continued existence of Jainism in this region.³ A similar early extension or migration of the Jaina community brought it to Mathurā in the west where are found the ruins of a Jaina shrine of the pre-Christian period and a large number of small dedicatory records dating from the first two centuries of the Christian era. Their evidence is confirmed by the information supplied by the *Sthavirāvalī*.⁴

Ujjayinī also became a stronghold of Jainism quite early. The story of Samprati's (grandson of Aśoka) conversion to Jainism by Suhastin suggests its spread to Malwa in as early as the second century B.C. Samprati imitated his grandfather in sending religious missionaries to Āndhra and Draviḍa region to propagate his new religion. The famous story of Kālakāchārya, the Jaina sage, implies the existence of Jainism in Malwa in the first century B.C. Further west in Gujarat the Junagarh inscription of a grandson of Jayadāman belonging to the second century A.D. makes mention of men who had attained perfect knowledge (*Kevalijñāna*) and were free from old age and death (*jarāmaraṇa*).⁵ Of about the same period may be the caves found at Dhank, in which the sculptures of the Jaina prophets like Ṛshabha, Pārśva, Mahāvīra and others have been found.⁶ In the North-West also Jainism was popular even in the Maurya period, for according to the Jaina tradition Chāṇakya, who was born near Taxila and later became the Prime Minister

¹Goyal, S. R., *Prāchīna Bhāratiya Abhilekha Saṅgraha*, p. 359ff; Cf. Chakraborty, *Asceticism in Ancient India*, p. 355.

²Goyal, *op. cit.*, p. 402.

³*AIU*, p. 418.

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵Goyal, *op. cit.*, p. 348.

⁶*AIU*, p. 419.

of Chandragupta Maurya, was a Jaina by faith.¹

The age of the Gupta imperialism, which marked a revival of Hinduism, saw a corresponding decline of Jainism. The paucity of Jaina epigraphic records, comparative lack of literary evidence from the side of Jaina writers and the absence of any reference to it in the description of the Chinese traveller Fa-hsien prove it. However, there are indications that it continued to be popular as before among the middle classes. An inscription belonging to the reign of Kumāragupta, found at Mathurā (432 A.D.) speaks of the dedication of a Jaina image by a lady². Another inscription found at Udayagiri in Malwa (425 A.D.) records the erection of a statue of Pārśva by a private individual³. The Kahaum inscription of the time of Skandagupta (461 A.D.) also refers to the setting up of five images of the Jaina prophets in that village.⁴ A little later, the Paharpur copper-plates of A.D. 478 record the donation of some land by a private individual and his wife, for the maintenance of worship at the Jaina Vihāra at Vaṭagohālī. The Vihāra was presided over by the pupils of the Nirgrantha teacher Guhanandin of the Pañchastūpanikāya of Banaras⁵. The founder of the vihāra according to this record was a monk, who had migrated there from Banaras. These inscriptions suggest that the erection of the images of the Jaina prophets was a usual feature, and that the organisation of the community of monks continued to be the same as before, with its divisions into gaṇas and śākhās⁶.

For the period of the decline of the Gupta empire some light on the condition of Jainism is thrown by the *Kuvalayamālākahā* of Udyotana composed in 779 A.D. According to it in North India, there was a town called Pavvaiyā close to the river Chandrabhāgā, which was the capital of the Yavana king Toramaṇa. The spiritual

¹The present author believes that Chāṇakya, the Prime Minister of Chandragupta Maurya, was a Jaina but was different from Kauṭilya, the author of the *Arthaśāstra*. See Goyal, S. R., 'The Riddle of Chāṇakya and Kauṭilya', *Jijñāsā*, Jaipur, I, Nos. 3-4, pp. 32-51.

²Goyal, S. R., *Guptakālina Abhilekha*, p. 145 f.

³*Ibid.*, pp. 142-4.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 255; *CA*, p. 410.

⁵Goyal, *op. cit.*; *CA*, p. 410.

⁶*CA*, p. 410.

preceptor of this king was one Harigupta of the Gupta family¹. It seems to indicate that Toramāṇa had become a regular convert to Jainism. For the condition of Jainism in the centuries following the disintegration of the Gupta empire, we have the testimony of Hiuen Tsang (seventh century) who reports that the monks of both the Śvetāmbara and Digambara sects were to be found near Taxila to the west and Vipulā to the east, and the Digambara Nirgranthas were very numerous in Puṇḍravardhana and Samatāṣṭa in the east. However the Brāhmaṇas of the period held the Jaina monks in low esteem as is seen in the reference to the naked Kshapayaka by Bāṇa in his *Harshacharita* and the sun Daṇḍin makes of the conversion of a poor wretch to Jainism in his *Daśakumāracharita*. Udyotana in his *Kuvalayamālā* reports that Śivachandra, pupil's pupil of Harigupta mentioned above, carried this religion to Bhinnamala, otherwise known as Śrīmālā while his other pupils converted the whole of Gujarat to their faith.² The presence of Jainism in Kathiawar and Gujarat in the early medieval period is also indicated by other literary as well as epigraphic and archaeological evidences, though in contrast to the splendour it attained in the eleventh and the twelfth centuries, due to royal patronage, in this period it remained mainly the religion of the merchant class.

In the age of the Gurjara-Pratihāra and Pāla imperialisms (8th to 10th cent.), except in the west Jainism appears to have lost much of its hold over the rest of North India. The Chāga rulers were patrons of this religion. Vanarāja Chavada the founder of the line was installed on the throne, according to the *Jaina Prabandhas*, by his Jaina guru Śīlaguṇasūri.⁴ Though the official religion of the realm was Śaiva, most of its influential persons were Jaina. At the suggestion of his guru Śīlaguṇasūri, who refused the gift of the kingdom, Vanarāja built a temple known as Paśukāraśrāddhāgṛha. He and his successors also build many other temples. The Pratihāra also figure prominently in the Jaina literature. Vanarāja (or Javada) is called in *Jaina Prabandhas* it is said to have built Jaina temples at Kanauj, Mathurā, Anahīlavāda, Modhera, etc. He was succeeded by his son II is said to have been converted to Jainism and the latter's grand-

¹Goyal, S. R., *A History of the Imperial Guptas*, p. 265. Cf. also the case of Kālaka with the Śakas in earlier period.

²CA, p. 410.

³Jain, K. C., *Jainism in Rajasthan*, p. 13 II.

⁴Pusalker in *AIK.* p. 223.

son Bhoja was also a great patron of the religion. Pradyumnasūri is credited with the conversion of the rulers of Sapādalaksha, Tribhuvanagiri, etc. to Jainism.¹

In the 11th–12th centuries Gujarat was a flourishing centre of Jainism. A Jaina temple, known as Mūlabastikā, was built by Mūlarāja at Anahilapāṭaka or Anahilavāḍa. At this time Śrīchandra and his teacher Sahasrakīrti, whose spiritual predecessors were Śrutakīrti and Śrīkīrti, enjoyed immense prestige in the political world so much so that Sahasrakīrti is described as ‘the sinless teacher whose supreme lotus feet were worshipped by eminent kings like Gāṅgeya, Bhojadeva and others’.² The reference is obviously to the Kalachuri king of Chedi and the Paramāra king of Malwa. During the reign of Bhīma I, his minister Vimala built in 1031 A.D. at Abu a magnificent temple of Ādinātha which, for its rich delicate carving, grace, and beauty, is considered unique in the world. According to the *Kharataragachchhapattāvalī* Vimala also built the temple of Ṛshabhadeva on the Arbudāchala. Jainism became even more dominant at the Chaulukya court during the reigns of Siddharāja and his successor Kumārapāla. The latter actually became a convert to Jainism under the influence of the celebrated scholar Hemachandra (1088–1172 A.D.). Under the guidance of Hemachandra Kumārapāla beautified Gujarat with Jaina shrines to an enormous extent. The continuity of the faith and the prosperity of its followers in this region are attested by the temple of Neminātha built at Abu by Tejahpāla, a minister of the Chaulukya king Somasiṃhadeva. Other numerous Jaina shrines were also built in this period. Besides Abu, Śatruñjaya and Girnar in Kathiawad received patronage of the rulers and merchants for the construction of beautiful temples including the Chintāmaṇi Pārśvanātha temple at Khambhāta (Cambay) which was built about 1108 A.D.³

Spread of Jainism in Deccan

According to tradition the extension of Jainism in the Deccan was associated with the migration of the Digambaras.⁴ It was caused by the great famine in Magadha which forced Bhadrabāhu to seek shelter in the South along with his royal disciple Chandragupta

¹*Ibid.*, p. 288 f.

²Jain, H. L., in *The Struggle for Empire*, p. 428.

³*Ibid.*, p. 428–9.

⁴Cf. Chakraborty, *op. cit.*, p. 355 ff.

Maurya and resulted in the establishment of the Digambara community in Mysore, with Śravaṇa Belagola as its centre. The Śvetāmbara tradition, however, makes the migration proceed from Ujjayinī in Malwa, which is also corroborated by a version of the early Digambara tradition. In any case, there are grave doubts whether the migration to the South had anything to do with the famous āchārya Bhadrabāhu or the Maurya king Chandragupta. "Among the different sects of the south, the Senagaṇa of the Mūla-saṅgha appears to show some intimate connection with the story of migration and may have formed the first migration group."¹

The history of the religion in this part of the country in the centuries following the initial migration is not known but it must have been in a fairly flourishing condition. In the Gupta age many royal families of the Deccan, their ministers and small chieftains showed decided inclination towards it. The Gaṅga kings of Mysore were intimately associated with Jainism. A later tradition makes the founder of the Gaṅga family a disciple of a Jain teacher called Simhanandin. A later ruler, Avinīta, is said to have been brought up by Vijayakīrti, a Jaina sage, and the famous Digambara author Pūjyapāda is associated with Durvinīta, another king of this dynasty.² Whatever value we may attach to these traditions, the epigraphic records mention several Gaṅga kings making gifts to Jaina monks and building Jaina temples, along with giving donations to Brāhmaṇical religious establishments.

The Kadamba rulers of Vaijayantī or Banavāsī were usually the followers of Brāhmaṇism but at the same time they showed unusual favour towards Jainism, giving donations to Jaina monks, erecting Jaina temples and giving other help to the different sections of the Jaina community. Their records show that there were different sects among the Jainas like the Nirgranthas, the Digambaras, the Yāpanīyas (a sect which later on disappeared), the lesser known Kūrchakas, and even the Śvetapaṭas.³

Barring a few spurious grants, there is no reliable evidence to show that the Chālukyās of Bādāmī had any particular leaning towards Jainism. We have, however, the famous Aihole inscription of Pulakeśin II, perhaps the greatest of the Chālukya emperors, whose protégé Ravikīrti constructed a temple of Jinendra in

¹Ghatage, *AIU*, p. 419.

²*CA*, p. 411 f.

³*Ibid.*, p. 412.

that village, called the Meguti temple. A Jaina cave at Bādāmī and another at Aihole, containing figures of Tīrthaṅkaras, also belong to the early Chālukya period.¹

After the Chālukyas, many Rāshtrakūta rulers patronised and even showed distinct inclination, towards Jainism. The great Rāshtrakūta emperor Amoghavarsha I was a Jaina. His chief preceptor was Jinasena and he appointed Guṇabhadra as the preceptor for his son Kṛshṇa II. Amoghavarsha abdicated more than once, probably to observe the vow of *akiñchanatā*.² How did he accept Jaina-*dikshā* is graphically described in a contemporary work, *Gaṇitasārasaṅgraha* of Mahāvīrachārya.³

The Gaṅga kings of the Rāshtrakūta age were also great patrons of Jainism. Nītimārga and his second son Būtuga were devout Jainas. Mārasīmha was a disciple of Ajitasena, and was a staunch Jaina. He ended his life by *Sallekhanā* (religious starvation). He gave many endowments for the cause of Jainism and constructed the colossal image of Gomata at Śravaṇa Belgola.⁴

The age of the Rāshtrakūtas (A.D. 754–974) was followed by a Śaiva reaction under Tailapa II, the later Chālukya king and his immediate successors, though we also read that Tailapa II had strong attachment to Jainism and patronised Raṅṅa, Kaviratna, the author of *Ajita purāṇa*. Tailapa's son Satyāśraya is also said to have constructed a monument (*nisidhi*) in honour of his Jaina *guru* Vimala Chandra Paṇḍitadeva. Many other kings of this family such as Jayasīmha II, Someśvara I and II, and Vikramāditya VI, showed favour to the Jaina faith by patronising Jaina writers, and giving lands to Jaina teachers and Jaina temples or settlements (*bastī* or *vasadī*).

The founder of the Hoyasala dynasty is said to have owed his greatness to the benedictions of a Jaina saint. Many other Hoyasala kings had Jaina saints as their spiritual teachers and made grants to Jaina temples and settlements. Vishṇuwardhana, the most celebrated and glorious of the Hoyasalas, changed his faith under the influence of Rāmānujāchārya, but there is ample evidence to prove that he continued to be benevolent and generous towards Jainism

¹*Ibid.*, p. 412 f.

²Pusalker in *AIK*, p. 290.

³For royal patronage of Jainism during the Rāshtrakūta period, see *CHI*, I, p. 401.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 289.

all through his reign.¹ His queen Śāntaladevī also continued to be a staunch devotee of Jainism throughout her life, and made several donations to the Jaina temples. Some of the most outstanding ministers and commanders of the Hoyasalas were also staunch believers in the Jaina faith.² The later Hoyasala kings were also patrons of Jainism. Two of them, Vīra Ballāla II and Narasimha III, had Jaina saints as their spiritual guides. In Āndhra, though the reigning monarchs were invariably Parama-Māheśvaras, members of the royal family, high state-officials, vassal kings and feudal lords sometimes followed Jaina faith. Some of the Eastern Chālukyas were also Jains or patrons of this religion and made pious endowments to its establishments.

Thus we find that there was not a single dynasty in the Deccan, including Āndhra and Karṇāṭaka, that did not come under the influence of Jainism at one time or another. Non-Jaina rulers also patronised Jainism. Ministers, generals, women—all played their part in the growth of Jainism.³

Spread of Jainism : The Far South

It is difficult to know precisely the condition of Jainism in the Far South in the early centuries of the Christian era. Of course we have the evidence of *Mahāvamsa* that there were Nirgranthas in Ceylon at the time of Paṇḍukābhaya, and some obscure Brāhmī records with probable reference to Jainism are found in caves in the districts of Ramnad and Tinnevely, but they are of no importance in tracing the history of Jainism in the Tamil region⁴. However, the evidence of early Tamil works leaves no doubt about the flourishing state of Jainism in the Far South when these works were composed. Like other religions Jainism also claims the writers of *Tolkāppiyam* and *Kural* among its adherents. The Buddhist epic *Maṇimekhalai* refers to Jaina-monks, mostly Digambaras, and their doctrines, in a fairly accurate manner. Other famous works like the *Jīvakachintāmaṇi*, *Silappadikāram*, *Nīlakeśi*, *Yaśodharakāvya* and others are obviously Jaina in origin and contents, but their dates are uncertain. In any case these must be anterior to the seventh century A.D. when

¹For details, see *The Struggle for Empire*, p. 430.

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*, p. 291.

⁴CA, p. 413.

Jainism suffered serious reverses in the Far South.¹

Jaina traditions also give evidence for the prosperous state of Jainism in the Far South. The famous Jaina author Samantabhadra is associated with the town of Kāñchī. Kundakunda, the famous Digambara scholar, is brought in relation with a ruler called Sīvakumāramahārāja who was probably one of the Pallava kings of the Prakrit charters. Sarvanandin, a Jaina scholar, wrote *Lokavibhaṅga* in 458 A.D. during the reign of Siṃhavarman of Kāñchī. According to some scholars Kaḷabhra invaders of the South came from Karṇāṭaka and were followers of the Jaina religion.²

The Jaina community of the Far South formed what is known as the *Mūlasaṅgha* (the original group). According to a later tradition four pupils of Arhadbali, a pupil of Bhadrabāhu II, founded the four gaṇas of the Mūlasaṅgha, known respectively by the names of Nandigaṇa, Senagaṇa, Siṃhagaṇa and Devagaṇa. The evidence of inscriptions however is not quite in agreement with this tradition. In any case, the community of the Jaina monks in the Tamil lands was elaborately organised and showed distinctions based on locality and practices, suggesting its wide expanse.³ A welcome confirmation of the same is furnished by Hiuen Tsang, who speaks of a large number of the Nirgranthas in the country of the Pāṇḍyas.

In the Tamil lands Jainism lost royal support and began to decline in the seventh and subsequent centuries as a result of the vigorous preaching of the Śaiva and Vaishṇava saints, called the Nāyanārs and Ālvārs. According to tradition, the famous Pallava king, Mahendravarman, originally a Jaina, was converted to Śaivism by the preaching of the saint called Appar. The Pāṇḍya king Arikesarī Māravarman, known to tradition as Sundara Pāṇḍya, was converted to Śaivism by Sambandar. The Jaina faith was subjected to further humiliation at the hands of the Vaishṇava Ālvārs and afterwards by the rise of the great Āchāryas. To attract the people of Hinduism the Ālvārs and Nāyanārs adopted the practice of four-fold *dana* (*āhāra*, *abhaya*, *bhāishajya* and *sūtra*), discarded caste system, recruited people from the lowest grade in their fold, instituted a hierarchy of sixty-three saints, composed hymns in

¹*ibid.*

²*ibid.*

³*ibid.*

honour of local deities and tried to win over the good grace of the king, thereby securing patronage of the state. As a result of all this, Jainism lost its hold over the people and many Jainas left the Pallava and Pāṇḍya kingdoms and migrated possibly to Koppana, Śravaṇa Belgola and the surrounding territory where they were patronised by the Gaṅga and other local dynasties.

Contribution of Jainism to Indian Culture

The Jainas have played a very important role in the cultural evolution of the country. Sanskrit has all along been the medium of sacred writing and preachings of the Brāhmaṇas and Pali that of the Buddhists. But the Jainas utilized the popular languages of the different times at different places for the propagation of their religion as well as for the preservation of knowledge. They did not invest any particular language with religious sanctity. It helped them in exercising a predominant influence in the development of the Prakrit languages. They even gave a literary shape to some of the regional languages for the first time.

Mahāvīra preached in the mixed dialect called Ardha-Māgadhī, in order that he might be understood by the people speaking both Māgadhī and Śaurasenī. Later on the Jainas used Sanskrit and other regional Prakrits for their literary works. Now a very rich literature produced by the Jainas is available, which preserves the form of the language as it was current prior to the evolution of the present-day regional languages, especially Hindi, Gujarati and Marathi. This language called Apabhraṁśa forms the link between the classical languages, Sanskrit and Prakrit, on the one hand, and the modern regional languages, on the other.¹ The Jainas were pioneers in cultivating Tamil and Kannaḍa and enriching the early literature in these languages. They have also produced a vast literature in Sanskrit, both narrative and philosophical, and works on astronomy, grammar, prosody, lexicography, history, historiography and mathematics.

The Jainas contributed their due share in the development of arts in the country. They erected stūpas in honour of their saints, with their accessories of stone railings, decorated gateways, stone umbrellas, elaborate carved pillars, free standing pillars (*mānastambhas*) and abundant statues. Early examples of these have been

¹Munshi Shri Buddhamalji, *The Contribution of Jain writers to Indian Languages*, Calcutta, 1964.

discovered at Mathurā. Bundelkhand is full of Jaina images of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The huge statues of Bāhubalin, known as Gomateśvara, at Śravaṇa Belgola (57 feet high) and Karkala in Mysore State are among the wonders of the world¹. The former was erected by Chāmuṇḍarāya, a Gaṅga minister during the tenth century. The Jainas also built cave-temples cut in rocks, the earliest examples of which, belonging to the second century B.C. and later, exist in Orissa, known as Hathigumphā caves. Other examples of the various periods exist at Junagadh, Junnar, Udayagiri, etc. The numerous Jaina places of pilgrimage, such as the Parasnath Hills, Pavapuri and Rajgir in Bihar, and Girnar and Palitana in Kathiawar, possess temples and other architectural monuments of different ages. The Jaina marble temples at Mount Abu belonging to the eleventh century and later, 'carry to its highest perfection the Indian genius for the invention of graceful patterns and their application to the decoration of masonry'².

The most important contribution of Jainism in cultural field is the principle and philosophy of *ahimsā*. According to A. N. Upadhye Jainism is perhaps the only religion of India which has explained the doctrine of *ahimsā* in a systematic manner.³ The *ahimsā* preached by Jainism is of a very extreme form but it has been duly graded for the householders and for the monks in view of the different circumstances of life in which they are placed (*supra*). Jainism turned *ahimsā* into a philosophy of action, and numerous instances on record show that the Jaina generals and kings fought as bravely in wars as their contemporaries of the Brāhmanical faith. On the other hand, the principle of *ahimsā* encouraged the movement for ending the *himsā* in Vedic sacrifices and helped Vaishṇavism in popularising vegetarianism in India.

In the field of philosophy the greatest contribution of Jainism have been the doctrines of Syādvāda and Saptanaya. They strengthened on the ideological plane the spirit of philosophical and religious tolerance for which India has been so famous. It is true that the "wealth of schism which enriched Buddhism philosophically, the Jainas never appear to have experienced",⁴ but their contribution

¹CHI, I, p. 403.

²*Ibid.*

³Upadhye, A. N., 'Jainism', Chapter in the work ed. by Basham quoted above, pp. 106, 109.

⁴Pande, *Origins*, p. 355.

to ethical thought and theory of knowledge can hardly be underestimated.

Causes of Limited but Permanent Success of Jainism

As compared to Buddhism, the career of Jainism betrays an extremely remarkable but interesting feature in India. Jainism acquired only a limited success; it never became so widely popular as Buddhism became in certain periods of Indian history. Outside India also it never acquired a worth-mentioning hold, while Buddhism succeeded in obtaining an all-Asia character. On the other hand, Buddhism, despite its great popularity in ancient times, lost its hold in this country almost completely while roots of Jainism proved much more powerful and it is even now, as it has always been, a prominent religion of the country. What were the reasons of this limited but permanent success of Jainism?

The question is indeed difficult to be answered. However, as regards the permanence of its success, two factors may easily be mentioned. Firstly, Jainism became popular mainly in the merchant class; at least this class became the backbone of the Jaina community. But a Jaina śrāvaka was not much different from a savarna Hindu. Therefore very soon the Jainas acquired the form of a caste and as a caste it was not difficult for them to maintain their existence because the Hindu society has never minded the existence of such social groups within itself. Secondly, with the passage of time the differences between Hindu and Jaina religions were blurred. The Hindus did not hesitate to worship Jaina Tīrthaṅkaras and the Jainas did not mind worshipping Hindu gods. The result was the onslaughts of Islam were directed against Hinduism; Jainism could maintain its existence without much difficulty behind the massive and powerful defensive wall of Hinduism. On the other hand, Buddhism, which had acquired a slightly more distinct personality of its own, had to bear the direct onslaughts of Islam for which it had no inner strength.

As regards the failure of Jainism in becoming a real all-India religion and in acquiring roots outside India, probably the extreme form of its asceticism was the real cause. For its spread Jainism depended upon the missionary activities of its monks whose rigorous ascetic practices including plucking one's own hair, emphasis on extreme form of non-violence, nudity, etc. could not attract many people in the country and could hardly attract any one outside

helped to make the *Volta* an attractive great king of the category of Asafo, Kumbi and Hausa towards itself. All these factors appear to have been responsible for the limited but permanent success of the *Volta*.

Gautama Buddha and Early Buddhism (i)

Life of the Buddha : upto Enlightenment

The followers of Buddha trace the roots of his teachings in the profound super-normal (*uttarimanussa*) realization of their great prophet. It is only natural for the adherents of a religion to credit the founder of their faith with powers of insight and penetration into the nature of truth and reality. But Hegel has familiarized us with the notion that great men are only the spokesmen of the 'ideas' of their age and that nebulous ideas of the day find their crystallization in a great man. According to this view it will not be an exaggeration even to maintain that the notion and criterion of what constitutes an element of originality in our thought is itself socially conditioned. The pursuit of this method is obviously essential in the interest of higher knowledge, but it should not imply the minimization of the genius of the great founders of religions. For example in the case of the Buddha himself it would be a travesty of truth to attribute his pessimistic world-view to economic depression or political tyranny of his times. He was born as a prince and was brought up in luxury, ease and comfort. Therefore the renunciation of the world by him and his *dukkhavāda* cannot, by any stretch of imagination, be set down to the motive of escapism.¹

A complete biography of the Buddha is not found in the Pali canon². However there are incidental references in the Nikāyas

¹Mookerjee, Satkari, *CHI*, I, p. 589.

²Cf. Warder, A. K., *Indian Buddhism*, p. 43. As the historicity of the Buddha is now fully established we are not discussing the views of those early scholars (such as R. Otto Franke, E. Senart and A. Barth) who doubted or rejected outright his historicity.

which shed some light on his personality and the events of his life.¹ An early form of the Sanskrit tradition is found in the collection of legends in the Tibetan scriptures, especially the *Vinaya*². The *Mahāvastu*, belonging to the *Vinaya* of the Lokottaravādins, contains much legendary material for Buddha's biography. Its *Rāhula vatthu* account is important for his early life. The *Lalitavistara*, in its present form, is a Mahāyāna sūtra, but contains some clearly old passages³. It gives a continuous narrative of Buddha's life. And finally, the *Abhinishkramaṇasūtra*, existing only in a Chinese translation and the *Buddhacharita* of Aśvaghosha may be mentioned.⁴

It seems that for the earlier disciples of the Buddha it was the doctrine which was the centre of interest, and not the teacher.⁵ Therefore certain evidence for Buddha's life is small; only its leading events and features can be historically delineated after removing the later legendary accretions, which we propose to do in the following pages.

Gautama Buddha, it is said in legends, came down to this world from the Tushita heaven where he was the presiding god. Before his advent into the world, he indicated the time, place and family which would suit him best for appearing as a human being. He was born in 563 B.C.,⁶ for his parinirvāṇa is now usually placed in 483 B.C. and he was eighty years old at that time. The place of his birth was Kapilavastu, the chief city of the Śākya. It was situated probably near the place where the Lumbini edict of Aśoka has been found.

The Śākya are described as proud Khattiyas of pure decent. But at the same time the Brāhmaṇa gotra of Gotama is ascribed to them and the tradition of close inter-marriages is associated with them

¹The *Ariyapariyesanāsutta*, *sutta 36*, *Mahāsachchakasutta*, *sutta 85*, *Bodhīrājakumārasutta*, *sutta 100* and *Saṅgāravasutta* are important for the history of his exertions towards the attainment of truth.

²Cf. Rockhill, *Life of the Buddha*.

³Pande, *Origins*, p. 370.

⁴Published in an abridged trans. by Beal as *The Romantic Legend of Śākya Buddha*.

⁵Warder, *op. cit*

⁶Vide Goyal, S. R., *Māgadha Sāmrajya kā Udaya*, pp. 148-52 for a detailed study of the various theories regarding the date of the parinirvāṇa. Cf. also Upadhyaya, K. N., *Early Buddhism and the Bhagavadgītā*, 1971, pp. 31-38.

which indicates some non-Aryan affinities. They were an oligarchical clan with a popular assembly and elected chief. Their economic life, rural and agricultural in nature, was simple. Against this background the story of Buddha's having had in his early life three different palaces for the three seasons does not appear very plausible.¹ From the *Mahāvagga* the name of his father appears to have been Śuddhodana and that of his mother Māyā or Mahāmāyā; his own name was Sidhārtha. According to the *Chullavagga* the mother of the Buddha died soon after his birth and he was brought up by Mahāprajāpati Gotamī, who is described as the mother's sister (*mātuchchha*) of the Buddha in later legends. She is mentioned at several places in the *Piṇaya* and the *Nikāyas*, but her relationship with Buddha is not explicitly specified in the latter.² According to a legend Ṛshi Asita, who learnt of the birth of the Great Being by his divine insight, came to Kapilavastu and prophesied that the child would either become a sovereign ruler or a recluse, a Tathāgata, a Samyaksambuddha. But the prophecy of Asita has little claim to be regarded authentic.³ On Buddha's education and the name of his wife,⁴ the earliest records are silent. Rāhula figures as a monk at several places in the *Nikāyas*, but is not called Buddha's son. Only in the *Mahāvagga* a person of that name is sent by his mother to the Buddha to ask for his *dāyajja*; but here the name of *Rāhulamātā* is missing.

At the age of twenty-nine the Buddha entered the homeless state. In the traditions it takes the form of highly pathos-ridden story which asserts that the crisis was caused by the first sight of old age, sickness, death and an ascetic. But as G. C. Pande points out, it seems difficult to believe that the Siddhārtha could have lived for twenty-eight years without encountering sickness, old age, death and asceticism.⁵ The *Ariyapariyesanāsutta* in the *Majjhima Nikāya* claims to record that he put on the yellow robes and went forth from his home to the homeless state against the wishes of his weeping parents. A sutta in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* informs us how through reflection over the subjects of old age, sickness and death he lost all pride of youth, health and life. Thus, though the precise

¹Pande, G. C., *Origins*, p. 372.

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*, p. 373.

⁴Variouly called Yaśodharā, Gopā, Bimbā and Bhadda Kañchanā.

⁵Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 374.

circumstances under which the actual *abhinishkramaṇa* took place are no longer known yet there seems no reason to believe that it was a sudden revolution.¹

The *abhinishkramaṇa* was followed by several years of wandering and seeking. He was invited by two Brāhmaṇa female hermits and then by Raivata Brahmaṛṣhi and Rajaka Tridaṇḍika to stay in their hermitages, which he politely refused.² The names of only two teachers, Ārāḍa or Ālāra Kālāma and Rudraka Rāmaputra or Uddaka Rāmaputta, under whom the Buddha sought spiritual instruction, are mentioned in the *Nikāyas*. On enquiry he learnt that Ārāḍa Kālāma had reached the seventh stage of meditation (*samāpatti*) called *akiñchaññāyatana* (in which one's mind seeks nothing) while Rudraka Rāmaputra could rise to the eighth stage of meditation called *n'evasaññānāsaññāyatana* (in which the sense-perception was neither active nor dead).³

From there Gautama went to Gayāśirsha Hill and found there many ascetics given to rigorous practices of self-mortification for spiritual elevation but he observed that they had not freed themselves wholly from worldly attachments and were far away from obtaining true insight and knowledge. Now he went to Uruvelā senānī-gāma on the bank of the river Nerañjanā. There he practised rigorous asceticism for six long years and realized that it would not lead to perfect knowledge. Thereupon he decided to change his line of practices by taking food which he began with *khīra* of Sujātā (the daughter of a local senānī) who offered it to him thinking that he was a tree-god. It disappointed his five Brāhmaṇa ascetic-companions (the Pañchavargīya monks named Koṇḍañña, Vappa, Bhaddiya, Mahanāma, and Assaji) who left him in disgust. Now Gautama took his seat under the Bodhi tree with the determination that even if his body dries up he would not leave his seat without attaining sambodhi. Māra tried to break his resolution but did not succeed. He gradually rose from the first to the fourth *jhāna* and visualised the highest Truth, the sambodhi, and thereby became fully enlightened, the Buddha, Samyaksambuddha or Prabuddha.

¹*Ibid.*, p. 376.

²Dutt, N., *Early Monastic Buddhism*, p. 87. The reference to Brāhmaṇa female hermits is interesting and significant.

³For the view that the Buddha had been a Jaina Muni before Enlightenment, see Jain, B. Bhagchandra, 'The Buddha and Buddhism', *Mahābodhi*, LXXIV, Nos. 1-2, pp. 18-20.

According to some scholars the tradition of Buddha's attaining Enlightenment under the 'Bodhi tree' is just a piece of popular legend. According to Thomas 'the whole story of the contest with Māra is a mythological development'¹. Rhys Davids has seen in the Māra story 'a subjective reality'². But according to G. C. Pande, the struggle with Māra was 'really a psychological struggle with secular temptations'³.

After obtaining Enlightenment the Buddha remained for some time⁴ at the Bodhi tree enjoying Vimuttisukha. After this the *Mahāvagga* narrates the acceptance of Tapussa and Bhallika as lay-disciples, which is followed by the description of Buddha's hesitation to preach⁵ (because the truth visualised by him was too deep and subtle to be comprehended by men of average intellect) and his final decision to engage in preaching at the entreaty of Brahmā (*Brahmayāchanā*). He resolved to preach the dhamma first to his former five Brāhmaṇa ascetic companions then dwelling at Isipattana or Sarnath, the deer-park near Banaras. With this began his career as a missionary, usually called setting into motion the wheel of law (*Dhammachakka pavattana*).⁶

Missionary Life of the Buddha

A systematic description of the traditional account of Buddha's missionary activities extending from his thirty-fifth year to the end of his life, has been given by Kern, Thomas, N. Dutt etc. The tradition, however, is for the greater part post-canonical and much of it is uncertain in the absence of earlier evidence. As noted above, his missionary activity commenced at Sarnath where he imparted his teachings to his former companions, the five Brāhmaṇas. Very probably at Sarnath Pūrṇa Maitrāyaṇīputra, Nālaka and Sabhiya, who were all recluses, also expressed appreciation of Buddha's teachings though they joined the *saṅgha* a little later, in the first or second year of Buddha's ministry. After this point no continuous

¹Thomas, *Life*, p. 74.

²Quoted by Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 381.

³Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 381.

⁴Variously mentioned as one, four or seven weeks.

⁵*Origins*, p. 383.

⁶For an interesting study of 'Some of the Common Features in the Life-stories of the Buddha and Mahāvīra' see Malvania, Dalsukh D., *POC*, Gauhati Session, 1966, pp. 149-53.

narrative of Buddha's activities is found in the Nikāyas though the *Vinaya* describes the conversion of Yaśa and his friends, the sending forth of the first missionaries, the conversion of Kassapa (the leader of the Jaṭilas) and his disciples at Gayāśīrsha, the delivery of the Fire Sermon, the conversion of King Bimbisāra at Rājagṛha and the conversion of Sāriputta and Moggalāna. Ajātasattu, the son of Bimbisāra, does not appear to have been favourably disposed towards the Buddha at first. Towards the end of Buddha's life, however, he is said to have had a change of heart as a result of listening to the Sāmaññaphala-sermon. Among the Brāhmaṇas of Magadha the Buddha does not seem to have been very successful though among his lay devotees of this region were included a number of gāmaṇīs, setṭhīs, gahapatis, princes and princesses.

There is some evidence to show that the Śākya were also not at first favourably disposed towards his teachings. The ordination of Rāhula is, however, mentioned in the *Vinaya*; though the tradition regarding the conversion of Śuddhodana and the mother of Rāhula is of a later date.¹ Some youths of prominent Śākyan families also became his disciples and joined the Order. Among them were included Ānanda, Anuruddha, Bhaddiya, Kimbila, Nanda and Devadatta. Chaṇḍaka and Upāli followed the Śākyan nobles and joined the order of monks. Ānanda was the son of Amitodana, a brother of king Śuddhodana. Nanda was a step-brother of the Buddha. Devadatta was the cousin of the Buddha and the brother of Yaśodharā. Upāli, who became the repository of Vinaya rules, belonged to a barber family. Chaṇḍaka had been the attendant and charioteer of prince Siddhārtha.

In the fifth year of his ministry at the request of Mahāprajāpati and the intervention and persuasion of Ānanda, the Buddha approved the formation of the order of nuns, provided they agreed to the eight disabilities imposed by him (*infra*, section on Buddha's attitude to women).

King Pasenadi and queen Mallikā of Kosala are depicted in the Nikāyas as admirers of the Buddha. Princesses Somā, Sakulā and Sumanā too figure as interested in Buddhist doctrines. From the setṭhī class of Kosala the two most important names are those of Anāthapiṇḍikā and Viśākhā—the daughter-in-law of Migāra (though called Migāramātā). The former is reported to have made

¹Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 389.

the gift of the Jetavana vihāra and the latter of the Pubārāma Migāramātupāsāda.¹ Among the rich and influential Brāhmaṇas of this region who accepted the new faith the names of Jānussoṇi, Aggika Bhāradvāja, Dhānañjani, Pokkharasādi, Lohichcha and Chaṅki may be mentioned. The most notable converts from among the Ājīvikas of Kosala were Vekhanassa and Poṭṭhapāda.²

Just as Sāvattī was the headquarter of the Ājīvikas, so was Vesālī or Vaiśālī of the Nigaṇṭhas. The most important success of the Buddha here was the conversion of the Nigaṇṭha upāsaka Siha (Siṃha)—a Lichchhavi general. From among the Bhaggas of Suṃsumāragiri came the three distinguished lay adherents—the parents of Nakula and Bodhirājakumāra.³ The two most well-known converts from among the Mallas were Dabba Mallaputta and Chunda Kammāraputta. In Aṅga the Buddha is reported to have disputed with the Brāhmaṇa teacher Soṇadaṇḍa of Champā. Some discourses of the Buddha have been placed at Kosāmbī, Verañjā and the Kuru villages Kammāsadhamma and Thulla-koṭṭhita.

Among the prominent personalities who accepted the faith of the Buddha the following also deserve mention : Mahākātyāyana (son of the royal priest of king Pradyota of Avanti), Mahānāma (the rich Śākya relative of the Teacher), Ambapālī (a courtesan), Jyotishka (son of a fabulously rich banker of Rājagṛha), Jīvaka (a very renowned physician), Abhayarājakumāra (a son of king Bimbisāra), Śroṇa Koṭiviśa (son of a very rich banker of Champā), Nyagrodha (a distinguished Paribbājaka), Upālī (a gahapati of Nālandā), Pukkusāti (king of Takshaśilā), Kūṭadanta (a learned Brāhmaṇa), Pañchaśikha (a gandharva), Nandamātā (a distinguished lady), Keniya and Sela (two Jaṭila ascetics), Aṅgulimāla (a dacoit-son of the priest of king Prasenajit), Mahālī (a prominent Lichchhavi), Sachchaka (a teacher of the Lichchhavis), Jānussoṇi (a rich and distinguished Brāhmaṇa teacher), Vakkali (a celebrated Brāhmaṇa of Śrāvastī), Bāvarī (the royal priest of the king of Kosala), Sunakkhatta (a Lichchhavi prince of Vesālī), Subhūti (a nephew of Anāthapiṇḍika), Mahakoṭṭhita (a learned Brāhmaṇa), Piṇḍola Bharadvāja (a son of the priest of King Udena), Khemā (a queen of Bimbisāra) and Sāmāvatī (the daughter of a

¹*Ibid.*, p. 388.

²*Ibid.*, p. 389.

³*Ibid.*

seṭṭhi).¹ From this list it is apparent that geographically the sphere of Buddha's activities embraced mainly the kingdoms of Kosala and Magadha. Among the lay disciples an important part seems to have been played by the moneyed and ruling classes. Women too figure prominently as nuns and lay devotees. Many Brāhmaṇas also entered the new Order, and there were followers from the lower classes too. The *Saṅgha* or Order of Monks was open to the people of all castes and all could join it on a footing of equality, except for government servants, debtors, slaves, certain kinds of proclaimed criminal offenders and those suffering from certain incurable physical defects.²

After completing his work of propagating his teachings and organizing the monastic institutions, the Buddha decided to enter the *parinirvāṇa*. At that time Chunda, a blacksmith of Pāvā invited him to a meal of rice, cakes and *sūkaramaddava*. Scholars differ about the meaning of the last word. It was either a boar's tender flesh or some edible herb. He ate it and fell ill. He breathed his last at Kusinārā or Kuśīnagara among the Mallas. His death took place at the age of 80 years on the full moon of Vaiśākha (May), as did his birth and awakening. The event was signified by an earthquake while Brahmā Sahampati and Sakka, the king of gods, expressed their sorrow by saying that all constituted beings and objects must have decay.³ His remains were cremated with royal honours. A battle for the possession of his mortal remains for daily worship was stopped by Droṇa, a Brāhmaṇa. Eight stūpas were erected in different parts of India to house his relics.

Teachings of the Buddha : Four Noble Truths or Dukkhavāda

It is not possible to determine exactly what were the actual utterances of the Buddha. Doubts have been raised about Buddhism of the *Tripitaka* being essentially the teaching of the Buddha and much discussion now centres round the question of his original doctrine.⁴ For example some historians believe that he did not repudiate the belief in ātman or soul; others maintain that he did. Some hold that

¹For details, vide Dutt, N., *op. cit.*, p. 116 ff.

²Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 390 f.

³Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

⁴For a detailed study of the controversy vide Pande, G. C., *Origins*, Allahabad, 1957; Warder, A. K., *Indian Buddhism*, Delhi, 1970, pp. 81-156; Varma, V. P., *Early Buddhism and its Origins*, New Delhi, 1973.

his ideas 'differed but little from the teachings of the Upanishadic sages'; others suggest that he taught a radical departure from the philosophy of these texts. Some have opined that he believed in the doctrine of *saṃsāra* while others have advocated that he 'rejected the doctrine of transmigration and taught merely the almost self-evident truism that one generation is affected by the deeds of the preceding one.' Further, some scholars attribute to him extreme pragmatism ignoring all dogma, while others deny it. Modern scholars also differ on the exact meaning of the terms *dukkha*, *pratītyasamutpāda*, *nibbāna*, etc. used in early Buddhism. Possibly there is some truth in the various views prevalent on the different aspects of Buddhism, but it also appears that there is a considerable amount of subjective element in them and a definite conclusion will always remain difficult to be reached.

According to N. Dutt we may accept as original those teachings of the Buddha which are repeated at several places in the Nikāyas.¹ Most of the traditions agree about three or four suttas (e.g. the *Ariyapariyesanūsutta*, the *Dhammachakkapavattanasutta*, the *Mahā-parinibbānasutta*) having been delivered by the Buddha. They contain substantially all of his teachings. The *Ariyapariyesanūsutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* states that after the attainment of bodhi, the Buddha became hesitant to teach his dhamma mainly in connection with the theory of causation, known as Paṭichhasamuppāda. But the starting point of his religion is suffering (*dukkha*) which is actually the starting point of all Śramaṇic philosophies and what is sought after is nirvāna by following the Middle Path. The Buddha had obviously fallen under the influence of the prevailing philosophical mood of Dukkhavāda (sorrowism). He pondered deeply over the distressing phenomena of old age, disease, poverty, death and the various other forms of sorrow which are inherent in life. The first part of the *Dhammachakkapavattanasutta* contains the exposition of the Middle Path. In the second part of this sermon he explains his views about sorrow in the formulation of the famous Four Noble Truths (Chattāri Ariya Sacchāni) thus :

'Now this, O Monks, is the Noble Truth of Pain (*Dukkha*). Birth is painful, old age is painful, sickness is painful, sorrow, lamentation, defection, and despair are painful. Contact with unpleasant things is painful, not getting what one wishes is painful. In short,

¹Dutt, N., *Early Monastic Buddhism*, p. 134.

the five khandhas of grasping are painful.

'Now this, O monks, is the Noble Truth of the cause of Pain (*Dukkha-samudaya*) : that craving (*taṇhā* = *trishṇā*) which leads to rebirth with pleasure and lust, finding pleasure here and there, namely the craving for passion, the craving for existence, the craving for non-existence.

'Now this, O monks, is the Noble Truth of the cessation of Pain (*Dukkha-nirodha*) : the cessation without remainder of that craving, abandonment, forsaking, release, un-attachment.

'Now this, O monks, is the Noble Truth of the Way that leads to the cessation of Pain (*Dukkha-nirodha-gāminī Paṭipadā*): this is the Noble Eightfold Path (*Āryāṣṭāṅgamārga*), namely, right views, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. Thus, O monks, only doctrines unheard before, in me sight and knowledge arose, wisdom arose, light arose.'

To sum up, what the Buddha taught in the First Sermon at Isipattana was this : (a) that life, as it is generally lived, is inevitably mixed up with sorrow; through the gate of birth we pass into the valley of sorrow and pain; (b) that it is craving or desire that leads to rebirth and hence to sorrow; (c) that in order to get rid of sorrow we must destroy its root cause, namely craving, and (d) that this can be done by following the Noble Eightfold Path.

Suffering originates from *taṇhā* or desire or thirst which has three aspects—*kāmataṇhā*, *bhavataṇhā* and *vibhavataṇhā*. In order to show their falsity the teachings of the undesirableness of sensual pleasures (*ūdittapariyāya*), of no-soul theory (*anatta*) and impermanence (*aniccha*) were brought about. In the *ūdittapariyāya* the world of sensual desires has been described as the world on fire, a world burning with the fires of *rāga* (attachment), *dosa* (vice) and *moha* (fondness).¹ Further, human beings desire to exist for ever without realizing the true nature of self. The Buddha struck at the root of this fallacy by his doctrines of *anatta* and *aniccha* (*infra*).

Various views have been advanced regarding the true meaning of *dukkha*. Stcherbatsky appears to believe that *dukkha* is unrest,² while actually unrest is only the outcome of *dukkha*, not *dukkha* itself. According to Coomaraswamy, 'Dukkha is to be understood

¹Mishra, G. S. P., *The Age of Vinaya*, p. 65.

²Quoted by Mishra, *op. cit.*, p. 66; cf. also Saddhatissa, 'Dukkha, the First Noble Truth', *Mahābodhi*, LXXIV, pp. 78-79.

both as a symptom and disease.¹ It was probably to reconcile such views that the Nikāyas speak of three kinds of *dukkhatā*—*dukkha dukkhatā* or the direct contact of the senses with unpleasurable feelings (e.g. when the skin is cut); *pariṇāma dukkhatā* or the feeling of pain emanating from the result of pleasure on account of its changeability and impermanence; and *saṅkhāra dukkhatā* which is connected with the doctrine of karman, for actions are ever in search of an opportunity to lead to pain either in this life or in the next.² The *Vinaya* in a qualified manner calls the five upādānakhandhas as *dukkha*. But as the world means nothing beyond them, some texts declare that all things are *dukkha*. The Kukulavādins or the Gokulikas even denied the existence of *sukha saṁvedanā*. According to them pleasure is nothing but merely the absence of pain. But the Theravādins and the Sarvāstivādins argue that it would be absurd to disbelieve in the existence of pleasure when one believes in the existence of pain. If there was no satisfaction to be found in the world, beings would not be attached to it. Therefore the undesirability of pleasure only means the undesirability of *dukkha* inherent in it. The Buddha realized that pain cannot be conceived without pleasure, but he concluded that as pleasure too results in pain, it should not be aspired for.³

It has been suggested by Kern that the formula of the Four Noble Truths was borrowed by Buddhism from medical science.⁴ In the *Vyādhisūtra* the Four Truths have been compared with their medical counterpart—disease, diagnosis, cure and medicine and in the *Lalitavistara* the Buddha has been attributed the epithet 'Vaidyarāja'.⁵

That the doctrine of the Four Noble Truths was included in the original teachings of the Buddha can hardly be doubted.⁶ The weight and importance attached to it in all texts proves it, though Mrs. Rhys Davids held a contrary view.⁷ But her skepticism has not met general approval. A 'dissatisfaction with the existent set-up is

¹Coomaraswamy, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

²Mishra, *op. cit.*, p. 67 f.

³*Ibid.*, p. 68-9.

⁴Kern, *Manual of Indian Buddhism*, p. 67 f.

⁵Quoted by Mishra, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

⁶Oldenberg, *Buddha*, pp. 197-8; Thomas, *The Life of the Buddha*, p. 173; Winternitz, *HIL*, II, p. 2.

⁷Mrs. Rhys Davids, *Gotama the Man*, pp. 147-48; *What was the Original Gospel in Buddhism?*, p. 378.

the necessary preceding state for a reform in any field; Buddha saw something wrong with the world around him and he proceeded to find out what is lacked and needed.¹ Similarly her view that the word dukkha used in the texts points merely to ills of body and mind and lacks a conception of ills in the spiritual realm,² does not seem to be convincing. According to G. C. Pande "such expressions as define dukkha in terms of birth, disease, old age and death should . . . be understood symbolically, not literally. When the Buddhist, contemplating life, was sorely distressed to see its limitation and uncertainties, he was surely feeling what may be called spiritual discontent . . . he did not mean merely to speak of a discontent of body and mind, but rather of discontent with body and mind, and this latter is the form of all spiritual discontent."³

The dukkhavāda of Buddhism, and also of Jainism, did not evolve from the early Vedic religion. The Ṛgvedic people wanted to live a full life of hundred years and more. But in the Upanishads the theme of the burden of the world with its fatalities and contradictions begins to weigh heavily upon the minds of the thinkers. Sometimes they explicitly say that everything else is full of sorrow—*anyad-ārtam*. However they looked upon the worldly sorrows against the background of the plentitude of bliss of Brahman. Secondly, the Upanishadic passages which refer to the miserable character of the world are not many. The *Kaṭha Upaniṣhad* contains the world *lokadukkha* but this text is a comparatively late composition. There are pessimistic strains in the *Maitrāyaṇī* but it is regarded as post-Buddhistic.⁴ Some of the greatest names in the Upanishads are those of householders and kings. Ushasta Chākṛāyaṇa, Uddālaka Āruṇi and Satyakāma Jābāla lived the normal lives of peaceful householders. Raikva was notorious for his love of gifts and fees. Yājñavalkya accepted plenty of cows and gold from king Janaka. They all engaged in philosophical discussions but they felt no urgency to renounce the world.

Here it may also be noted that the Buddha had himself "rejected outright all those views which might be generalised as Āstika (Be-

¹Mishra, G. S. P., *The Age of Vinaya*, p. 64.

²Mrs. Rhys Davids, *What was the Original Gospel?*, pp. 56-7.

³Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 403; cf. Thera, C. Nayanassatta, 'Dukkha, Contemplation of Suffering', *World Buddhism*, XL, No. 7, p. 21.

⁴Pande, *Origins*, App. III, p. 575 ff. The *Maitrāyaṇī* contains allusions to Buddhism.

lief in the existence of the Supreme God, the Creator), Nāstika (Annihilationism as also Materialism), and Daiṣṭika (Determinism or Fatalism) or as Śāśvata (Eternalism) and Ucheda (Nihilism) or a mixture of the two (Partial Eternalism and Partial Nihilism). He did not expressly refer to the Upaniṣads or to the philosophy embodied in them but it is clear that he was fully cognizant of the Brahmanical view of Jīvātman and Paramātman and also of the theory of origin of the world of beings. . . . There are, however, clear and repeated assertions that the only reality is Nibbāna, which is not mere negation of everything (*abhāvamātra*) and that all the constituted objects of the world are unreal.”¹

Historically the origin of Buddhism may be seen in the non-Vedic Śramaṇism, the ideology of *nivṛtti*, the existence of which has been traced even in the early Vedic and Indus Civilizations. We have already discussed the main aspects of the Śramaṇic ideology and its origin in the early Vedic age elsewhere (Ch. V).

Various theories have been advanced for explaining the emergence of dukkhavāda in Indian philosophy. According to the psycho-analytic theory the roots of the theory of *dukkha* are to be found in the psychological neuroses of the Buddha himself. He was an extraordinarily sensitive and tender personality and the all-pervasiveness of sorrow which appeared to reveal itself to him through the old man, the diseased man and the corpse was only an exaggerated interpretation put upon a commonplace phenomenon.² According to another explanation the dulling and enervating effects of the eastern regions were responsible for the philosophy of Upanishads and the dukkhavāda of Buddhism both.³ A third, anthropological, explanation of Buddhist dukkhavāda is found in the theory of racial admixture. According to Griswold for example the racial fusion of the Aryans and Dravidians was possibly the cause of the melancholy temperament of the Indians.⁴ A fourth explanation is offered by the Marxist philosophy which believes that the pessimistic ideology of

¹Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

²Cf. Wells, H. G., *The Outline of History*, New York, 1931, p. 390; Streeter, B. H., *The Buddha and the Christ*, London, 1932, p. 62; cf. also Griswold, H. G., *ERE*, IX, p. 812.

³Bloomfield, *The Religion of the Veda*, p. 264; cf. Tagore, Rabindranath, *Sādhanā*, Ch. 1; Melamed, *Spinoza and Buddha*, p. 235; Keith, *The Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas and Upaniṣads*, II, p. 469.

⁴Griswold, *op. cit.*

despair and nullity was preached by the exponents of the interests of the dominant classes in order to benumb the zeal and revolutionary fervour of the suppressed strata. For example Rāhula Sāṃkr̥tyāyana makes three factors responsible for the Upanishadic gloom: (a) suppressed sense of revolt of the exploited; (b) social inequalities; and (c) internal quarrels among the exploiting sections.¹ On the other hand some scholars emphasize the elements of unhappiness brought about by the political upheavals and vicissitudes of the period. For example according to Stevenson the notion of dukkha emphasized in Buddhism and other contemporary systems was a theoretical formulation of an actual concrete miserable situation.² Men hoped to evade the avaricious fingers of the king by renouncing everything that could be taken from them. According to Coomaraswamy,³ however, the pessimism of Buddhism and other philosophies was the result of the accumulation of philosophical experience. At times a philosophical probe into the nature and procession of the world does indicate immensity of suffering. A philosophy that teaches that things are as they should be is no philosophy at all. Buddha's stress on the dark side of the phenomena of the world was based upon his perceptions and experiences. Thus the Buddhist dukkhavāda was the result also of the intuitional experience of its founder,⁴ though other factors discussed above also played their role.

Pratītyasamutpāda (Law of Causation)

Pratītyasamutpāda or the law of dependent origination was a great contribution of the Buddha to the philosophical thoughts of India of the 5th century B.C.⁵ *Pratītyasamutpāda* (Pali, *Paṭichhasamutpāda*) means that every object or being is subject to dissolution and the objects that dissolve appear (samutpāda) again and again (*Pratītyasamutpāda = idam sati idam hoti = this being so, that happens*). It is also called the law of *Idampratyayatū* or *Idappachchayatū* (= the things of this world are this conditioned or interdependent) and *Majjhima Dhamma* (=The Middle Path).

The Buddha is stated to have discovered the Truth of Paṭichhasam^o

¹*Darśana Digdarśana*, p. 382 ff.

²Stevenson, S., *The Heart of Jainism*, New Delhi, 1970, p. 3.

³Coomaraswamy, *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*, p. 180.

⁴Varma, V. P., *op. cit.*, p. 137.

⁵Cf. Gokhale, V. V., 'Gotama's Vision of Truth', *Brahmavidyā*, Adyar, XXX,

during his Sambodhi, and finding it too difficult and subtle for ordinary comprehension, to have hesitated in preaching it. He agreed to preach it only after he was requested to do so by Brahmā. That the formula is the most ancient one and in some form or the other goes back to the Buddha himself is proved by the conversation which took place only a few months after the Enlightenment between Sāriputta, then a non-Buddhist wanderer, and Arhat Assaji. When questioned by the former the latter defines the dhamma briefly thus: "The Tathāgata has explained the origin of those things which proceed from a cause. Their cessation too he has explained. This is the doctrine of the Great Śramaṇa"¹ (*Ye dhammā hetuprabhavā tesam hetum Tathāgato āha. Tesam cha yo nirodho evam vādī Mahāsamaṇo*). Probably it was from such a brief formula that the detailed chain of causation was later on postulated. In any case, all sects of Buddhism agree on its significance and it has been identified with Dhamma and the Buddha in ancient sayings as well as later texts both of the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna. "The universally recognized importance of the idea, its equal obscurity, and its occurrence in some of the most ancient passages of the Nikāyas testify to its authenticity."²

As the 'Middle Doctrine' Paṭiccasamuppāda seeks to avoid both Sat and Asat, Being (*Atthita*) and Non Being (*Natthita*). "It denies that things just are, pure and immutable, or that they are a nihil. It denies that they just happen without an intelligible law, as a matter of chance, of fiat, or natural freak. And it denies that one thing actively produces another, or that one thing comes out of another. It denies Eternalism (Sassatavāda), Nihilism (Ucchedavāda), Fortuitionism (Adhiccāsammuppāda), and anthropomorphic, or dynamic causality. . . Paṭiccasam^o appears now as a law relating to events which do not happen in isolation. It thus resolves the world into a procession, and sees a necessary order in its sequence."³ Thus for the Buddha, becoming was an undeniable and extremely significant fact about the finite world. By this law he sought to establish that the world was "neither a creation of God nor its origin was accidental nor it was issued out of the ever existing Prakṛti nor it was a composite of eternal atoms (*aṇuparamāṇu*) nor was

¹Bhikshu Sangharakshita, in *A Cultural History of India*, ed. by A. L. Basham, p. 85.

²Pande, *Origins*, p. 412.

³*Ibid.*, p. 423 f.

it pre-determined as held by the Ājīvikas."¹ Further, it sought to prove that the world was caused and not uncaused and that it is "in a dynamic state and is never static even for a moment. In other words, it is only a series of point-instants. From this it follows that the beings and objects of the world have only dependent origination and hence they are impermanent and sources of misery, and that except *Nibhāna* and *Ākāśa*, there is nothing that is not originated by sequence of causes and conditions. This law also shows that all that is thus caused and conditioned is evanescent and without any substance. It explains the fixed, unchangeable and this-conditioned (*idappaccayatā*) nature of beings and objects."² For the Buddha all phenomenal objects have existence though it is only momentary (*kṣaṇika*), similar to waves on the sea. These waves are not purely imaginary, and do exist, but only for a moment; hence they are impermanent (*anitya*).

Thus the Buddha inculcated the belief that the universe is *anicca* (impermanent or ever-changing). At the same time he maintained that it is *dukkha* and in startling opposition to the Upanishadic philosophy also apparently taught that it is *anatta*, i. e. without a non-changing, abiding entity called *attā* (*ātman*) or soul (*infra*) and that it is the non-comprehension (*avijjā*) or only partial grasping of this three-fold nature of the universe that gives rise to *taṭhā* and ultimately leads to sorrows.³

In the Buddhist texts such as *Mahānidānasūtra* an attempt has been made to elaborate the theory of Pratītyasamutpāda or causation by a chain of factors that elucidate the relationship between *avijjā* (ignorance) and *dukkha* (sorrow): from ignorance (*avijjā*) arises imagination (*saṃkhāra*), from imagination arises consciousness (*viññāna*), from consciousness arise name and form (*nāmarūpa*), from name and form arises the sphere of the six (*saḥajāyatana*), from the sphere of the six arises contact (*phassa* or *sparśa*), from contact arises sensation (*vedanā*), from sensation arises craving (*taṭhā*), from craving arises grasping (*upādāna*), from grasping arises becoming (*bhava*), from becoming arises birth (*jāti*) and from birth as cause arise old age, death, grief, lamentation, pain, dejection and despair. So long *avijjā* and craving are not overcome the cycle of re-births (*samsāra*) will continue and there will be no emancipation

¹Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

²*Ibid.*

³Warder, A. K., *Indian Buddhism*, p. 106 ff.

from the shackles of sorrow implied in birth. With the cessation of ignorance and craving, the necessity of rebirth will come to an end, and the state of emancipation, Nirvāṇa, will be reached.¹

Paṭichhasamuppāda is commonly supposed to represent Buddha's explanation of suffering. Jacobi's suggestion² that this formula was derived from the Sāṅkhya scheme of evolution was endorsed by Schrader while Senart posited the influence of Yoga³. It is of course true that the Sāṅkhya, like Buddhism, sees the origin of *Dukkha* in desire-promoted actions, and the origin of desire in some sort of 'ignorance', but as pointed out by G. C. Pande the idea of *avidyā* is in a way common to all systems of Indian philosophy. According to him "the comparison between the Sāṅkhya scheme of the *Tattvas* and *Pratītyasamutpāda* appears to be forced."⁴

Modern opinion has varied also on the significance of the theory of *Paṭichhasamuppāda*. Keith thought that the chain aimed at explaining the origin of evil, and that it does not denote a causation in nature⁵. On the other hand Prof. Rhys Davids considered the formula as the first clear enunciation in history of the principle of natural causality in all phenomena⁶. Mrs. Rhys Davids too takes the formula as an expression of law exactly in the sense that *ṛta* and *vṛata* were used in the earlier periods but had come into disuse for the gods with whom they were associated had lost their importance⁷. Oldenberg believes that the formula of 'the Causal Nexus of Being' was drawn up to strengthen the tenets regarding the origin and cessation of suffering⁸. Coomaraswamy enunciates the idea more clearly when he says that "it is the grasp of the very fact that we are mechanisms, causally determined . . . that points out the way of escape"⁹.

Significantly, for the Buddha the realization of Truth or Sambodhi

¹Cf. Baptist, E. C., 'Buddhist Law of Dependent Origination', *Buddhist*, Colombo, XXXII, pp. 161-4; *Ibid.*, XXXVII, No. 4, pp. 100-103.

²Quoted in *Origins*, p. 407.

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Ibid.*

⁵*Buddhist Philosophy*, p. 112.

⁶Rhys Davids, *Dialogues*, II, p. 42 ff.

⁷Mrs. Rhys Davids, *Gotama the Man*, pp. 77-78.

⁸*Buddha*, pp. 226-27.

⁹*Hinduism and Buddhism*, p. 80, n. 225.

and so of *Parityramutpāda* and *Nirvāna* both. In the passage within the *Brahmarachana* context, the Buddha dichotomised his *Chāyama* into *Parichchāyam* and *Nibbāna*. According to Pandé, "Since *Nibbāna* is apparently the final principle or experience, *parichchāyam* may be designated as the principle of non-ultimate experience." The relation between the two seems parallel to the relation between *Brahma* and *Māyā* in the philosophy of *Śaṅkara*.

The Doctrine of *Anatta* (4)

There are three basic doctrines of early Buddhism—orrowism (*dukkha*), impermanence (*aniccatā*) and non-soulism (*anattama*). Since there is nothing permanent and everything is in a state of flux, it automatically follows that the soul as a self-subsisting entity does not exist.¹ Soon after the *upasampāda* of the *Parichchāyigā* Bhikkhus the Buddha gave a discourse to them on the nature of *indriyanāmarasā* and emphatically stated that *nāma*, *ruppā*, *saññā*, *saṅkhārā* (*saññhārā*) and *viññāna* (*viññāna*) do not constitute the self. The belief in the existence of soul, or in other words, the heresy of individuality (*ahikkāvalūḥhi*) is due to the misapprehension of one of the five constituents (*khandhā*) as the self. Many other texts preach the doctrine of *anatta*. In the *Samvatta Nikāya*, when *Ānanda* asks the Buddha the meaning of the phrase 'the world's empty', the latter replies, "That is empty, *Ānanda*, of a self or of anything of the nature of a self. And what is that 'is thus empty' The five seats of the five senses, and the mind, and the feeling that is related to mind all these are void of a self or of anything that is self-like."² In the *Majjhima Nikāya* the doctrine of the permanence of soul is called a foolish doctrine. What is liable to pain and corruption cannot be the self of a thing.³

It is thus evident that the Buddha explicitly denied the self in the phenomenal realm. To this extent his views were not opposed to the orthodox Brāhmanical views as expounded in the Upanisads. For what he here denies is that any of the *Khandās* may have *attā*, not the *attā* as such. But what about the transcendent-immanent

¹Pandé, *op. cit.*, p. 414.

²Mahathera, Saddhatissa, E., 'The Anatta Doctrine', *Mahāvohī*, LXXXV, No. 9-10, pp. 194-6.

³Dutt, N., *Early Monastic Buddhism*, p. 227.

⁴*Sāmyutta Nikāya*, IV, 54.

⁵*Majjhima Nikāya*, I, 138.

self as inculcated in the Upanishads? Different scholars answer this question differently. According to Stcherbatsky and Rāhula Sāṃkṛtyāyana the Buddha did not believe in the existence of soul of any type. His dhamma was thoroughly *anattavādi*.¹ According to Prof. Rhys Davids at the time of the Buddha there were prevalent in North India animistic, polytheistic, pantheistic and dualistic views. The belief in *attā* or soul was fundamental for all of them. The Buddha not only ignored it but regarded it as a hindrance in spiritual progress.² According to Vidhushekhara Shastri the denial of soul by the Buddha emanated from the fact that he found in his experience nothing that paralleled the supposed characteristics of the Ātman, viz. independence, permanence and blissfulness.³ According to Poussin in the Pali literature there are many passages supporting anattavāda but a few which support *attā*.⁴ Hegel regarded Buddhism as a creed of final negation.⁵ Edward Caird interpreted Buddhism as a doctrine of Nirvāṇic extinction. Streeter and Melamed interpret Buddhism as a negative creed which denied the soul and the world.⁶ Mr. C. A. F. Rhys Davids also in her earlier works put a negativist interpretation on the Buddhist *anatta*.⁷

However according to Prof. Schrader, the Buddha appeared as a 'soul-denier' to his contemporaries only because they conceived of the soul in an extremely anthropomorphic fashion, speaking of its form, weight, colour, etc.⁸ In her later writings Mrs. Rhys Davids⁹ has most vigorously supported the view that the Buddha

¹Sāṃkṛtyāyana, R., *Buddha Darshan*, pp. 22-3; *Introduction, The Central Conception of Buddhism*, Mahabodhi, G. P., 'The Indian Conception of Buddhism', *Mahabodhi*, LXXIV, Nov. 2-4, pp. 63-6.

²Rhys Davids, *Hilbert Lectures*, p. 24; *Buddhism*, pp. 35-8.

³Quoted in *Origins*, p. 62.

⁴Poussin, *The Ātman in the Pali Canon*, *Indian Culture*, 11, 1935-36, pp. 821-4.

⁵Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, pp. 167-72.

⁶All quoted by Varma, *op. cit.*, p. 354.

⁷Cf. her early work *Buddhism, a Study of the Buddha's Teachings and Buddhist Psychology*, 1913, also see her paper, 'The Buddha's Psychology', *JRAS*, 1903.

⁸Quoted in *Origins*, p. 62.

⁹Cf. her *Gosama the Hermit*, 1912; *What are the Original Sources of Buddhism? Śākya or Buddhist Origins*, 1913, etc.

did not propound the 'No-soul' theory and that it was a later monkish development, an imposition on the original gospel under the influence of the hostility toward the Brāhmaṇas. Commenting on a verse of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* which she compares with a passage of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, she states: "I believe it is far more likely, that the original speaker of the verse used *attā* in the sense in which the original speaker of the Upaniṣad utterance used *ātman*."¹ The view has been reiterated *mutatis mutandis* by Coomaraswamy² and Radhakrishnan.³ At one place Radhakrishnan categorically says: "It is however wrong to think that there is no self at all according to Buddha. . . . The Upaniṣads arrive at the ground of all things by stripping the self of veil after veil of contingency. At the end of this process they find the universal self, which is none of these finite entities, though the ground of them all. Buddha holds the same view, though he does not state it definitely."⁴ According to Sogen⁵ and Suzuki⁶ also the Buddha denied the soul in the sense of a finite substantial individual but not in the sense of the absolute unity of the universe. The arguments of the scholars who generally claim that the Buddha did not deny the existence of soul as a transcendental entity (though their views differ in detail) may be summarized as under:

(1) Mrs. Rhys Davids has argued that had the Buddha raised a revolt against the theory of soul as accepted in the Upanishads he would have brought it forward while in controversy with the learned Brāhmaṇas, which he did not do.

(2) There are some compound words which occur in early texts in which the word *atta* or *attā* is used in a sense different from that of man as a complex of body and mind only. Such are *Ajjhatta*, *Pachhatta*, *Attabhāva*, *Pahitatta* and *Bhāvitatta*. According to G. C. Pande at least in the first of these compounds the argument has some weight. The belief of the

¹Quoted by Varma, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

²Coomaraswamy, *Living Thoughts of the Buddha: Hinduism and Buddhism*; cf. Gour, H. S., *The Spirit of Buddhism*, p. 285.

³*Indian Philosophy*, I, p. 386-9; cf. also Chatterji, J. C., 'The Buddha and the Ātman', *Prabuddha Bhārata*, LXIII, No. 3, pp. 91-8.

⁴*Op. cit.*, p. 388; cf. Bahm, Archie J., 'Was Gautama a Buddhist', *Bulletin of Ram Krishna Mission Institute of Culture*, XV, pp. 9-15.

⁵Sogen, Y., *Systems of Buddhist Thought*.

⁶Suzuki, D. T., *Outlines of Mahāyāna Buddhism*, 1927.

Buddha in the existence of *attā* may also be deduced from the statement in the Mallikā section of the *Kosala Sāmyutta* according to which the *attā* is the dearest in the whole world and that an 'attakāma' should not injure another. In a few passages *attā* is used in the sense of the 'inner monitor' or conscience.¹ In the *Mahāvagga* the Buddha asks thirty Bhadravargīya bhikshus to make a search after soul—*attānaṃ gaveseyyātha*. In the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* the words *ātmaḍīpa* and *ātmaśaraṇa* are used to exhort the bhikshus to regard the *attā* as their light and refuge.² However here the aim of the Buddha appears to emphasize individual efforts; the existence of a metaphysical soul need not be regarded as necessarily implied.

(3) In the *Dharmachakrapravartanasūtra* delivered at Sarnath the Buddha said that what is evil and painful cannot be the *ātman*. The supporters of Buddhist attavāda argue that this denial of selfhood to the phenomenal modes implies the indirect positing of the reality of the transcendent superior 'I'.

(4) One of the grounds in support of ātmavāda in Buddhism is the belief in heavens and hells which are frequently mentioned in the Tripiṭakas. If after death the soul goes to heaven or hell in accordance with its merit or demerit, then it necessarily follows that there must first be a soul. In the *Dhammapada* the Buddha condemns a liar to hell. He has himself been said to have visited the various *lokas*. The belief in the existence of heavens and hells would become meaningful only if one concedes the existence of soul.

(5) Another proof which supports a positive interpretation of *attā* in Buddhism is its emphasis on *dhyāna*. Without positing a spiritual principle it is impossible to explain the ascending scales of mystical consciousness.³

(6) There are a number of references in the Buddhist scriptures to the blissful nature of nirvāṇa. In the *Dhammapada*, nirvāṇa is described as the state of highest happiness. In the *Theragāthā* and the *Therīgāthā* also the rapturous and ecstatic state of nirvāṇic bliss is described. These descriptions do not fit in with a negativistic notion of the final destiny of man.

¹*Origins*, p. 488.

²Cf. Coomaraswamy in *JRAS*, 1938, pp. 680-81.

³Rhys Davids, C. A. F., 'Dhyāna in Early Buddhism', *IHC*, III, 1927, pp. 689-715.

(7) According to some texts, what survives a man's death is his *chitta* or *viññāna*. The doctrine is almost certainly pre-Buddhist. The Buddha seems to have modified rather than rejected it. *Viññāna* doubtless exists after death but it is not a permanent entity. It is in fact extremely changeable. But in *nirvāṇa* its fluctuations cease and it rests in its own natural infinity and luminosity. Thus, *viññāna* resembles the *ātman* of some Upanishadic texts.¹

(8) In the *Dhammapada*, *attā* is described as an entity which is very near and dear. Essentially self-dependent, it has great potentiality for good and for evil. It is not only the same as *chitta*, it is also the man behind mind, in a way identical with it but in another something more than it.²

(9) Mid-way between the Purusha of the Upanishads and the Puggala of the Nikāyas is the expression Purisa-puggala. According to G. C. Pande it "signifies the individual acting, believing and experiencing the results of his acts". The Buddha himself gave sermons on puggalas of various classes. Usually the usage Purisa-puggala does not indicate a belief in self but the well-known *Bhārahāra sutta* is an exception for it clearly distinguishes between puggala and khandhas and describes the latter as burden of the former.³

(10) In the famous Buddhist formula of *trīśaraṇa* there is the surrender to the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha. If the Buddha was completely extinct after the *parinirvāṇa* then there would seem no sense in making a surrender to him.

When asked directly, the Buddha is reported to have refused to answer the question about the existence of the *ātman* either positively or negatively. According to Keith⁴ and Poussin⁵ it was the result of his 'Agnosticism'⁶, while according to Rosenberg the Buddha did not answer this question simply because the word *ātman*

¹*Origins*, p. 494 f.; cf. Wijesekara, O. H. De A., 'The Concept of Viññāna in Theravāda Buddhism', *JAOS*, 84, No. 3, pp. 254-9.

²*Ibid.*, p. 488; cf. Shukla, Karunesh, 'Ātman in Buddhist Philosophy', *Poona Orientalist*, XXVII, No. 3-4, pp. 114-32.

³*Origins*, p. 490.

⁴Keith, *Buddhist Philosophy*, pp. 39-46.

⁵Poussin, in *ERE*, I, under 'Agnosticism'.

⁶Perera, T. H., 'Was Lord Buddha an Agnostic?', *Buddhist*, XXXVII, No. 5, pp. 137-9.

was meaningless for him.¹ Stcherbatsky's view that it was a custom in Buddha's time to remain silent when one wanted to answer negatively, is groundless.² According to G. C. Pande in this regard the Mādhyamika approach seems to be the only correct one. When the Buddha did not speak positively or negatively about the ātman or the Tathāgata, he indicated his position most precisely. "Ātman and Anātman, existence and non-existence do not possess ultimate adequacy. One must avoid such 'extreme' or categorical characterizations and try to follow the Middle Path in Metaphysics as in Ethics."³ ... "Nirvāṇa remains indescribable in terms of finite consciousness, for it is absolutely infinite. One describes it best by preserving 'silence', for, to say anything about it would be to make it relational and finite. On the theoretic side, Buddha appears to have adhered to this position so rigorously that his 'silence' has become enigmatic for all ages. For practical guidance, however, he not only indicated that the Absolute alone is eternal and beatific but also suggested a way to its direct realization. This attitude is clearly more 'mystical' than rational."⁴ All this "cumulatively suggests an Absolutist position and supports the Mādhyamika interpretation. And this is hardly surprising, since, already before Buddha, Absolutism is in unmistakable terms expressed in the Upaniṣads."⁵

Skandha Theory and the Doctrine of Rebirth

The Doctrine of *saṃsāra* or rebirth has a prominent place in the ancient systems of Indian thought. Most of the Indian religions adhere to it in some form or other. On anthropological evidence it is believed that some of the pre-historic races of India held a rudimentary notion of continuity of the dead person in some form or other.⁶ According to Poussin "The belief in reincarnations was a purely savage surmise."⁷ Bohtlingk, Ernst Windisch, Pischel, Geldner, Swami Dayananda, Ranade, etc. believe that the concept of *punar-*

¹Quoted in *Origins*, p. 505.

²Quoted, *ibid.*, p. 506.

³*Ibid.*, p. 507 f.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 510; cf. Bhattacharya, Bidhushekar, 'The Doctrine of Ātman and Anātman', *POC*, V, 1930, II, pp. 1002-6.

⁵*Origins*, p. 509.

⁶*Supra*, Ch. I.

⁷Poussin, *The Way to Nirvāṇa*, p. 18.

janma is as old as the *Brāhmaṇa* texts. Some of them find it in a vague form even in the *R̥gveda*.¹ This has rightly been questioned. According to Oldenberg, Macdonell, S. Lévi, Bloomfield, Hopkins and G. C. Pande the idea of *punarjanma* was developed only in the age of the Upanishads. There are absolutely no traces of the doctrine of rebirth in the *RV*.² According to the Vedic poets after death the souls reside in the world of Yama. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, 1. 5. 3. 4. is supposed to contain a dubious allusion to the concept of transmigration, but as G. C. Pande has shown the usual attitude of the *Brāhmaṇa* texts towards after-life does not assume such a doctrine. The doctrine of transmigration "has ever been closely and essentially bound up with a number of other ideas" such as "belief in an innately immaculate and immortal conscious principle, recognition of the law of karman and deep-seated urge for Mukti."³ Now, the *Brāhmaṇa* texts conceived soul in close connection with body and never thought it to be naturally immortal. The law of karman was also quite beyond the ken of their priests and their concept of immortality is just that of endless duration in a changeful world of sensuous enjoyment. Therefore it is hardly possible to imagine that the priests of the *Brāhmaṇa* texts knew and were responsible for the doctrine of rebirth.⁴

According to G. C. Pande the doctrine of rebirth originated among the munis and śramaṇas of the Vedic age.⁵ From them it was adopted by the Upanishadic thinkers. In the *Kaṭha Upanishad* there is a clear exposition of the belief in the transmigration of soul. Rebirth is regarded as being determined by one's intellectual and moral attainments. In this text there is the famous dialogue between Yama and Nachiketā in which Yama remarks that a being is reborn just as a ripened corn after decay reappears again.⁶ In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad* soul is described as a link

Hopkins says, "... metempsychosis is also known in a vague form in the *R̥gveda*" (*Hindu Ethics*, p. 44). Bohtlingk also finds allusions to rebirth in the *RV*, 1.164, 30-32. Ranade supports him (*A Constructive Survey of Upaniṣadic Philosophy*).

¹Keith, *RPV*, II, p. 570 f.

²*Origins*, p. 283.

³*Ibid.*, p. 284 f.

⁴For a similar view see Upadhyaya, K. N., *Early Buddhism and the Bhagavadgītā*, pp. 68-70.

⁶*Kaṭha*, 1.1.20.21.

between death and rebirth because it passes from one existence to another¹. Buddhism accepts this concept of rebirth but unlike Upanishadic thinkers rejects the notion of the transmigration of a spiritual entity. According to Buddhism there is the rebirth of personality or of the psycho-physical complex—the *nāmarūpa skandhas*. As believers in the law of causation the Buddhists deliberately avoided the question of the existence of an entity, which becomes subject to feeling (*vedanā*), desire (*taṇhā*), strong attachment (*upādāna*), and desire for re-existence (*bhava*) and rebirth (*jāti*). According to them beings and inanimate objects of the world are *saṃskṛta*, so described on account of their being constituted of some elements, as distinguished from *nirvāṇa*, the *asaṃskṛta* (the unconstituted). The constituted elements are put under two heads: *nāma* and *rūpa*, *nāma* denoting the non-material or mental constituents of a being, while *rūpa* the material only. All inanimate objects therefore are included in the term *rūpa*.² *Nāma* is analysed into four mental states namely *vedanā* (feeling), *saññā* (perception), *saṅkhāra* (resultant impressions produced through *karman*) and *viññāna* (knowledge derived through the organs of senses) while the *Rūpakkhandha* denotes the four elements: earth (*pathavi*), water (*āpo*), fire (*tejo*) and air (*vāyu*), including all that is formed out of these four. The four subdivisions of *nāma* with the fifth the *rūpa* are termed *Pañchakkhandhas*. Every being and object is a composite of these five *khandhas* (*skandhas* or groups of elements), without a sixth, the *puggala* or *attā* (=soul).³ A living being composed of five *skandhas* is beginningless, and is in a continuous state of flux, each preceding group of *skandhas* giving rise to a subsequent group of *skandhas*, and this process is going on momentarily and ceaselessly in the present existence as it will go on also in the future until the eradication of *avidyā* and the attainment of *nirvāṇa*. The Buddhists describe this process as rebirth and not transmigration and deny the existence of soul which supposedly passes from one existence to another like the caterpillar from one blade of grass to another.⁴

¹*Bṛ. Upa.*, IV.4.3.5.

²Dutt, p. 197.

³*Ibid.*

⁴Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 227 f.; cf. Rashtrapala, Bhikshu, 'The Buddhist Doctrine of Rebirth', *World Buddhism*, XIV, No. 3, pp. 3-5.

Theory of Karma

Karmavāda or theory of moral determinism represents one of the prime themes in Indian philosophical speculations and social life. The ordinary meaning of karma is deed or action. At a more comprehensive level it connotes motivation behind the action.¹ The Vedic seers adhered to the belief in *ṛta*—the cosmic law of harmony and order. This order was recognized not merely as a mechanical uniformity but as emanating from a superior moral force symbolised by the god Varuna. In the age of the *Brāhmanas*, the growth of the sacrificial religion hindered the emergence of the concept of karma.² As pointed out by G. C. Panda, "the idea of an inflexible moral law extending far beyond the grave" was quite beyond the ken of the priests of the *Brāhmana*-books.³ 'Karma' meant to them simply 'ritual act'. The other world is doubtless made (*ṛta*) but made by sacrifice.⁴ It was in the age of the early Upanishads that the theory of karma made its emergence. Garbe was rightly of the opinion that the theory of karma was a new addition to the philosophical world-view of the Upanishads though he ascribed its formulation to the *kṣātriyas*. The "evident circumspection with which Yājñavalkya introduced Ārabbhāga to the idea of karma clearly shows that the idea was new to the priestly world and its favourable reception in that circle a matter of course. This is easily intelligible since the law of karma would be decidedly disadvantageous to the sacrificial priest. If moral quality of an action solely and inevitably determines the future, man becomes the captain of his destiny; the priest and sacrifice, then, cease to be indispensable. More serious, through sacrifice one hoped to win divine favour but if the 'acts' of a man were omnipotent, where, indeed, would divine favour be? And if the gods did not possess the power of independent grant, were not sacrifice and prayer useless?"⁵

Thus the full realisation of the implications of the theory of karma, Dr. Panda argues, was tantamount to a complete revision of the old Vedic eschatology and destined to usher in a silent revolution. Some priests tried to reconcile *karmavāda* with the new theory of knowledge leading to the emergence of the concept of

¹ Cf. Reussin, "Karma", in *ES*, VII, pp. 673-7.

² *Upaniṣad, Varuna, op. cit.*, p. 215.

³ *Panda, Origins*, p. 234.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 236 f.

jñānakarmasamuchchayavāda; some held on to the old belief with only slight modification: karman doubtless determines the future but were not sacrificial acts the most righteous acts? Further, the theory of karman tended to make gods subject to this inflexible law; some were now looked upon even as executive functionaries towards the operation of the law of karman. And lastly, it changed the conception of immortality from that of perpetual afterlife i.e. the unending continuation of this-life (which shares the features of all empirical existence) to that of eternal being or the absolute transcendence of empirical existence. To realize immortality of this type one has to know the true nature of his self, to turn back from this world.¹

However, the Upanishadic thinkers diluted the operation of the law of karman in several ways. Firstly, the later Upanishads which have a pronouncedly theistic orientation exalt the conception of grace. The *Kaṭha Upanishad* states that the *ātman* is attained not by intellectual or scholastic profundity but by divine grace. It is apparently inconsistent with the doctrine of karman which postulates the possibility of emancipation only through one's own efforts. In the Paurāṇika Hinduism, Mahāyāna Buddhism, Christianity and Islam there is the acceptance of the notion of grace but Jainism and early Buddhism emphatically repudiate it. Secondly, sometimes the Upanishads propound the view that the son takes over the actions of the father.² Such an assumption apparently goes against the operation of the law of karman. Thirdly, in some of the Upanishads it is said that the last thoughts of a man determine his future station.³ This view is also contained in the *Gītā*. The later theistic Bhakti literature also advises that in the last moments a man should keep his mind and soul attuned to his *Isṭadevatā*. All these ideas created distraction from strict adherence to moral determinism.

In the period subsequent to the Upanishads, the doctrine of karman acquired immense significance. Buddha's contemporaries held a variety of views on the subject of the origin of dukkha. The most important of these was the theory of karman held by the Buddha himself, Mahāvīra and the philosophers of some other Śramaṇa sects. In spite of his anattavāda the Buddha agreed with

¹*Ibid.*, p. 287-90.

²*Br. Upa.*, I.5.17; *Kaushītaki*, II.15.

³*Chhāndogya*, 3.14.1; *Praśna*, 3.10; *Br. Upa.*, 4.5.5.

the Upanishadic thinkers about the transmission of the effects of one's karmans from one life to another. The Nikāyas often depict the Buddha as preaching this doctrine. At the time of Enlightenment he is said to have had three visions. In the second vision "he saw the whole universe as a system of karman and reincarnation, composed of beings noble or mean, happy or unhappy, continually passing away according to their deeds, leaving one form of existence and taking shape in another."¹ He taught the momentous vitality and significance of the law of karman with such fervour that it has been said that he almost put it in place of the Upanishadic Brahman.

According to early Buddhism the essence of karman is will², and the most important type of karman is the voluntary mental act—through association with which alone do speech and physical action become karman. Karmans originate in will and are destroyed through will.³ This makes the Buddhist view of karman basically different from that of the Jainas who regarded karman as a substance rather than as a function.⁴ In Buddhism there are two types of karmans *sāsrava* and *anāsrava*. The *sāsrava* karmans are those which bring about good and bad consequences. On the other hand meditation on the Four Noble Truths, which leads to *Arhathood*, is an *anāsrava* karman; it does not generate good or evil consequences.

The Buddha divided karmans into three categories: those which produce fruit (i) in this life; (ii) in the next life, and (iii) in a future life. It is by the elimination and neutralisation of karmans that a person attains full emancipation. Self-exertion is the only means of *nirvāṇa*, and by self-exertion the Buddha meant performance of certain karmans, moral and spiritual. Thus the greatest emphasis was laid on one's acts and exertion and non-dependence on a superior power or on any ritual and ceremony.⁵

¹Varma, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

²Rhys Davids, C. A. F., 'Man as Willer', *Buddhist Studies*, ed. by B. C. Law, Calcutta, 1931, p. 587.

³*Origins*, p. 430.

⁴In early Buddhist literature is also found a popular version of the kamma theory which gives expression to the principle of moral retribution operative beyond life.

⁵Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 241 f.; cf. Bhikshu, Rashtapala, 'The Buddhist Doctrine of Kamma', *World Buddhism*, XII, No. 6, pp. 3-5; cf. also Narada, Thera, 'Kamma, or the Buddhist Theory of Causation', *B. C. Law Volume*, II, pp. 158-175.

The Middle Way : Buddhist Ethics

For the Way to nirvāṇa the *Vinaya* uses two terms, *paṭipadā* (*prati-padā*) and *maggo* (*mārga*) side by side.¹ Mrs. Rhys Davids feels that the latter was the original term preferred and used by the Buddha.² In brief, the Way is the Middle Way (*majjhima paṭipadā* or *majjhima maggo*) consisting in the avoidance of the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification. In juxtaposition to the three stages in the process of the origination of sorrow, namely ignorance (*avijjā*), desire (*taṇhā*) and immoral actions (*karman*), Buddhism postulated three stages of the Way leading to the end of sorrow. Its first stage (*sīla*) consists in the practice of virtue and the avoidance of sin. Then comes the practice *jhāna* or *dhyāna* or contemplation (*samādhi*). And finally comes the attainment of knowledge or intuition of Truth (*paññā* or *prajñā*). Sometimes (as in the *Mahāvagga*) the scheme is made four-stepped through the addition of *vimutti*, or it is made five-fold through the further addition of *vimutti-ñānadassana*. However, these two contribute nothing important to the formula as they are not distinguishable from *paññā*.³

As pointed out by Prof. G. C. Pande, it will be a mistake to suppose that the Buddha preached the Way in the form of a neat and precise formula. According to him like Jesus, Gautama provided his followers with parables and exhortations. The Dhamma which he left behind was an inspiration, not a detailed handbook. He knew that treading the spiritual path is not a mechanical and formal exercise. His followers however naturally sought to interpret the Dhamma intellectually and 'create the Abhidhamma out of it'. "The Buddha pointed to the moon of Truth; his followers were often content to seize the finger."⁴

The negative aspects of the Middle Way are more or less clear. Vedic rituals, other external sacrifices and the worship of nature-deities were opposed by the Buddha. Similarly he opposed the extreme austerities advocated by the Jainas and the Ājīvikas. He himself appears to have taught a 'Jhānic' or contemplative way. However, the precise determination of the Way he taught is rather difficult.

According to the traditional view, the three sections of the Way

¹Mishra, G. S. P., *The Age of Vinaya*, p. 76.

²*Gotama the Man*, p. 41.

³*Mishra, op. cit.*, p. 76 f.

⁴*Origins*, p. 514.

śīla,¹ *samādhi* and *paññā* were divided into eightfold path (Aṭṭhāṅgiko Maggo) by the Buddha himself. The Aṭṭhāṅgiko Maggo consists of *sammā-vācchā*, *sammā-kammānta* *sammā-ājīva*, *sammā-vāyāma*, *sammā-sati*, *sammā-saṅkappa*, *sammā-diṭṭhi* and *sammā-samādhi*. *Sammā-vācchā* is refraining from speaking falsehood, malicious words, and harsh and frivolous talk; *sammā-kammānta* is refraining from killing,² stealing, and misconduct; *sammā-ājīva* is refraining from earning livelihood by improper means; *sammā-vāyāma* is effort or exertion to remove the existing evil thoughts; *sammā-sati* is mindfulness (*smṛti*) of all that is happening within the body and mind including feelings; *sammā-saṅkappa* means resolution for renunciation, and also for refraining from hatred and injury to other beings; *sammā-diṭṭhi* means comprehension of the right metaphysical views about the nature of things as propounded by the Buddha (such as the realization of the Four Noble Truths and the Pratītyasamutpāda); and *sammā-samādhi* means four stages of contemplation (*jhāna*) which lead to the attainment of perfect concentration. The first *jhāna* results in the attainment of joy. The second *jhāna* leads to inner peace and silence. By the third *jhāna* one is able to neutralize all his passions, false suppositions and assumptions. The fourth and final *jhāna* results in the attainment of perfect tranquillity and spotless calm.³

The Aṭṭhāṅgiko Maggo or Aṣṭāṅgika Mārga as described above deals with all the aspects of spiritual life namely moral, mental and intellectual. In the *Magga Saṃyutta* it is described as the spiritual guide (*kalyāṇamitta*) and is shown as bestowing all the spiritual benefits that a Buddhist seeker of truth may desire to have. After giving up asceticism, Gautama had fallen back on his childhood experience of Jhāna or Dhyāna, and it was that which led him to Enlightenment. It was therefore only natural that Jhāna played a prominent part in his teachings. He is more than once described as *jhāyin*.⁴ In several descriptions of the Way, Jhāna is accorded the chief place. His prominent disciples are praised for their ability in

¹Soni, Sujata, 'Place of Śīla in Buddhism', *Mahābodhi*, LXXIII, No. 5, p. 137 f.

²Vide Khantipalo, Bhikkhu, 'Buddhism, Ahimsā and Tolerance', *Aryan Path*, XXXIV, No. 4, pp. 180-3.

³Cf. Rhys Davids, C. A. F., 'Dhyāna in Early Buddhism', *IHQ*, III, pp. 689-715.

⁴*Origins*, p. 529 f.

Jhāna. Jhāna was essentially a method of mental discipline which could be utilized for a diversity of purposes—for attaining to this or that divine world, for the sake of supernormal powers, for the sake of enjoyable experience, for communion with the true self or the inner reality.¹ In the case of the Buddha it served as a footstep to the realization of higher learning (*vijjā*) culminating in Enlightenment. Normally the *chitta* is covered over with impurities, and is distracted and unsteady. Jhāna serves a cathartic function. It renders the *chitta* pure and receptive which sets the stage for Enlightenment.²

It is sometimes believed that the Ashtāṅgika Mārga represents an original teaching of the Buddha. Many passages from the Nikāyas, the most important occurring in the First Sermon (*supra*), are quoted in support of this view. But Mrs. Rhys Davids feels that it was the result of later systematization.³ In some apparently early passages the Way is spoken of without any reference to its eight-fold character. According to G. C. Pande also had the Buddha himself taught the Ashtāṅgika Mārga then,⁴ in view of the later fame of the idea, a more positive proof of it would have been preserved. "In fact it would not seem wise", he opines, "to attribute the formula of the eightfold path to Buddha himself in the absence of more convincing evidence. It is probable that he spoke only of the middle way between the two extremes of sense-pleasures (Kāma-sukha) and austerities (Attakilamatho), while it 'crystallized' as eightfold later."⁵

Besides the Aryan Eightfold Path, the early Buddhist texts refer to another moral path—that of the four *Brahmavihāras* of *Maitrī*, *Karuṇā*, *Muditā* and *Upekshā*. *Maitrī* or *mettā* includes both non-hatred and loving kindness. Hatred cannot be overcome by hatred; it can be overcome only by non-hatred. *Karuṇā* signifies a feeling of universal compassion, a sympathetic identity with all living beings. The Indian mind has always regarded the Buddha as a personification of universal compassion. *Muditā* or cheerfulness is also a moral virtue. The fourth *Brahmavihāra* namely *Upekshā* stresses the cultivation of utter non-attachment to the ills, pains, pleasures and

¹*Ibid.*, p. 531.

²*Ibid.*, p. 532.

³Mrs. Rhys Davids, *Original Gospel*, p. 60.

⁴*Origins*, pp. 517 f.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 518.

tragedies of the world. Upekshā is the feature of the man of vision who refuses to be enchanted by the allurements of the eternally changing world.

Concept of Nirvāṇa

Nibbāna or nirvāṇa is regarded as the *summum bonum* for a Buddhist. Its nature as taught by the Buddha has been a subject of controversy from ancient times. It has been variously interpreted in the ancient texts and by modern scholars.¹ When in the light of the later developed philosophic thought the original sayings of the Buddha did not appear to be sufficiently precise, the Buddhist scholars interpreted them in the light of their own philosophical assumptions, just as the later Vedāntin scholars interpreted the *Upanishads*, the *Gītā* and the *Brahma sūtras* (*Prasthāna trayī*) in the light of their own philosophical ideas.²

Etymologically nirvāṇa may mean three things: Firstly, it may mean cooling which, metaphorically, indicates the cooling of the cravings and passions. Secondly, it may mean stillness produced by the absence of wind—*nirvāṇa avāte*. Thirdly, it may signify the extinction of the psycho-physical complex—*nāmarūpa-skandha*—which is regarded as responsible for pain and sorrow.³

There are several possible interpretations of the concept of nirvāṇa and for each one of them some support can be obtained from the early Buddhist texts. (i) At the primary level, nirvāṇa means the extinction of pain and sorrow. However, it does not and cannot mean negation of all feelings because Buddha's heart is said to have been full of deep compassion (*karuṇā*) and love. (ii) At a more philosophical level, nirvāṇa means the extinction of the empirical phenomena. (iii) A third implication of nirvāṇa mentioned in some parts of the Buddhist literature and later developed by the Sautrāntikas is absolute extinction or total nihil. (iv) A fourth significance of nirvāṇa is the implication of the being of an absolute real. This interpretation was later developed in the *tathatā* philosophy of Aśvaghosha. There nirvāṇa is identified with the real being of an Absolute. A few passages of the Tripiṭaka texts possibly refer to this interpretation.

¹For a critical analysis of various views of modern scholars vide Pande, *op. cit.*, pp. 451–56.

²*Ibid.*, p. 443 f.

The Buddha himself deliberately avoided any positive answer to the question: what is nibbāna? He regarded it as beyond any discussion (*atarkāvachara*) *avyākṛta* or *akathanīya*. Various explanations are given as to why the Buddha did not give any clear answer to this question. There is no proof in support of Stecherbatsky's view that it was a custom in Buddha's time to remain silent when one wanted to answer a question negatively.¹ Similarly, the suggestion of Keith and Poussin that the Buddha did not know the answer himself² is, to say the least, uncharitable. The best explanation³ seems to be that the Buddha realized that a metaphysical discussion of nirvāṇa is not only irrelevant but also a hindrance in its practical realization. He knew that nirvāṇa is inconceivable, inexpressible, and so deep and subtle that it could not be communicated by one person to another; it could be realized by one within one's own self.⁴ He advised the Pañchavaggīya monks to realize the Truth by themselves (*sañam abhiññā*) through proper training.⁵

But in spite of the inconceivability of nirvāṇa there are passages in the early texts which attempt to describe its negative and positive attributes. In the *Majjhima Nikāya* nibbāna is described as unborn, unoriginated, unconstituted, undecaying, undying, free from distress, grief and impurities, the highest perfection achievable by the best exertion. "The question of origin or non-origin does not arise in the case of Nibbāna, because it is firm, eternal and changeless."⁶ In the *Samyutta Nikāya* also nibbāna is described as unconstituted, undying, true, going across, undecaying, firm, signless, inexpressible, calm, quiet, excellent and a place without fall and as the dhamma, the form, location, age and measure of which cannot be described.⁷

According to the *Mahāvagga* the truth or dhamma realized by the Buddha at the time of Enlightenment consisted of the *pañcakkhārīya* *samuppāda* and nibbāna, respectively the non-illuminata and illuminata

¹ *Origins*, p. 556.

² *Ibid.*, p. 555.

³ Cf. Schrader, F. C., 'On the Problem of Nirvana', *Journal of Pol. Econ. Society*, 1904-5.

⁴ Cf. Srani Tappananda, 'A Buddha's Answer to the Great Question of Life' (*Vedant Keral*, LII, No. 1, pp. 13-21, who argues that Buddha's wisdom had only one term of reference and that is *nibbāna*).

⁵ *Maha. G. S. P.*, *The Age of Nirvana*, p. 15, n. 136.

⁶ *Dira. of Lit.*, p. 211.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

experiences. The same text answers this question by saying that after the attainment of nibbāna all *saṅkhāras* cease to operate, all *upādhis* are left far behind, all desires are destroyed, even the desire of nirvāṇa.¹ It is thus cessation of suffering as feeling as well as of its cause. It is not a state of total nihil or annihilation or nothingness; according to the *Mahāvagga* it is a state of positive bliss (*vimutti sukha* or *parama sukha*)² It instantly reminds one of the Upanishadic *ānanda*, a characteristic of Brahman. In the *Theragāthā* and the *Therīgāthā* it is stated that the theras and theris relished the bliss of nirvāṇa. In the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* it is said that the spirit of the Buddha passes "from one state of ecstasy to another up and down through the stages of rapture until he passed into nirvāṇa."³ At another place the *Dīgha Nikāya* states that the nirvāṇa is the beginning point of all mundane phenomena and the worldly elements are dissolved in that. In the *Sutta Nipāta* it is said—*amṛtaṃ sāntaṃ nirvāṇaṃ padamachyutam*. Another verse of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* refers to it as "sudurdarśaṇi, ajaraṇi, dhruvaṇi, nishprapañchaṇi, amṛtaṇi, śīvaṇi". Here the word nirvāṇa seems to be substituted for the word Brahman. It is tantamount to śāśvatavāda or eternalism, which the Buddha is supposed to have been so anxious to avoid.⁴

The *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* texts also contain some aspects of the metaphysics of nirvāṇa. According to the *Kathāvatthu* and the *Abhidharma-kosha* nirvāṇa is *lokottara*, eternal and blissful. In the *Dhammasaṅgīṇī* also nirvāṇa is not utter extinction or absolute nihil; it is at least partly positive. In it there is a stress on the indescribability of the state of nirvāṇa; its negative descriptions have been applied in virtue of its transcendence.⁵ In several other Pali texts nibbāna is equated with infinite consciousness (*viññāna*). According to a simile commonly used nibbāna is like a vast ocean which does not show any increase or decrease, however much water (in the form of countless arhats) may flow into it. According to Nāgasena nibbāna is like the invisible air the existence of which is only felt by the body of a common man. The fact that it is perceived by the arhats

¹Conze, E., *Buddhist Thought in India*, p. 67.

²Mishra, *op. cit.*, p. 74; Poussin, *IHQ*, IV, p. 347; *ERE*, IX, p. 376.

³Oldenberg, *Buddha*, p. 202; cf. Obermiller, E., 'The Account of Buddha's

Nirvāṇa', *IHQ*, VIII, pp. 781-84.

⁴Varma, *op. cit.*, pp. 252-55.

⁵*Ibid.* p. 258 f.

in the present life proves its reality. Just as a blind man sees the sun the moment this blindness is cured, nibbāna is visualized by the arhat as soon as he develops eyes of knowledge. Nirvāṇa is not a state or an object to be attained. It is not produced by the eight-fold path or *sādhana*. It is ever-existent and comes to an exerting person as a flash of light. In the *Milindapañho*, nibbāna is considered to be something positive, non-temporally eternal and supremely beatific. It can be experienced, though not described.¹ Buddhaghosha strongly opposes the view that nibbāna is a mere absence or annihilation of the passions etc. According to Anuruddhācāriya, nibbāna is eternal, transcendental, supreme, 'realizable' and unique. Thus the Theravādins consistently held nibbāna to be positive, experienceable, indescribable and supreme—the most worthwhile.² The Vaibhāshikas regarded nirvāṇa as real and eternal. Only the Sautrāntikas generally believed in the purely negative character of Nirvāṇa, though they also generally admit the survival of a subtle spiritual consciousness. The Brāhmaṇical tradition and many European scholars have described them as utter nihilists, but most of the Japanese scholars oppose such a view. Stcherbatsky has also opined that Śūnyatā meant only the relativity of individual things and ideas. According to Nāgārjuna the Buddha kept silence on the question of nirvāṇa because "the asked for determinations were inapplicable. Thus Nirvāṇa cannot be non-existence, else it will cease to be uncaused and unconditioned. It cannot be existence for the same reason. It cannot be both because both are conditioned (Saṅskṛta) while Nirvāṇa is unconditioned (Asaṅskṛta). To call Nirvāṇa neither existence nor non-existence will be tantamount to speaking the unspeakable. It is just the quiescence of all phenomena (*Prapañcopaśamaḥ*) and utterly well (Śivaḥ)."³

The attainment of nirvāṇa makes one different from ordinary mortals. He becomes omniscient, all-enlightened, and released; he remains unpolluted by everything and enjoys perfect calm. He is not attached to anything in the world as a lotus flower is not affected by the water upon which it floats. He leaves evil, and virtues become useless for him like a raft which is forsaken by one who has crossed the river. He acquires true insight into the *dhamma*, attains *ñāṇa*, *paññā*, *vijjā*, and *āloka*. The *paññā* of a Buddha is

¹Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 445.

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*, p. 450 f.

intuitive and synoptic and he realizes it himself (*sañam abhiññā*) because the ultimate truth is beyond logic (*atakkō*).¹

It is unlikely that originally any distinction between the Buddha and the Arhat was conceived. The attainment of the state of the Arhat was the same as the culminating realisation of the state of nirvāna. However, later on a distinction came to be effected between the two. There are indications in the Buddhist literature that the state of the Tathāgata was regarded as superior to the state of the Arhat. The Hinayānist Arhats themselves admitted that they had not become Buddhas, probably to indicate the super-eminent position of the founder of their religion.

The attainment of the state of the Arhat or of nirvāna does not mean absolute withdrawal from the active world. The early Buddhist literature categorically states that the Buddha had attained nirvāna in his life time. Hence it follows that even after the attainment of the state of nirvāna, a life of dynamic energy and action is possible. That is why a distinction was conceived between nirvāna and parinirvāna. Nirvāna means the withering away of pain and sorrow. Parinirvāna means the state of Buddhahood after the disintegration of the physical body elements of the Arhat.

On the metaphysical relation of nibbāna and saṃsāra there is little evidence in the early texts. However, it is repeatedly said that nirvāna implies the stoppage of the wheel of rebirth. The *Sutta Nipāta* refers to nirvāna as the end of the wheel of birth and death. Nibbāna is the ultimately sought for end, the most worthwhile. It is the goal of the spiritual pilgrimage, that where one finally goes beyond all sorrows. It is the safe 'other bank'. In nibbāna not only does saṃsāra cease, there also takes place an emancipation from it. This freedom rests in nibbāna i.e. to be freed from saṃsāra is to rest in nibbāna.²

Thus we observe that with the possible exception of the Sautrāntikas hardly ever did the Buddhist regard nirvāna as total nihil. Further, there is a complete unanimity among the various schools of Buddhism about the unconditioned nature of nirvāna. It is beyond the pale of causes and conditions. They also agree that it is inexpressible: it can only be intuitively comprehended. Finally, it is unanimously accepted that nirvāna is the ultimate good, the end of

¹The gāthā uttered by the Buddha to the Ājīvika Upaka contains a number of descriptive epithets of one who has attained nibbāna (Mishra, *op. cit.*, p. 74).

²*Origins*, p. 482.

all restlessness and striving.

The weight of modern scholarly opinion is also against regarding the Buddha as agnostic or nihilist. Poussin argues that nirvāṇa could be regarded either as immortality or as annihilation or as cessation of pain. The first he considered as impossible, the second as logically following from the doctrine of no-soulism and third as the actual attitude of the Buddha. Some others have also attributed utter nihilism to the Buddha. However Oldenberg believed that there are some texts which suggest that the silence of the Buddha was due to the indescribable character of nirvāṇa. Mrs. Rhys Davids, Schrader and Radhakrishnan appeal to forcible *a priori* considerations against regarding the Buddha an agnostic or nihilist. Barua also repudiates the negative concept of nirvāṇa.¹ According to G. C. Pande the evidence of the Buddhist texts "cumulatively suggests an Absolutist position and supports the Mādhyamika interpretation. And this is hardly surprising since already before the Buddha Absolutism is in unmistakable terms expressed in the Upaniṣads."² Many other scholars have expressed their agreement with a non-annihilationist interpretation of nirvāṇa. According to Mahā Thera Nārada "To say that Nibbāna is nothingness simply because one cannot perceive it with five senses is illogical."³ According to Conze nirvāṇa is obviously transcendental and uncognizable by logical thought. According to Wilbon G. Richard one cannot insist that nirvāṇa for the Buddhists was ever only bliss or annihilation.⁴ Saddhatissa opines that nirvāṇa was regarded as the highest happiness.⁵ Moni Bagchi⁶ thinks that what the Buddha meant by nirvāṇa is limitless, permanent, eternal, positive and immutable consciousness.

N. Dutt has divided Buddha's discourses on nibbāna into three

¹For a detailed discussion on and assessment of these views, see Pande, *op. cit.*, pp. 451-56.

²*Ibid.*, p. 509.

³Nārada, Mahāthera, 'Nibbāna', *Mahābodhi*, Vol. 71, No. 5, pp. 74-83; Cf., also Pandita Sudharma, 'How Positive is Nirvāṇa?', *Ceylon Today*, XII, No. 4, p. 30 ff.

⁴Wilbon, G. R., 'On Understanding the Buddhist Nirvāṇa', *History of Religion*, V, No. 2, pp. 300-26.

⁵Saddhatissa, 'Nibbāna', *Mahābodhi*, LXXIV, No. 3-4, pp. 34-39; cf. Bhikshu Rashtrapala, 'Nibbāna' *Mahābodhi*, 72, No. 5, pp. 138-40.

⁶Moni Bagchi, 'The conception of Nirvāṇa', *Mahābodhi*, LXXIV, No. 7-8, pp. 161-4.

categories. In the discourses of the first category nirvāṇa is described as a negative ethical concept. In them "it is the end of desire or thirst for worldly objects or existences; it is the eradication of attachment (*rāga*), ill-will (*dveṣa*) and delusion (*moha*); it is the removal of all impurities (*kleśas* and *āśravas*) by meditational and other practices; it is the removal of ignorance (*avidyā*); it is an end of repeated existences; it is the cessation of all thought-constructions (*vikalpa*); it is the absence of worldly attributes (*upādāna*); it is not associated with happiness or unhappiness or indifference; it is non-mental; it has no basis, no cause."¹ In the discourses of the second category nirvāṇa is described as a positive ethical concept. Here it "is perfection in *śīla*, *saṃjāna* and *prajñā*, i.e. the eightfold path; it is realised by exertion (*tapaś*), purity (*brahmacarya*) and comprehension of the four truths; it is perfection in four *smṛtyupasthāna* (mindfulness) practices; it is arhathood, it is peace and quietude; it is the place from which there is no fall; it is death-less, the place of bliss and perfect passionlessness."² In the discourses of the third category nirvāṇa is regarded as a metaphysical concept. Here it is "eternal and fixed and beyond the scope of discursive and discriminatory thoughts. It is homogeneous. It has neither origin nor decay. It is without past, present or future. It is unlimited and unsurpassable, unfathomable and immeasurable. It is unconditional and unconstituted (*asaṃskṛta*)... It is supramundane (*lokottara*) and beyond the three spheres of existence, *Kāma*, *Rūpa* and *Arūpa* (*aṅgariyūpanna*). It is beyond the fourfold propositions, i.e. it cannot be said to exist, not exist or both exist and not exist, or neither exist nor not exist."³ How close it is to the Upanishadic concept of Brahma!

¹Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 293.

²*Ibid.*, p. 293-4.

³*Ibid.*, p. 294.

Gautama Buddha and Early Buddhism (ii)

Buddhism and the Vedas and Upanishads

The Vedic religion in the 6th century B.C. had two main branches : ritualistic and non-ritualistic. The early Buddhist texts more than once represent the Buddha as disputing with the learned Brāhmaṇas who were representatives of the former. The topics were mainly caste, sacrifice¹ and the authority of the Vedas. Buddhist opposition on these subjects has always been clear. Buddha also emphatically repudiated every kind of external worship. In some of the *suttas* he ridicules the worship of the Vedic deities. In the Tevijja sutta of the *Dīgha Nikāya* he ridicules the attempts of the Brāhmaṇas to invoke Indra, Īśāna, Prajāpati, Brahmā, Yama, etc. He mocks at the idea of reaping fruits and rewards through propitiating the gods.

As regards the Upanishads, the Buddhist texts are silent about them. However, from very old times the view has been prevalent that there are deep affinities between the Upanishadic and the Buddhist doctrines. Gauḍapāda held the view that the main ideas of the Upanishads agreed with those of the Buddha. Many other ancient thinkers held the same opinion.² Max Müller, Bloomfield, T. W. Rhys Davids, C. A. F. Rhys Davids and Oldenberg have adhered to the view that the Buddha was deeply influenced by the teachings of the Upanishads. Keith regards the Buddha as an agnostic but even he compares the Buddhist concept of Nirvāṇa with the Upanishadic Absolute.³ B. M. Barua has made an attempt to trace the Upanishadic sources of Buddha's ideas at great length.⁴ But whether

¹Cf. Horner, I. B., 'Early Buddhism and the Taking of Life', *B. C. Law Volume*, I, pp. 436-55.

²Varma, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

³Keith, 'Pre-canonical Buddhism', *IHQ*, XII, No. 1, pp. 1-20.

⁴Cf. also Upadhyaya, K. N., *Early Buddhism and the Bhagavadgītā*, pp. 90-105. Upadhyaya gives a long list of similar ideas and expression found in the Upanishads and early Buddhist texts.

or not the Buddha had any deep knowledge of the Vedas and Upanishads is not certain. Nor is there any record of any discussion between him and any spokesman of Upanishadic wisdom. He, however, must have had some acquaintance with the fundamental theme of the Upanishadic thought. There is a similarity between the ridiculing attitude of Buddha and the Upanishads towards the Vedas and in their view that moral endeavour, contemplation and meditation are more exalted than Vedic ritualism. However disapproval of sacrifices in Buddhism was more pronounced and condemnatory. It is true that in some of the Upanishads we find mild denunciation of the cult of sacrifice and that in some Upanishads attempts have been made to allegorize and spiritualize the sacrificial rituals, but they (the Upanishads) accept the validity of Vedic ritualism as a path to the lower realm of *pitṛyāna*. Thus the Vedic *karmakāṇḍa* received at least a subordinate place in the scheme of the Upanishadic religion.

Whether or not the Buddha was influenced by the Upanishadic doctrine of Brahman is a debatable question.¹ According to Radhakrishnan² the Upanishadic Brahman is called by the Buddha as Dharma "to indicate its essentially ethical value for us on the empiric plane." But according to the Buddha, Dharma is the moral norm and never a supreme primordial reality. According to W. S. Urquhart³ without stating his attitude the Buddha "implicitly admitted an ultimate reality." According to G. C. Pande it is true that nowhere is the Buddha seen to criticize the *Ātmavāda* or *Brahmavāda* of the Upanishads; even in later times a Buddhist critique of Vedānta is rare. "Now the roots of Śaṅkara's Absolutism go back to the Upanishads, while those of Buddhist Absolutism can be traced to the Nikāyas." If we suppose, Dr. Pande suggests, "that the Nikāyas were themselves influenced by the Upanishads, it will render clear the nearness of latter-day Vedānta and Buddhism . . . it appears that early Buddhism was fundamentally influenced by the Upanishads which gave to it its early tendencies towards Idealism and Absolutism. These tendencies, it may be noted, could not have been derived from the Śramanic thought-world."⁴

¹Cf. Pratap Chandra, 'Was Early Buddhism Influenced by Upanishads?', *Philosophy: East and West*, 1971.

²*Gautama Buddha*, p. 49.

³*Vedānta and Modern Thought*, 1928, p. 94.

⁴Pande, *Origins*, p. 556.

The early Vedic attitude towards life and its problems was one of hope and optimism. But with the Upanishads pessimism makes its appearance. The phenomena of the world came to be regarded as full of sorrow. In the *Kaṭha Upanishad* we find reference to the prevalence of cosmic misery—*lokadukkha*. However, while the Upanishads approve a life of meditation and contemplation of the great truths, they do not emphasize withdrawal from the mundane pursuits of a householder's life. In Buddhism, on the other hand, the stress on the renunciation of all ties of the home-life is dominant. According to Jacobi¹ the germs of the monastic movement which began in the days of the Upanishads assumed tremendous proportions under the leadership of the Buddha and Mahāvīra. He therefore concludes that the originals of the monastic orders of the Jainas and Buddhists were the Brāhmaṇical ascetics from whom "they borrowed many important practices and institutions of ascetic life." This observation is not an entirely new one. Max Müller², Bühler and Kern were also of the same opinion.³ We have already criticized this theory in detail.

The ultimate spiritual destiny of the men, according to the Upanishads, is a positive state of being, consciousness and blissfulness (*sachchidānanda*). Even ladies like Maitreyī hankered after immortality and refused to be satisfied with mundane prosperity. Against this, Buddhism put the concept of *nirvāṇa* as the *summum bonum* of life. Whether or not this concept was influenced by the Upanishadic notion of Brahman, is a controversial question. Buddha did not engage himself in an abstruse psychological and metaphysical examination of the bases of the Upanishadic teachings. He adopted a pragmatic attitude and was content with describing such questions as *avyākṛta*, as examples of empty and futile intellectual jugglery.

Buddhism and Sāṅkhya

Sāṅkhya philosophy enjoys a very reputable position in Indian philosophic thought and the *Bhagvadgītā* calls its legendary founder Kapila a perfect sage. As its name suggests, Sāṅkhya pursues an analytical methodology based on numerical classification. The classical Sāṅkhya admits two ultimate realities namely *purusha* and

¹*Jaina Sūtras*, SBE, XXII, pp. xxiv–xxv.

²*Hibbert Lectures*, p. 351.

³*Manual of Indian Buddhism*.

mind. This is the cause of all our sorrows. Once we realize the distinction between self and not-self we attain *mukti* or *moksha*. As regards God, the main tendency in Sāṅkhya is to do away with theistic belief. Some Sāṅkhya philosophers, however, admit the existence of God as the supreme person who is the witness but not the creator of the world.

Thus in its classic form realistic dualism of Sāṅkhya is anti-Vedic in the sense that it tries to construct a system of evolution instead of accepting the existence of a creative agency as accepted in the form of Hiranyagarbha or Prajāpati in the Vedas and the Brāhmaṇas. But many scholars try to trace the origin of Sāṅkhya in the Vedas themselves.¹ As distinguished from the Buddhists, the Sāṅkhya accepted the validity of the Veda as a *pramāṇa* and has ever remained anxious to establish its Vedic origin (a claim which was seriously challenged by Śaṅkara). It has been argued that there is the germinal conception of Sāṅkhya in the *RV* itself where a reference is made to two birds who are associated together and mutual friends and take refuge on the same tree; one of them eats the sweet fig, the other abstains from food, and merely looks on.² According to Macdonell the conception of the origination of *sat* from *asat* as formulated in the *Nāsadiya sūkta* is the starting point of the natural philosophy which developed into the Sāṅkhya system.³ According to Radhakrishnan there are hymns which stop with the two principles of puruṣa and prakṛti.⁴ Some scholars trace the origin of Sāṅkhya in the later Vedic literature. The *Atharvaveda* (X.8.43) refers to three guṇas. Many Indian and European scholars trace the development of Sāṅkhya from the *Brāhmaṇas* or *Upanishads*. Johnston holds that Sāṅkhya is rooted in the speculations of the Brāhmaṇas.⁵ B. M. Barua⁶ traces the roots of Sāṅkhya dualism in *Praśnopanishad*. The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* says : *tamaso mā jyotirgamaya*. According to G. C. Pande however Sāṅkhya together with Yoga belonged to the Śramaṇa stream of thought. In the Upanishads there is an attempt to combine the

¹Varma, *op. cit.*, p. 299 f.

²*RV*, X.125.

³*The Vedic Reader*, p. 207.

⁴*Indian Philosophy*, I, p. 102.

⁵Quoted by Varma, p. 304.

⁶*A History of Pre-Buddhist Philosophy*, p. 234; see also Hume, *Thirteen Principal Upanishads*, p. 8.

one of the teachers of Buddha, believed in a philosophy which is essentially Sāṅkhyan, but it is strangely silent over the three guṇas. Further, the source of Aśvaghosha on this point is not known.¹ Therefore, it does not appear safe to hold that the early Buddhism was influenced much by the Sāṅkhya philosophy.²

Buddhism and Yoga

The roots of Yoga can be traced to the Indus civilization.³ In the *R̥gveda* the word Yoga is used in various senses, viz., (a) accomplishing the unaccomplished, (b) yoking or harnessing, (c) relation or combination, etc. In the *Atharvaveda* the great immanent power of *prāṇa* is recognized.⁴ The famous brahmachārī sūkta of this work is a classic eulogy in praise of the power of continence.⁵ It lays great stress on the cultivation of the status of Urdhvaretas.⁶ Another significant idea about Yoga referred to in the *Atharvaveda* is the mention of the 'eight chakras'. Chakra is a key concept in the later Indian philosophy and practices of Haṭhayoga. The realization of the transcendent bliss through philosophical and mystical contemplation is the central tenet of the Upanishads. The *Kaṭha Upanishad* inculcates restraint of the external workings of mind and speech. The *Kaushītaki* refers to the *antara agnihotra* of Prataṛdana. The second chapter of the *Śvetāśvatara* contains the psychology and technics of Yoga. The *Maitrāyaṇī* refers to the *śaḍāṅga* (six limbs) of Yoga. Tarka or deliberative reasoning is included here as one of the elements of Yoga.

As a philosophy the Yoga system is closely allied with Sāṅkhya. Its founder was sage Patañjali, the author of the *Yogasūtra*. It accepts the epistemology and metaphysics of Sāṅkhya with twenty-five principles but also the existence of God. Hence sometimes it

¹*Origins*, p. 547; Upadhyaya, K. N., *Early Buddhism and the Bhagvadgītā*, p. 95.

²We have already discussed the relation of Buddhism with Jainism. Here it may only be reminded that many earlier scholars such as Lassen, Barth, Weber and R. C. Dutt regarded Jainism an offshoot of Buddhism. But this view was given up after Bühler and Jacobi showed that Jainism was distinct and separate from Buddhism. (See Dutt, R. C., *Buddhism and Buddhist Civilization in India*, 1983, p. 77 ff.).

³Cf. Ch. II. Also see discussion on the Muni sūkta of the *RV*, p. 93 ff.

⁴Cf. 'R̥gveda men Prāṇa Vidyā', *Kalyāṇa (Yogāṅka)*.

⁵Cf. Ch. V.

⁶*Ibid.*

is called theistic (*śeśvara*) Sāṅkhya as distinguished from the Sāṅkhya of Kapila which is generally regarded as atheistic (*nirīśvara*). It regards God as the highest object of contemplation. The special interest of this system lies in the practice of Yoga as a means for the attainment of *vivekajñāna* or discriminative knowledge which is regarded in Sāṅkhya as essential for liberation. According to it Yoga consists in *chittavṛttinirodha* (the cessation of all mental functions). There are five levels of mental functions (*chittabhūmi*), the last two of which are conducive to Yoga. There are two kinds of Yoga or *śamādhi* namely *śamprajñatā* (mind's perfect concentration on the object of contemplation) and *āśamprajñatā* (complete cessation of all mental functions including the knowledge of the contemplated object). There are eight āṅgas (steps) in the practice of Yoga—*yama* (restraint), *niyama* (ethical culture), *āsana* (posture), *prāṇāyāma* (breath control), *pratyāhāra* (withdrawal of senses), *dhāraṇa* (attention), *dhyāna* (meditation) and *śamādhi* (concentration).

The influence of Yoga on early Buddhism is regarded as certain. After leaving his home Gautama tried various methods for the search of truth and wisdom. He practised Yoga also. Ālāra Kālāma taught him the technics leading to the realization of the realm of Nothingness. Uddaka Rāmaputta taught him a further stage of Yoga, the mystic process leading to the realm of neither-consciousness-nor-unconsciousness.¹ But Gautama was not satisfied with these techniques. Hence he fell back upon his own efforts. He is said to have practised concentration with held breath. The famous Aryan Eight-fold Way refers to *dhyāna* and *śamādhi*. The famous Aryan scriptures refer to the four-fold *dhyāna*. Besides this a second scheme in early Buddhistic Yoga is that of the four *Brahmavihāras* or sublime occupations—love and kindness (*maitrī*), compassion (*karuṇā*), cheerfulness (*muditā*) and impartiality (*upekshā*). According to Buddhism and Pātañjala Yoga system both, the final goal of effort is the attainment of *prajñā*. But despite this obvious influence of Yoga on early Buddhism, in the absence of a definite date for the *Yogasūtra*, it is difficult to determine the historical relation of Buddhism with Yoga as philosophy and system.

Buddhism and Other Contemporary Thought-Currents
The emergence of early Buddhism was the result of a criticism.

¹Upadhyaya, K. N., *op. cit.*, p. 95 f.

acceptance and synthesis of different streams of thought. We have discussed its relation with Jainism in the chapter on Jainism (p. 191 f.), with other Śramaṇic ideologies in seventh chapter and with the earlier Vedic and Upanishadic thought currents and with Sāṅkhya and Yoga in the preceding sections of the present chapter. Here we may add some words on the relation of early Buddhism with the newly emerging Bhakti cult.

According to R. G. Bhandarkar "The tide of free speculation culminated in the east into such systems as those of Buddhism and Jainism. In the west, however, a theistic system with a god who had come to dwell among men arose."¹ "It appears that the idea of a religion of devotion arose in earlier times" though "it received a definite shape when Vāsudeva revealed the *Gītā* to Arjuna."² In view of the antiquity of Bhakti and some similarities between Bhāgavatism and early Buddhism some scholars have postulated the influence of the former on the latter. For example, Senart³ argues that the fact that the same epithet 'Bhagavat' is used both for Kṛṣṇa and the Buddha shows that the latter is recast in the mould of the former. Further, he refers to the legends of marvel ascribed alike both to Purushottama Kṛṣṇa and Mahāpurusha Buddha and points out to the similarity between the Bhāgavata doctrine of *avatāra* and the Buddhist tradition of the successive Buddhas descending at intervals from heaven to instruct the people on earth. Senart even finds devotionism of the *Gītā* in the various Buddha stories and points out to common elements in the two, such as *jñāna*, *yoga*, *samādhi*, *nirvāṇa* (mentioned as Brahma *nirvāṇa* in the *Gītā*), etc. On the basis of these similarities he concludes that "Buddhism is undoubtedly the borrower."⁴

But none of the arguments of Senart proves his point. The term 'Bhagavat' was a commonly used epithet for any divinity or venerable person. The life histories of the Buddha and Kṛṣṇa do not show any similarities and even myths about them radically differ. The concepts of love for the Buddha and unqualified surrender to Vāsudeva differ fundamentally. In fact it is not possible to derive the religion of renunciation, as the early Buddhism was, from the theistic religion of the *Gītā*. In the Nikāyas there is no mention of

¹Bhandarkar, *Collective Works*, IV, p. 3.

²*Ibid.*, p. 11.

³*IHQ*, VI, pp. 669-73.

⁴*Ibid.*

Vishṇu or Kṛṣṇa as the supreme deity. The only form of theism which the older portions of the Nīkāyas seem to be familiar with, is the idea of Mahābrahmā as creator. Further, neither the Nīkāyas are acquainted with the *Bhagavadgītā* and, nor is the *Gītā* acquainted with them. We therefore feel that Prof. G. C. Pande is right when he concludes that Buddhism and Bhakti were "alternative developments of a common basic tendency, viz., anti-ritualistic free speculation."¹

Early Buddhism as an Instrument of Social Change : Was Buddha a Social Revolutionary? His Attitude Towards Women

It is generally believed that the Buddha was a great social reformer, a believer in the equality of all human beings, a democrat and that his efforts for the emancipation of women and lower castes created a sort of social revolution in society.² In order to evaluate this belief and find out whether or not the Buddha was a social revolutionary we should (i) not only analyse his stand on the various social problems of his time dispassionately, but also (ii) compare his ideas with other contemporary thinkers and religious leaders, and (iii) also compare them with the ideas of the thinkers of the preceding age. Without undertaking the last two exercises it will not be possible to determine whether or not he proposed something 'revolutionary' in social life.

Let us first take up the question of the attitude of the Buddha towards women. Many historians have sought to make him a redeemer of the lot of Indian women. According to I. B. Horner, "In the pre-Buddhist days the status of women in India was on the whole low and without honour. During the Buddhist epoch there was a change. Women came to enjoy more equality and greater respect and authority than ever hitherto accorded to them." Horner gives this credit for the supposed change to the Buddha for he "gave the Dhamma to both (men and women)." "It was impossible," she argues, "for the men, steeped as they were in the Buddhist teachings, not to respond to the constant proofs in daily life of

¹*Origins*, p. 557, n. 94.

²Nehru, J. L., *Discovery of India*, 1946, p. 141; Roy, M. N., *From Savagery to Civilization*, p. 9; Ambedkar, *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, pp. 301-6; Pratap Chandra, 'Buddhism as Instrument of Social Change', *Studies in Religion and Change*, ed. by Madhu Sen, 1983, pp. 81-92; Narasu, P. Lakshmi, *The Essence of Buddhism*, 1976, Ch. IV and V.

women's powers of devotion, self-sacrifice, courage and devotion." "Under Buddhism, more than ever before, she was an individual in command of her own life until the dissolution of the body, and less of a chattel, to be only respected if she lived through and on a man. The old complete dependence, in which the will never functioned but to obey, was gradually vanishing."¹ According to another Buddhist historian "Buddhism along with Jainism but unlike Brahmanism gave equal opportunity in religious culture to women."² According to Ambedkar also the Buddha was an upholder of the doctrine of the equality of sexes.³ According to P. Lakshmi Narasu, "man and woman are placed by the Buddha on the same footing."⁴ But the entire approach of Horner and the like is vitiated by their *a priori* assumption that the condition of the Indian women in the pre-Buddhist period was on the whole low and without honour and that it improved to a considerable degree because of the impact of Buddhism. But the first part of this assumption is not only unproved, it is decidedly against the well-known facts of history. As A. S. Altekar⁵ has shown, before c. 500 B.C. the position of Indian women was comparatively better as compared to what it became in subsequent centuries. He has shown that down to c. 500 B.C. the custom of *sati* and child marriage did not exist to embitter the lot of woman; she was properly educated and given the same religious privileges as man; she could have a voice in the settlement of her marriage and occupy an honoured position in the household, could move freely in family and society and take an intelligent part in public affairs and take to a career if urged by inclination or necessity. The position of women deteriorated in the post-500 B.C. period because of the growth of slavery which rendered them unproductive members of society, the entry of non-Aryan females in the Aryan households and decline of the cult of sacrifice which made their *upanayana* unobligatory leading to a decline in their education. Thus chronologically speaking the position of women in India with the advent of Buddhism became worse, not better, as compared to their position in the pre-Buddhist period (though no casual relationship between the two phenomena is

¹Horner, I. B., *Women under Primitive Buddhism*, 1975, p. 1 f.

²Joshi, L. M., *Studies in Buddhist Culture*, p. 368.

³*Op. cit.*

⁴Narasu, P. Lakshmi, *The Essence of Buddhism*, p. 122.

⁵Altekar, A. S., *Position of Women in Ancient India*, p. 343, 940 ff.

suggested here).

But was the attitude of the Buddha at all more sympathetic to women than the attitude of other contemporary leaders and thinkers? Most likely not. As is well-known, the Buddha was not at all in favour of admitting women as nuns in his Church, and agreed to do so most reluctantly only after the repeated requests of his foster-mother and aunt Mahāprajāpati were supported by Ānanda and that too after laying down eight special rules for their admission which were, to say the least, highly insulting for them. Briefly, these rules were¹ (i) A nun, even of a hundred years standing, must make salutation to and bow down before a monk if only just initiated. In other words a monk of whatever standing was always to be saluted by a nun of whatever standing. (2) A nun must not spend the rainy season in a district in which there was no monk. (3) Every fortnight a nun must know from the monks the date of Uposathā and the day fixed for monk's address (*ovāda*) to nuns. (4) A nun must perform pavāraṇā first in the bhikkhu saṅgha and then in the bhikkhunī saṅgha. (5) A nun must take a *manatta* discipline first from monks and then from nuns. (6) A nun, trained in six pachittiya rules of bhikkhunī pātimokkha should seek Upasampadā from both the saṅghas. (7) On no pretext a nun was to revile or abuse a bhikshu. (8) A nun must not admonish a monk and she must not prescribe any date for Uposathā or pavāraṇā for monks; the official admonition of the nuns by monks, however, was not forbidden. *All these rules were never to be transgressed.*

Some of these rules were obviously framed from the point of view of the security of the nuns (for example, rule no. 2); but others were not framed with the same purpose in view. From these rules it is obvious that the Buddha subscribed to the notion of innate superiority of male over female. He apparently believed that the nuns should not be independent of monks; they were ever to remain dependent upon them for the performance of most of their ceremonies and for the authorisation of them all. The first and the last two rules, specially the first, were obviously made to make the nuns always remember that they were inherently inferior to monks because of their sex. One can understand the regulation that no one should abuse the others, but invidious discrimination made in respect of women is inexplicable. Why should a senior nun be not

¹Horner, *op. cit.*, p. 119 f.; Chakraborty, H., *Asceticism in Ancient India*, p. 221.

entitled to rebuke a junior monk in his failings? When Mahāprajāpati Gotamī requested the Buddha to apply the rule of seniority for monks and nuns according to their relative status and not according to their sex, he is reported to have said: "This is impossible Ānanda, and unallowable that I should so order . . . you are not, *bhikkhus*, to bowdown before women, . . . or to perform towards them these duties that are proper (from an inferior to a superior)." Apparently what the Buddha feared most was that the nuns might claim for themselves equality if not superiority over monks while he himself apparently believed in the inferiority of the fair sex.

From several other facts Buddha's attitude towards women becomes clearer. Firstly, it is to be noted that it was a *pachittiya* offence for a nun to ordain a girl who had not the consent of her parents or husband. But in the case of males, only the consent of parents was sought, not that of the wife. Mention is frequently made of women who tried successfully, or unsuccessfully, to obtain their husband's permission.¹ Secondly, Buddha's opinion about women is reflected in the *Chullavagga* wherein he says: "If, Ānanda, women had not received permission to go out from the household life and enter the homeless state under the doctrine and discipline proclaimed by the Tathāgata, then would the pure religion have lasted long; the good law would have stood fast for a thousand years. But since, Ananda, women have now received that permission, the pure religion will not now last so long . . . will stand for only 500 years."² Once he is known to have said, "He feels no pleasure when she comes, no sorrow when she goes; him I call a true Brāhmaṇa, released from passions."³

It can hardly be denied that the Buddha was always sympathetic, courteous and helpful to his women contemporaries.⁴ But, strangely, throughout the *Vinaya* the *bhikkhus* are represented as bringing their questions and difficulties directly to him, while the nuns are always represented as complaining through the medium of the *bhikkhus*; only Mahāprajāpati is said to have approached him directly probably on account of her kinship with him and her long standing in the saṅgha. The attitude of the Buddha percolated into

¹Horner, *op. cit.*, p. 149 ff.

²*Chullavagga*, X; Chakraborty, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

³*Ibid.*

⁴Horner, *op. cit.*, p. 301 ff.

the saṅgha.¹ It is best exemplified by an incident which took place after his death. It is reported that at the Council of Rājagṛha held during the first rainy season after the Nirvāna, an accusation was brought against Ānanda for having first let women mourners defile the body of the Buddha with their tears.² It may be regarded as an indication of the Buddhistic attitude towards women during the age of the Buddha himself.

According to Horner the association of the large number of educated women with early Buddhism proves what Buddha had done for the emancipation of the weaker sex. But it may reasonably be argued that the women of the age of the Buddha were not the product of Buddhism: they were born and brought up in the Brāhmanical society; it is another matter that they accepted the teachings of a great thinker of their age. Therefore the academic and intellectual standard of the Buddhist ladies of the age of the Buddha himself—nuns and lay women both—cannot be regarded as the achievement of the Buddha or early Buddhism. The contribution of Buddhism for the betterment of the lot of women should be judged by its impact on them in the post-Buddha centuries. But for that evidence is extremely meagre. It is true that the existence of bhikkhunīs is mentioned in the schism edict of Aśoka, the Ceylonese chronicles (which refer to the missionary activity of Saṅghamitrā) and some post-Aśokan inscriptions. But it is also a fact that “compared with the number of vihāras for monks, the nunneries were few . . . no nunnery is heard from the enormous inscriptions of Nāgarjunikoṇḍa. Hence we may infer that the number and position of nuns were fast declining about the Kuṣāna period.”³

Here it may be mentioned that the attitude of the Buddha towards women was not in any way better as compared with other religious sects. For example the Śvetāmbara Jainas recognised the right of women for emancipation and organised their own nunneries. Even in the days of Pārśva, and even earlier, the Jainas had their own order of nuns who numbered in thousands. Therefore what the Buddha did in the late sixth century B.C. was not something ‘revolutionary’: it had been done by Pārśva in the 8th century B.C. and was being done by several contemporaries of the Buddha in c. 500 B.C. And, significantly, his contemporaries like Mahāvira did

¹Horner, *op. cit.*, p. 308 f.

²*Ibid.*, p. 300.

³Chakraborty, *H.*, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

not raise any objection against admitting women into their saṅghas. As regards Brāhmaṇism, it should be remembered that it was not a missionary religion; hence it had no need to organise orders of missionary monks and nuns. Therefore one cannot and should not expect the existence of Brāhmaṇical nunneries. If one maintains that Brāhmaṇical society gave equal religious opportunity to women, he can only be expected to show that in the early Vedic society women could participate in the performance of sacrifices and in the Upanishadic age in the cultivation of Brahmavidyā. And such was actually the case. In the Vedic religion performance of sacrifices depended upon the actual and equal participation in it by the wife of the householder. That is why the *upanayana* of girls used to take place as regularly as that of the boys. Consequently they were given equal training in the Vedic lore also. In the Upanishadic age, ladies of the Brāhmaṇical society took active interest in the cultivation of Brahmavidyā. For example Yājñavalkya's wife Maitreyī was more interested in finding out the way to immortality than in setting new fashions in dress and ornaments. In the philosophical tournament held under the auspices of Janaka, the lady philosopher Gārgī asked extremely abstruse questions. Ātreyī, a lady student of Vedānta, studied under sages Vālmīki and Agastya. In the Vedic society women like Sulabhā and Gārgī Vachaknavī even adopted homeless life. When the Buddha left home and proceeded in search of Truth, he was invited by two Brāhmaṇa female hermits to stay in their hermitages.¹ Pāṇini and Baudhāyana refer to Brāhmaṇical nuns and Kauṭilya uses the term *parivrajakā* in the sense of a nun.

In early Buddhism women were generally regarded as extremely unreliable, faithless and no better than household possessions.² In a number of references the early Buddhist texts class them with inanimate objects and cows and horses.³ In the *Mahāvagga* the Buddha advises Ānanda not to see women; and if it becomes necessary to see them, not to speak with them; and if it becomes

¹Dutt, N., *Early Monastic Buddhism*, p. 87.

²While advocating the cult of asceticism in his *Saundarananda* (VIII.31.36), Aśvaghosha holds women as the greatest obstacle in the path of virtue. He makes the Buddha pronounce that women are like envenomed creepers, like unsheathed swords and like dens of horrible reptiles. According to him an indignant serpent can be appeased but the heart of a woman cannot be subdued.

³Indra, *The Status of Women in Ancient India*, p. 222 f.

necessary to speak with them, then to keep wide awake.¹ In the *Milindapañho* the Buddha is reported to have said that "with opportunity and secrecy and the right wooer all women will go wrong. Aye, falling with others, with a cripple even."² In the *Chullavagga* the Buddha opines that "unfathomably deep . . . is the character of women. They are like robbers with many artifices, with whom truth is hard to find, to whom lie is like the truth, a truth is like a lie. No heed should be paid to either their likes or their dislikes."³

Some historians have made an attempt to differentiate the religious and social aspect of Buddha's attitude to women. It has been urged that though from the standpoint of religion, which demanded high moral discipline on the part of a monk, the Buddha appears to be anti-women, but in social aspect, he did not teach difference between man and woman.⁴ But, as seen above, it is not true. The Buddha had no particular respect for women as members of society. Here it may be noted that he did not concern himself with the problem of the lay women at all. Examples can be cited to prove that he cherished the ideal of the subservience of wife. Once he described seven kinds of wives to Sujātā, the unruly daughter-in-law of Anāthapiṇḍika. Four of these categories he described as virtuous. These are respectively of those wives who act as mother, sister, companion or slave; they go to heaven. The three kinds of non-virtuous wives behave like slayer, robber or mistress; they go to hell. Significantly, as a result of his teachings Sujātā decided to become a slave-like wife.⁵

Buddha and Caste System: Criticism of the Current View

Another proof generally advanced in support of the view that the Buddha was a social revolutionary is the supposed assumption that he attacked caste system as it existed at that time. According to Ambedkar, "No caste, no inequality, no superiority: all are equal. That is what he (that is, the Buddha) stood for."⁶ Rhys Davids has stressed that Buddhism "ignores completely and absolutely all advantages and disadvantages arising from birth, occupation or

¹*Ibid.*, p. 223 f.

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*, p. 252.

⁴Madhu Sen, in *Studies in Religion and Change*, pp. 101-10.

⁵*Aṅguttara Nikāya*, IV, p. 92 f., quoted *ibid.*

⁶Ambedkar, *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, 1957, p. 301.

social status and sweeps away all barriers and disabilities arising from the arbitrary rules of mere ceremonial or social impurity.”¹ According to some recent historians Buddhism produced the only consciously egalitarian social philosophy in ancient India² and Buddha’s professed commitment to human equality was nothing short of a revolution.³ We, however, feel that this assumption is only marginally correct. The belief that the Buddha believed in the social equality of men is as much untrue as the theory that he believed in the social equality of both the sexes. It is generally held that he was prepared to accept differences between man and man, but based not on heredity; for this he relied on the criterion of wisdom, deeds and virtue. In other words he opposed the caste hierarchy based on the birth as was advocated by the Vedic religion. In this connection we would like to draw the attention of our readers to the following facts:

(1) The Buddha did not reject the notion of caste system. He merely gave a new twist to it. In the *Aggañña sutta* he rejects the divine origin theory of the caste system and instead ties it up with the evolutionary process. In this sutta he opines that all castes arose because of the laziness and greed of men. The first to emerge were the Khattiyas, so called because their job was looking after the field (*kheta*). The first Khattiya was elected to the position of king or Mahāsammata because he was “the handsomest, the best favoured, the most attractive, the most capable.” Next arose the Brāhmaṇas (those who put away evil) who became abstainers from worldly pursuits. They were the *jhāyakas* or the meditating ones and *ajjhāyakas* or those who teach. Then there were the Vessas who indulged in various trades and the Suddas who subsisted on hunting.⁴ From this it is apparent that : (a) The Buddha did not question the wisdom behind organising the society into the four varṇas. (b) In his own scheme he made Kshatriyas as superior to the Brāhmaṇas. (c) He had nothing to add so far as the last two varṇas were concerned. Thus his whole exercise boils down to one point only : the Kshatriyas are superior to Brāhmaṇas.

(2) Buddha’s partiality for the Kshatriya caste is apparent from

¹ *Dialogues*, III, p. 78.

² Pratap Chandra, ‘Buddhism as an Instrument of Social Change’, *Studies in Religion and Change*, ed. by Madhu Sen, p. 93.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 94; cf. also Narasu, P. Lakshmi, *The Essence of Buddhism*, Ch. IV.

⁴ Ghoshal, U. N., *A History of Indian Political Ideas*, 1959, p. 63.

other, for though he theoretically rejected the principle of determining one's social status on the basis of birth in a caste (which, as we have seen, was not an unqualified rejection and was applied in the case of Brāhmaṇas only) he accepted the concept of social superiority or inferiority on the basis of *kula* or family, which in his thinking was determined by one's birth. As we have seen, in the *Ambaṣṭha sutta* he tries to convince the Brāhmaṇa Ambaṭṭha that he was inferior to the Śākya because he was born in an inferior *kula*. He argues that even the most degraded of the Kshatriyas is superior to a Brāhmaṇa because the former is born in a higher *kula*. In the Jātakas this point has been illustrated by a number of stories. In the *Sigāla Jātaka* the son of a barber dies for the love of a Lichchhavi girl. The Buddha denounces him for his ambition because being born in a low *kula* a barber should not covet the hand of a Kshatriya girl. In the *Siṃhakotthuka Jātaka*, Kokākila, a monk born in an inferior *kula*, wants to recite the religious texts as the monks born in higher *kulas* were doing. The matter is brought to the notice of the Buddha who calls the aspirant monk and rebukes him thoroughly and tells him that while the monks born in superior *kulas* were like lions, he was like the offspring of a jackal. In the *Siṃhachamma Jātaka* the same Kokākila is likened with the ass who wants to acquire the status of lion by wearing the lion-skin. Many other Jātaka stories emphasize the importance of being born in a superior *kula*. This emphasis on *kula* nullified whatever influence Buddha's partial and lop-sided denunciation of the caste system might have exerted.¹

(7) The Buddha is supposed to have attacked the Brāhmaṇical caste system from several angles. Firstly, it is maintained that instead of birth he defined castes with reference to one's qualities, inclination and vocation.² In the *Soṇadaṇḍasutta* the Brāhmaṇa Soṇadaṇḍa declares that there are five pre-requisites for being regarded as a Brāhmaṇa—Varṇa (pure descent on both sides), Jāti (fine personality), Mantra (knowledge of the Vedas), Śīla (virtue) and Pāṇḍitya (learning). But when the Buddha presses him to declare what is indispensable out of these five, the Brāhmaṇa agrees that only the last two are necessary to make a person Brāhmaṇa.³

¹Cf. Niyogi, *Jātakakālīna Bhāratīya Saṅskṛti*.

²Cf. Saha, K., 'The Brāhmaṇa in Pāli Literature', *Social Life in Ancient India*, ed. by D. C. Sircar, pp. 49-51.

³Warder, A. K., *Indian Buddhism*, p. 178.

(Here it may be noted that in the praise of virtue and learning ritual conduct and Vedic learning were expressly excluded). In the *Assalāyanasutta* when the Brāhmaṇa Assalāyana claims that Brāhmaṇa is the superior varṇa, the Buddha tells him that people of all the varṇas are of the same human species, capable of interbreeding. In the *Vāseṭṭhasutta* when two Brāhmaṇas come to him with the problem: does one become a Brāhmaṇa by birth or by deed, he explains the difference between species (which differ in physical features) and human classes (which rest on the vocations of men). A man may become a trader, a soldier or may adopt any other profession. But a Brāhmaṇa is one who has high moral qualities and is detached and wise; one does not become a Brāhmaṇa by birth.¹ At a later date Aśvaghosha also argued that Brāhmaṇahood consists neither in birth or jāti (because we know that several famous sages were born through miscegenation and in that case no Brāhmaṇa can lose his caste as the Smṛtis maintain), nor in body (because then burning the dead body would cause *brahmahatyā*), nor in learning (because then learned Śūdras would be Brāhmaṇas) and nor in conduct (because then low caste people with good conduct would be Brāhmaṇas). Aśvaghosha then concludes that the Brāhmaṇahood consists in the purity of heart and that all men belong to one varṇa which gets divided into four on the basis of vocations or functions. Many other suttas of the Buddha and other early Buddhist texts may be quoted where the Brāhmaṇahood is defined in terms of qualities and not birth. But this definition (or rather definitions) of a true Brāhmaṇa had no relationship with actual social stratification. It was like defining a Vaishṇava as the one who understands the grief of others. (*Vaishṇava jana to tene kahiye jo jāne pīḍa parāyī re*). It is a good sentiment; nobody can have any quarrel with it. But it is the definition of a good man, not of a Vaishṇava. Logically such a definition is no definition at all, for the question still remains who, among those who understand the grief of others, may be regarded as a member of the Vaishṇava sect. Similarly the qualities of a Brāhmaṇa as enumerated by the Buddha are the qualities of every good man. The Buddha himself must have looked for these qualities in the members of other social groups also. Therefore his definition of a Brāhmaṇa is no definition at all; it does not make Brāhmaṇas a social group—as the Ksha-

¹Pande, *op. cit.*, p. 55 f.

their view is the eye of the Buddha himself. As the Buddha does not give any evidence in the qualities necessary for the *Upariyaya* and does not profess, he requires attempts to determine his Brahminism contemporaries by comparing their self-conception with the actual character of the Brahmins of his own definition only. There is prejudice against Brahminism and partiality for the *Upariyaya*.

The Buddha's direct agents were *gṛhastha*, whatever his limitations, was not "Buddhism" it is not a sect, and it was not some dogmatic or dogma. It was shared by all contemporary religious men. The first attitude to this problem is evidenced by the *Upariyaya* and where a Brahminism called monks insisted the Brahminism look upon it as the sacrifice and *vīra* as a true Brahminism. The meaning of *Upariyaya* in the sacrificial *gṛhastha*, all the *Vedas* and *Upanishads*, being *gṛhastha* of his, *gṛhastha* save the *gṛhastha* for his *gṛhastha* of very powerful ... The *gṛhastha* of *Śramaṇa* by equating it Brahminism by *gṛhastha* and *Mīmāṃsā* by *gṛhastha* and a *Upariyaya* by *gṛhastha* and *Upariyaya* of a *Śramaṇa* ... him *vīra* is exempt from all *gṛhastha* of all Brahminism.

A similar emphasis on *gṛhastha* rather than *gṛhastha* was given in the *Upariyaya* and *Upariyaya* of the Brahminical society. The *Upariyaya* of the *Upariyaya* says that *gṛhastha* makes a man the true Brahminism of the *Upariyaya*. *Upariyaya* declares that he *gṛhastha* the true *gṛhastha* according to divisions of *gṛhastha* and *gṛhastha*. *Upariyaya* on *gṛhastha* *gṛhastha* *gṛhastha* *gṛhastha*. Referring to the *Upariyaya* *gṛhastha* *gṛhastha* "There is nothing in the *Upariyaya* or *gṛhastha* whether *gṛhastha* was hereditary." According to *Upariyaya* also "The *gṛhastha* of the *Upariyaya* is on *gṛhastha* *gṛhastha* and *gṛhastha* *gṛhastha* and *gṛhastha* *gṛhastha*. The *gṛhastha* of the *Upariyaya* which we *gṛhastha* is independent of *gṛhastha* *gṛhastha* of *gṛhastha*. A class determined by *gṛhastha* and *gṛhastha* is not a class determined by *gṛhastha* and *gṛhastha*." Similarly *Upariyaya* *gṛhastha* *gṛhastha* "There are natural divisions among men in accordance with their intrinsic qualities and

Jason, *Jama Sūtra*, II, p. 181 B
 Prof. Eugene S. M., "Case in Early Buddhist Literature", *Social Life in Ancient India*, ed. by D. C. Sircar, pp. 45-48.
Upariyaya, p. 11.
 The *Upariyaya*, pp. 181-182.

actions; their capacities and duties vary accordingly.”¹

That the *Gītā* did not believe in the rigidity of the traditional caste system is further proved when Kṛṣṇa declares: “Those who take refuge in me, O Arjuna, though they are lowly born, women, Vaiśyas as well as Śūdras, they also attain to the highest goal” (IX.32). From this it is evident that the *Gītā* did not believe in the rigour of caste with regard to the practice of religion. Buddhism was obviously not the only religion to give religious rights, including the right of emancipation, to the Śūdras.

The theory as propounded in the *Gītā* is made clearer in the Ājagaraparvan of the *Mahābhārata*. Here Yudhisṭhira is asked by the python, “Who O king, is a Brāhmaṇa?” and the king answers, “A Brāhmaṇa is one who evinces truth, liberality, forbearance, virtue, mildness, austerity and pity.” At this the python points out that such qualities may be found in the Śūdras as well. Yudhisṭhira however sticks to his definition and insists that anyone possessing these qualities should be called a Brāhmaṇa. On being further questioned he explains that birth is not the criterion of caste and men are all alike in their social and sexual behaviour. “O great serpent, if sacramentally purified conduct is to be found in some one, I would call him Brāhmaṇa.”²

That the enlightened sections of the Brāhmaṇical society did not believe in the superiority or inferiority of any profession is made further clear by several other passages of the *Gītā* and the *Mahābhārata*. The *Gītā* declares: “man attains perfection devoted each to his own duty” (XVIII.45) and that “all actions are associated with (more or less) defects as fire with smoke” (XVIII.48). In the Vana-parvan of the *Mahābhārata* in the dialogue between a meat-seller and a Brāhmaṇa the former is considered better than the penance-performing Brāhmaṇa because he, the meat-seller, discharges his duties devotedly for the good of others. Similarly in the dialogue between the pedlar and Jājali (Śāntiparvan of the *Mahābhārata*) the profession of pedlary is held superior if followed honestly. By these instances we are not trying to prove that the Brāhmaṇa society did not believe in the rigours of caste system, for its main current certainly believed in the caste system of most rigid type. What we want to emphasize is only the fact that many Brāhmaṇical texts and thinkers were as much liberal as the Buddhists, probably more, in

¹The Chief Currents of Contemporary Philosophy, p. 566.

²Śramaṇa Tradition, p. 59.

existence of slavery in the Śākya society is proved by the famous example of Vāsabhakhattiyā, the slave-girl, who was treacherously married to Prasenajit. Further, the Buddha must have seen innumerable slaves with his affluent and royal lay devotees such as Anāthapiṇḍika, Bimbisāra, Prasenajit, etc. The question is : as a 'social revolutionary' what did he do for the eradication of this evil institution? The answer is 'precious nothing'. He was certainly moved by their pitiable condition and once he suggested a code of conduct for the slaves and their masters. But the proposed code only suggested that (a) the slaves should remain satisfied with what they had got; (b) they should work for the praise and fame of their master; and (c) the masters should behave with the slaves kindly. In brief, his code merely exhorted the masters to be merciful to their slaves.¹ Aśoka shows the same attitude in his edicts. Thus it is apparent that the early Buddhism did not appreciate the spirit of resentment among slaves, what to talk of rebellion. The entire *Tripitāka* is free from any suggestion for their betterment. Rather the Buddha is known to have consoled them with the argument that their condition was the result of their past actions and assured them the status of god if they suffered their lot willingly.²

The Buddha apparently did not see any 'suffering' in slavery—and for that matter in any evil social institution. It is significant that none of the spectacles which led him to adopt the life of homelessness (viz., sickness, old age and death) was 'social' in nature; all these three represent 'individual' suffering. Actually his concept of suffering was not even individual; he was motivated by 'spiritual' suffering and sickness, old age and death were its symbolic representation. Similarly, his concept of *bahujana hitāya bahujana sukhāya* was not social in nature; the *hita* of others which he sought to achieve was spiritual or ethical, not social. Buddhism emerged in a particular social environment in which the very existence of man was regarded as sorrowful. *Dukkhavāda* in those days was as widely accepted a doctrine as socialism is today. The Buddha was a great thinker, but he was also a child of his age; he was therefore more concerned with the ethical betterment of his followers and not in the social problems of the day (such as position of women, slavery and condition of the low castes). His influence on the contemporary social order, if any, was only

¹*Ibid.*, p. 85.

²*Ibid.*, p. 86.

accidental, not intentional. Therefore the question of his being a 'social revolutionary' should not in the first place be raised at all.

Organisation, Discipline and Achievements of the Buddhist Saṅgha

"The great practical achievement of the Buddha", Charles Eliot observes, "was to found a religious order which has lasted to the present day. It is chiefly to this institution that the permanence of his religion is due." In the early stage of Buddhism, however, the disciples of the Buddha led a wandering life residing in caves and forests and living on alms. They were personally ordained by the Buddha with the words '*Ehi bikkhu*' (Come, O monk). After he had won over a number of adherents, in accordance with the custom of his age, he established a saṅgha. Some historians believe that before the First Council the Buddhist monks were very loosely differentiated from others as there was "merely a community of faith and spiritual alliance among them" and they lacked "any external bond of union." Yet there is a possibility that even at that time there existed a set of regulations to be observed by all the Buddhist monks. The custom of the recital of Pātimokkha twice a month must have started in the life-time of the Buddha. He is also known to have been very particular in keeping a distinction between his disciples and monks of other sects with regard to dress, alm-bowl, etc.

The story of the Buddhist saṅgha begins with the conversion of the so-called 'Pañchavargiya' bhikshus. When he had sixty disciples, he gave them the right to ordain new converts because it was difficult for him to attend personally upon each and every ordination. But with the increase in the membership of the Order, innumerable complexities also made their appearance in the monastic code. Hence onwards monastic rules were quite often modified and changed and, when necessary, new rules were formulated.

As we have seen, at first Buddha had used a very simple formula for ordination. It merely invited and welcomed the applicant to embrace his dharma. But in the ordination conducted by a bhikshu, the 'Tisarana' or 'Triśaraṇa' formula was used. Further, one who desired admission had to shave his head and beard and put on yellow robes. Then he saluted the monks and repeated the Triśaraṇa formula thrice with folded hands. This was called the ordination (*pabajjā*, Sans. *pravrajyā*) ceremony. The new entrant

was put, as it were, on probation. He was told in the very beginning about the Four Nissayas so that he could realize that in joining the Order he would have to face many physical discomforts. The rule requiring that parents should give their permission for the pabajjā of their son may be an old one framed on the request of Śuddhodana when Rāhula was ordained. The Buddha proscribed the ordination of men in royal service, of those suffering from serious disease, of those who were declared to be thieves and jail-breakers and whose names were written in the royal house on the charges of theft, and of those who were castigated by whip and were branded as culprits, debtors and slaves.¹ On attaining the age of 20 a monk, if found fit, was given higher ordination (*upasampadā*).

The increasing number of the monks and the custom of rain-retreat led to the emergence of monastic establishments (*vihāras*) which were supported by the gifts of the devoted laity in the form of buildings, money and material goods for the monks. Detailed rules were framed for the selection of the site of monasteries and also about the size of their rooms. Larger vihāras had rooms for every purpose—service halls, store-houses, bath-rooms, etc. Ownership of monasteries was vested in the saṅgha. Later on vihāras acquired huge properties, both movable and immovable, and became very rich. Thus a fullfledged monasticism came into existence which explains the enormous number of Vinaya rules.

A monk who had obtained the *pabajjā* but not yet the *upasampadā* ordination was called *samanera* (Sans. *Śramaṇera*). The *Śramaṇera* was required to take ten vows (*daśa śīla*) which are negatively formulated. These are : to abstain from (1) taking life, (2) taking what is not given, (3) practising *abrahmacharya*, (4) speaking a lie, (5) taking intoxicants, (6) taking food at wrong times, (7) indulging in dance, song, etc., (8) decorating the body, (9) sitting or sleeping on high seats and beds, and (10) receiving silver or gold. The first four of these constitute *pārājika* offences for which there is no 'cure', while the remaining six were considered of lesser importance, though also undesirable for a monk.

When monasticism acquired roots every *antevāsika* or junior monk was expected to select two persons, as his *upādhyāya* and *āchārya* respectively. The *āchārya* officiated for the *upādhyāya* in the latter's

¹Chakraborty, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

absence and thus the monk was never left unrestrained in his behaviour. The ideal of relationship between the *upādhyāya* or *āchārya* and the *antevāsika* was to be that of father and son. The *antevāsika* had to do all the services for his *upādhyāya* and *āchārya*, while they were expected to see that the young monk had all the required articles and to attend upon him if he was ill.

It is said that the Buddha borrowed the custom of *uposathā* from the Brāhmanical society at the suggestion of Bimbisāra. In the beginning in the *uposathā* ceremony the main teachings of Buddha were repeated. Later on, it assumed the nature of a confessional ceremony. The list of the possible offences (*pātimokkha*) was repeated before the assembled monks and those guilty of any of these made a confession for which they were punished according to the nature of their guilt.

Varshāvāsa commencing from the full moon of Ashāḍha or Śrāvaṇa was another custom commonly observed by the ascetics of Brāhmaṇa, Jaina and Buddhist faiths. During these three months the monks stayed at one place and were fully dependent upon the gifts of the laity of that area, who very often came to hear religious discourses. Therefore the *varshāvāsa* came to serve as a link of close relationship between the saṅgha and the laity.

Pavāraṇā (Sans. *Pravāraṇā*) ceremony was held at the expiry of the *varshāvāsa* period. It was, like the *pātimokkha* assembly, a confessional assembly. But there was a difference also, for unlike the *pātimokkha*, in the *pavāraṇā* *pātimokkha* rules were not recited to the monks to ask them if they had committed any of the listed offences; on the other hand in the *pavāraṇā* the monks themselves, in a very humble manner, requested the assembly to point out the sins that they might have unknowingly committed.¹ After the *pavāraṇā* the *Kaṭhina* ceremony was held in which cotton cloth, provided by the laity and made up into robes, was distributed among the monks.

From the *Vinaya* it is clear that in the beginning the Buddhist monks observed strict rules regarding dress, etc. Besides three *chīvaras* of dull orange colour (an upper robe, a lower one and a sort of cloak) called *saṅghāti*, *antaravāsaka* and *uttarāsaṅga*, monks could use mantle, blanket, loin-cloth for the rainy season, bathing

¹For a detailed discussion on the main Buddhist monastic ceremonies see Saha, K., 'Buddhist Ceremonies', *Religious Life in Ancient India*, ed. by D. C. Sircar, pp. 39-45.

clothes, small cloths to be used in wounds, itches, eczema, etc., towels and bags. Alms-bowl was also a necessity for the monks. Among other permissible articles were needles, razors and nail-cutters, duster to sweep the *āvāsa* and some other things of general use.

The Buddha was usually invited along with his disciples by the lay devotees for meals. Rules regarding food-taking were very liberal in Buddhism. A monk could generally take anything in alms but could not express his wish for any particular kind of food. Use of medicines was not prohibited.

After renouncing the world monks found themselves in a new society bound by a common faith and a common disciplinary code. The seniors commanded due respect and were given first preference with regard to seat, water or food. If a monk fell ill, he was duly attended by some member of the saṅgha. The co-residents of the *āvāsa* were the only relations of the monk and therefore the Buddha insisted upon mutual service. He also encouraged a healthy relation between society and the saṅgha. If a monk insulted a faithful householder, he became liable for punishment. A quarrelsome monk was penalized with such disabilities on account of which he immediately lost the right of conferring ordination. "A monk having an excessive relation with the laity or repeatedly violating the *pātimokkha* rules, became liable to *Niyassa-kamma*. A monk, who brought about any corruption among the laity or earned bad name for the saṅgha by his conduct, became subject to *Pabbhajanīyakamma*. *Paṭisaranīyakamma* was conducted against a monk who had offended a householder by making a false accusation. *Parivāsa* and *Manatta* might be imposed upon a monk who had been guilty of any of the *Saṅghādisesa* offences. A long list of disabilities is given that is to be imposed upon a monk under *parivāsa*."

During his life, the Buddha was regarded as the head of the saṅgha and the acceptance of this fact was the first condition of admission into it as the Trīśaraṇa formula *Buddhaṃ śaraṇaṃ gacchhāmi Dhammaṃ śaraṇaṃ gacchhāmi Saṅghaṃ śaraṇaṃ gacchhāmi* proves.¹ However it may be noted that in those days in such a religious Order the leader not only acted as its supreme head and controlled and regulated the life of the whole Order, but also nominated his

¹Mahathera, Saddhatissa, 'The Three Refuges', *Mohābodhi*, XXIII, No. 6-7, pp. 167-8. Incidentally, the Trīśaraṇa formula shows that the Saṅgha was raised to the status of 'the 'Buddha' and 'Dhamma'.

and in other countries of Asia. It is certain that Buddhism could not have become an international religion without the help of the Church. The local branches of the saṅgha became great educational centres. Actually for centuries both higher and lower Indian education to some extent remained in the hands of the Buddhist Church. The Buddhist Church imparted education not only in the subjects concerned with Buddhism, but also in subjects concerned with other religions and also in secular branches of knowledge. Nālandā Mahāvihāra is a great example of such institutions. The Buddhist vihāras became centres of artistic and cultural activities also. They produced great sculptors and painters—as the art and paintings of Ajanta prove.

The Buddhist vihāras indirectly became instrumental in the expansion of Indian languages, literature, arts and culture outside India. The impact of the Ajanta paintings on the paintings of Tung Huang caves in China or on the Sigiriya paintings of Ceylon is an example of this process.

The Buddhist Canon

Buddhist literature may broadly be divided into two sections: the Hīnayāna (in Pali and mixed Sanskrit) and the Mahāyāna (in mixed and pure Sanskrit). It can be further sub-divided into literatures of different sects of both the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna schools.

The Pali *Tipiṭaka* represents the earliest available and most complete collection of the Buddhist religious texts. It is in the form of three systematic *Piṭakas* meaning baskets in the sense of collections : (1) the *Vinaya Piṭaka* or the collection of books on discipline; (2) the *Sutta Piṭaka* or the collection of books of discourses; and (3) the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* or the collection of books on higher religion or metaphysics.

The *Vinaya Piṭaka*, which is usually placed at the head of the canon, contains rules, sometimes very minute and on trivial subjects, for the conduct of Buddhist monks and nuns. As the Buddha lived for about 45 years after the 'Wheel of Law' was set in motion, it is certain that he settled many of the rules himself. But it is also certain that other rules grew up after his death though they were usually attributed to him. The *Vinaya* comprises the following texts : (1) *Pātimokkha*—It gives a list of 227 rules of discipline (originally 152 only) together with atonements for transgressing

them. (2) *Suttavibhaṅga*—It contains explanation of the suttas of the *Pātimokkha* with a short historical introduction. It comprises the *Mahāvibhaṅga* and the *Bhikkhuni vibhaṅga*. (3) *Khuddaka*—It is a continuation of the *Suttavibhaṅga* and comprises two divisions—*Mahāvagga* and *Chullavagga*. (4) *Parivāra*—It is a later composition and seeks to give a résumé of the earlier texts.

The *Sutta Piṭaka* professes to record the sayings (*suttas*) of the Buddha himself in his own words, usually in the form of a dialogue with some one, often Socratic in the method of questioning. Occasionally one of his disciples repeats the saying of the Buddha. The suttas are accompanied with short introductions to indicate when and where did Gautama or his disciple speak. It is divided into five *Nikāyas*: (i) *Dīgha Nikāya* or the collection of long independent treatises, 34 in number; (ii) *Majjhima Nikāya* or the collection of suttas of moderate size, 152 in number; (iii) *Saṃyutta Nikāya* or the collection of connected treatises or kindred sayings, grouped in 56 *saṃyuttas*, usually divided into *vaggas* (*Sagātha*, *Nidāna*, *Salāyatana*, *Khanda* and *Mahā*); (iv) *Aṅguttara* or *Ekuttara Nikāya* or the collection of sermons the length of which increases by one and which consists of eleven sections or *nipātas*; (v) *Khuddaka Nikāya* or the collection of short miscellaneous treatises.¹

The *Khuddaka Nikāya* contains fifteen works. They are: (i) *Khuddaka pāṭha* or short passages; (ii) *Dhammapada* or collection of moral precepts in the form of 423 sayings of the Buddha; (iii) *Udāna*, or short lyrics, 82 in number, supposedly uttered by the Buddha under strong emotion; (iv) *Itivuttaka* containing 110 sayings of the Buddha; (v) *Sutta Nipāta*, containing didactic poems, 70 in number; (vi) *Vimānavatthu* or stories of celestial mansions; (vii) *Petavatthu*, a treatise on the departed spirits; (viii) *Theragāthā* or the *gāthās* composed by the monks; (ix) *Therīgāthā*, or the *gāthās* composed by the nuns; (x) *Jātakas* or stories of Buddha's former births; (xi) *Niddesa*, a treatise on the explanation of the *Sutta Nipāta* composed by Sāriputta; (xii) *Paṭisambhidāmagga* or *treatise on intuitive insight*; (xiii) *Apadāna* or a treatise on the legends about arhats or saints; (xiv) *Buddhavaṃsa*, a work on the lives of preceding Buddhas and Gautama Buddha; and (xv) *Chariyā Piṭaka* or *treatise on Gautama's deeds in former births* or a collection of *Jātakas* in versified form.

¹The *Khuddaka* is sometimes classed with the *Abhidhamma*.

The *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*, as its name suggests, purports to discuss metaphysics or higher religion (*abhidhamma*), but actually its treatises deal with the same subjects as the *Sutta Piṭaka*, though in a more scholastic way. It comprises seven books known as *Sattapa-karaṇa*, viz. (i) *Dhammasaṅgīṇī*, (ii) *Vibhaṅga*, (iii) *Kathāvatthu*, (iv) *Puggalapaññati*, (v) *Dhātukathā*, (vi) *Yamaka*, and (vii) *Paṭthāna*. All these books are quite late in date. For example the *Kathāvatthu* is usually ascribed to Moggaliputta Tissa (3rd cent. B.C.) though Winternitz rightly assigns parts of it to a still later period.

Originally the *Tripitaka* was composed in Pali, Māgadhī and other dialects; of these the Pali version has alone survived in full. Of the rest, only fragments are now available. The Pali canon can broadly be placed between the death of the Buddha (483 B.C.) and the reign of Vaṭṭagāmiṇī of Ceylon when it was first put to writing (c. 30 B.C.). Though the orthodox Buddhists claim that the whole *Dhamma* and *Vinaya* (according to *Sumaṅgalavilāsīṇī* even the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*) were recited in the First Council held immediately after the Buddha, but modern scholars do not accept this tradition. Here it is not possible to discuss the chronology of the Pali canon in detail, but some general conclusions of competent scholars may be mentioned. As noted earlier, the *Abhidhamma* is regarded by all as of a late date (not earlier than the third century B.C.). As regards the other two Piṭakas it is now generally agreed that in their present form they are "not as old as the First or even the Second Council; but quotations from scriptures in the Aśokan edicts, references to persons well-versed in sacred texts in inscriptions of the second century B.C. and scriptures, reliefs and inscriptions on the railings and gateways at Bharhut and Sāñchī suggest that the works on Dharma and Vinaya were current before the Maurya and Śuṅga dynasties. The *Milinda pañho* is the earliest evidence of the existence of the three Piṭakas and five Nikāyas."¹ According to G. C. Pande, one of the greatest authorities on the subject, "it may be asserted that the growth of the Nikāyas falls between the 5th and the 3rd centuries B.C. The fact that the Nikāyas take but slight notice of the issues contested by the earliest sects certainly suggests that they had practically reached completion in the 1st century A.B."² The silence of the Vinaya over the Third Council suggests that it had reached completion in the first two centuries A.B. The silence of the

¹ *AIU*, p. 408.

² That is, in the first century after the nirvāṇa of the Buddha.

canon over Aśoka, which contrasts so strongly with later tradition, is also significant in this respect and suggests its antiquity."¹

Unfortunately at present we have no complete Buddhist canon in Sanskrit. It appears, however, that the Sarvāstivādins had Sanskrit Āgamas corresponding to the Pali Nikāyas and seven books of *Abhidhamma* corresponding to the seven books of the Pali *Abhidhamma*. The Mūla-sarvāstivādins also possessed a *Vinayapiṭaka*. Large sections of this, preserved in the Gilgit Manuscripts, are now available.

Later Buddhist Literature

Besides the canonical literature in Pali, there is also the non-canonical literature, consisting of the *Milinda pañho* (containing a conversation between Nāgasena and Milinda or Menander, an Indo-Greek ruler of the second century B.C.), the *Nettipakaraṇa* and *Peṭakopadesa* (ascribed to Mahākachchāyana, a disciple of the Buddha but evidently a later work), Buddhadatta's Manuals of Vinaya and Abhidhamma, commentaries on the Pali Tipiṭaka texts, including the Jātakas, written by or ascribed to Buddhaghosha or Dhammapāla, Ceylonese chronicles such as the *Dīpavaṃsa* and the *Mahāvamsa*, and later works in Pali. Buddhaghosha's treatise, the *Visuddhimagga*, is veritably a small encyclopaedia on early Buddhism.²

In Sanskrit, pure or mixed, we have innumerable independent texts or their fragments which are of a varied nature and belong to different schools of Buddhism. The *Mahāvastu* is claimed to be a book on Vinaya belonging to the Lokottaravādins but its subject matter is extremely varied. The *Lalitavistara* is an incomplete biography of the Buddha. Aśvaghosha is known for his *Buddhacharita* and *Saundarānanda* and Āryaśūra for his *Jātakamālā*, a Sanskrit text, corresponding to the Pali *Chariyāpiṭaka*. There is also a vast *Avadāna* literature corresponding to the Pali *Apadānas*.³

Among the Mahāyānist sūtras, nine texts or *nava dharmas* are regarded as the most important. They are: the *Ashṭasāhasrikā-Prajñāpāramitā*, the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka*, the *Lalitavistara*, the *Laṅkāvatāra*, the *Suvarṇa-prabhāsa*, the *Gaṇḍavyūha*, the *Tathāgata-guhyaka*, the *Samādhirāja* and the *Daśabhūmika*. These are called the *Vaipulyasūtras*. Hardly less famous are the *Sukhāvāṭīvyūha*, the

¹*Origins*, p. 16.

²Bapaṭ, *2500 Years of Buddhism*, p. 138.

³*Ibid.*, p. 140.

Amitāyussūtra, and the *Karaṇḍavyūha*. Nāgārjuna, Vasubandhu and Asaṅga were the notable authors of the philosophical works of this school.¹

At one time there was a vast Buddhist literature in Pali, the Prakrits, mixed Sanskrit and pure Sanskrit. But "not a single Buddhist work, with the exception of the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, has been found within the borders of India"², probably because with the passage of time or through desecration of and vandalism in the monasteries, innumerable manuscripts were destroyed. "The Buddhist literature that we study today has come to us from monasteries outside India, in Ceylon, Burma, Siam and Nepal, and in translations from Tibet, China and Mongolia. An idea of the vastness of this literature can be formed from the works mentioned in the Chinese and Tibetan Catalogues. A remarkable addition to our knowledge of Buddhist literature has been made by the discoveries of manuscripts in Central Asia and Gilgit as well as by the manuscripts photographed in Tibet by Rahula Sankrityayan and collected by Prof. G. Tucci."³ In Tibet there is found a large collection of translations of Indian Buddhist texts numbering more than 4,500. These are divided into two groups, namely, Bkaḥḥgyur, popularly called the Kanjur, consisting of 1,108 texts, and Bstanḥgyur, popularly called the Tanjur, consisting of 3,458 texts. Similarly there exists a large number of translations from Indian texts into the Chinese language. In his Catalogue, Bunyiu Nanjio records 1,662 texts while Hobogirin, a still later catalogue, mentions as many as 2,184 texts printed in fifty-five volumes. In another 25 volumes, there are supplementary texts, written in China and Japan. In the Manchurian language also there is a translation of the same, and in Mongolian, a translation of the Tibetan Tanjur.⁴

Causes of the Early Success of Buddhism

It is evident from the early texts that Buddhism gained the support of a large number of people and was securely established in the life-time of the Buddha himself. It also appears fairly certain that there already existed many Buddhist centres in Kosala, Vatsa, Magadha, Aṅga and North Bihar before Gautama entered Pari-

¹*Ibid.*, p. 140 f.

²*Ibid.*, p. 142.

³*Ibid.*

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 141.

nirvāṇa. After him also, Buddhism spread quite rapidly. The rise and success of Buddhism (and also of Jainism) has been explained by some scholars¹ as Kshatriya revolt against the superiority of Brāhmaṇas inherent in the Vedic religion and the caste system. But as pointed out by G. C. Pande the mere fact that the founders of the new religions were Kshatriyas is hardly sufficient to prove the point (*supra*). Actually the causes of the rapid expansion of Buddhism were many and may be divided into two groups : (1) the causes which led to its success in the age of the Buddha himself and shortly after his Nirvāṇa, and (2) the causes which led to spread in India and other countries in the later ages. Among the primary causes of its immediate success the simplicity and moderate nature of the Dhamma may be regarded as the most important. As Rhys Davids puts it, "had the Buddha merely taught philosophy, he might have had as small a following as Comte". As it is, in his teachings he avoided philosophical problems and emphasized the moral aspect of religion. This factor undoubtedly did much to make his teachings popular among the common men who were more confused than enlightened by the philosophical discourses of other contemporary thinkers. His system also avoided extreme type of asceticism and therefore could attract the common man who was wary of the extreme self-mortification. For a lay devotee the practice of his dhamma needed very little extra expenses thus providing a striking contrast to the costliness of the Vedic rituals. His denunciation of slaughter of animals in the name of the religion received wide-spread support and his condemnation of the superiority complex of the Brāhmaṇas appealed to the non-Brāhmaṇa masses. Above all, though original in some respects, at no point his religion involved a violent break from the past. He described his dhamma as the 'ancient wisdom of the land'. According to P. V. Kane and many others he was "born a Hindu, lived a Hindu and died a Hindu".²

Secondly, to a considerable extent the credit for early spread of Buddhism should be given to the zeal of the monks on whom the Buddha enjoined the task of propagating the dhamma. He was himself a great missionary and like Jesus Christ, he made first-rate missionaries out of his disciples—Sāriputta, Moggallana and others. The Buddhist nuns also did commendable propaganda among the

¹Roy, M. N., *From Savagery to Civilization*, p. 9; Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, pp. 1-6.

²Kane, P. V., *History of Dharmasāstra*, p. 1004.

women folk.

Thirdly, the Buddha and his followers preached to the people in the latter's own language, thus securing an advantage over Brāhmaṇism whose medium of religious teaching, Sanskrit, was the language of only the educated few.

Fourthly, the liberal patronage of kings, republican chiefs and wealthy and influential persons were valuable assets to the Buddha. As he was himself born as the son of a republican chief he was intimately connected with the contemporary royal families.

Fifthly, the force of Buddha's own personality also did much to attract attention to his teaching. All accounts are agreed that he was possessed of remarkable personal qualities. He had an attractive personality, was gifted with learning, mild speech, compassionate disposition, widest possible tolerance and other admirable mental and moral virtues. His personal qualities played an important role in attracting and converting a large number of people to his dhamma.

Sixthly, as B. G. Gokhale has opined, it is also likely that the changing economic pattern of the contemporary society also contributed to the early success of Buddhism. The period about the sixth century B.C. was one of great economic expansion and urban revolution. Vedic religion, with its economic setting of rural conditions, was not wholly in tune with it while Buddhism was consonant with the new development. With its agrarian economy and sacrificial rituals, the Vedic religion tended to acquire a local character. It may not be without significance that a large number of the leading setṭhis of the period, who formed the spearhead of economic growth, were among the main supporters of the Buddha.¹

B. G. Gokhale made an interesting study of a group of 332 Buddhist elite found scattered in the *Theragāthā*, the *Therīgāthā* and the *Paramatthadīpanī* commentary of the *Dhammapada* belonging to the period from c. 500 to 250 B.C. and has shown that (a) the composition of the elite group was predominantly urban in character (over 71% of them hailed from the urban areas and about 20% belonged to the rural areas); (b) the Brāhmaṇas formed the largest single group, the Vessas were second, the Khatiyas third and Suddas fourth. There were only 21 Suddas out of 328

¹Cf. also Negi, J. S., *Groundwork of Ancient Indian History*, p. 149 f.

Growth and Development of Buddhism : The First Buddhist Council

As pointed out by N. Dutt¹, after the Buddha, the first four stages in the growth and development of Buddhism were marked by the four General Councils or Saṅgītis (Recital or Saṅgāyanā Councils). According to the Pali tradition the First Council was held after the death of the Buddha under the auspices of Ajātaśatru at Rājagṛha during the ensuing varshāvāsa, that is only three months after the Parinirvāṇa, for the parinirvāṇa took place in Vaiśākha, varshāvāsa began in Ashāḍha and the recitation took place in Śrāvaṇa. The tradition preserved in the 11th Khandhaka of the *Chullavagga* has been accepted as authoritative in the different accounts found in extra-canonical literature, such as the *Dīpavaṁsa*, the *Mahāvāṁsa* and the accounts of the Chinese travellers.² It is recorded that a bhikshu called Subhadda exhorted the lamenting monks to refrain from expressing grief for the death of the Buddha, for they had got rid of a ruthless Master. This irreverent remark filled the Venerable Mahākassapa with alarm for the future of the *Dhamma*. He, therefore, suggested to hold a Council of leading monks in order to make a full collection of the teachings of the Buddha with a view to safeguarding the future safety and purity of the *Dhamma*. There is general agreement that the number of the monks selected was five hundred. Originally Ānanda was not included in them, but he was eventually accepted by Mahākassapa as a result of the motion on the part of the monks who pleaded that though not an Arhat, Ānanda had learnt the *Dhamma* and *Vinaya* from the Buddha himself. Further, it is recorded that he obtained Arhathood before the actual recitation took place. It is also recorded in some texts that Ānanda had to meet certain charges after the recital of the *Dhamma* and the *Vinaya*. But there is no allusion to his failings in the *Dīpavaṁsa*, the *Mahāvāṁsa*, Buddhaghosha's *Samantapāsādikā* and the *Mahāvastu*. As regards the actual proceedings, Mahākassapa presided over the assembly and Upāli and Ānanda took leading part in the recitation. There was hardly any dissension over doctrinal matters. It is generally accepted that the Council settled the *Dhamma* (as recited by Ānanda) and the *Vinaya* (as recited by Upāli). There is no ground for the view that the *Abhidhamma* formed part of the canon adopted at the

¹AIU, p. 377.

²Cf. Upadhyaya, K. N., *Early Buddhism and the Bhagavadgītā*, p. 41.

First Council as the *Sumaṅgalavilāsinī* of Aśvaghoṣa reports and expects us to believe.

An important item of business transacted at the First Council was the passing of the highest penalty (*Brahmacariya*) on Channa, the former charioteer of the Buddha. As a monk he had slighted every member of the saṅgha whether high and low, and was arrogant in the extreme. On him was imposed the penalty of complete social boycott¹. When the punishment was announced to Channa he was seized with profound repentance and in consequence became an Arhat.

The question of the historicity and nature of the First Council has been widely debated by modern scholars. It is *prima facie* impossible to think that two huge parts of the canon, viz. *Sutta* and *Vinaya*, were finally composed and settled within a short period of two or three months² for which the Third Council took (of course along with the *Akkhharāma*) nine months. Oldenberg and Franke regard it as pure fiction³ mainly because it has not been mentioned in the *Mahāparinibbānasutta*. Rhys Davids repeats this argument though not so emphatically.⁴ But as pointed out by Jacobi it was not necessary for the *Mahāparinibbānasutta* to describe the Council. According to some scholars the *Chullavagga*, XI, was originally a part of the *Mahāparinibbānasutta* and was added to the *Chullavagga* in later ages after separating it from the latter. The fact that a work entitled *Samyuktavastu*, contains the account of both Parinirvāṇa and the Councils adds strength to the suggestion.⁵ But the acceptance of the historicity of the Council does not mean the acceptance of its detailed proceedings. Poussin is inclined to think that it was only an enlarged Pātimokkha assembly.⁶ According to Minayeff the account of the Council contains two distinguishable parts of which the one which speaks of the compilation of canon belongs to a period posterior to the rise of sects.⁷ According to Finot and N. Dutt the Council met to determine the less important rules of

¹Itaranda, B., in *2500 Hundred Years of Buddhism*, p. 40.

²The First month of the varshāvāsa was spent in the repair of the dilapidated parts of the dwellings at Rājagṛha.

³Quoted in *Origins*, p. 9.

⁴SEE, XI, p. xiii.

⁵Quoted by Fanda, *Origins*, p. 10; cf. also Upaḍāyaya, *op. cit.*, p. 46 f.

⁶Fanda, *Origins*, p. 9 f.

⁷Quoted by Fanda, p. 10.

Vinaya.¹ We may therefore conclude with Prof. G. C. Pande² that though it is no longer plausible to regard the First Council as pure fiction, yet its nature and work remain uncertain.³

The Second Buddhist Council

The Second Council was held a century or 110 years after the Mahāparinirvāṇa (that is in 383 or 373 B.C.). According to the *Chullavagga*, XII, which provides its most ancient history, it was necessitated by the controversy arising out of the liberty taken by the Vajjin monks of Vaiśālī, called the easterners, who were in the habit of practising Ten Points (*dasā vatthūni*) which were regarded as unorthodoxy by the westerners. The Ten Rules were: (1) carrying salt in a horn for use when needed; (2) taking food after mid-day; (3) over-eating by taking a second meal in a neighbouring village; (4) taking sanction from the saṅgha for an act after it has been done; (5) observation of *uposathā* in different places within the same parish (*sīmā*), (6) using customary practices as authority for an act; (7) drinking of butter-milk after meal; (8) use of rug without a border; (9) drinking of toddy and (10) acceptance of gold and silver. Of these, the last point involving the donation of cash to the saṅgha, was the chief matter of concern according to all versions of the *Vinaya* and also modern scholars such as A. K. Warder.⁴ Thera Yaśa, a western monk who visited Vaiśālī, opposed these ten unvinayic practices and declared them illegal and immoral. Thereupon the Vajjin monks pronounced on him the penalty of *paṭisāraṇīyakamma* and when he defended his position before the laity, punished him with *ukkhepanīyakamma* (which virtually meant his expulsion from the saṅgha). Thereupon Yaśa went to Kauśāmbī, invited all the monks of the western and southern regions to discuss the matter and approached the Venerable Sambhūta Sāṅavāsī of Aghoraghaṇṭa Hill and the Venerable Revata of Soreyya, who were widely and highly respected. They all declared the Ten Points invalid. Now, at the suggestion of Revata, the monks proceeded to Vaiśālī in order to settle the dispute at the place of its origin. There seven hundred monks met in a Council under the presidentship of the Venerable Sabbakāmi.

¹*Ibid.*

²*Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

³Pande, *Origins*, p. 10; cf. also Upadhyaya, *op. cit.*, p. 46 f.

⁴Warder, A. K., *Indian Buddhism*, p. 209.

The unanimous verdict of the assembly declared the conduct of the Vajjin monks to be unlawful.

This is the account of the Second Council as given in the *Chullavagga*, XII. According to the *Dīpavaṃsa* and the *Samantapāsādikā* the Council was held in the reign of King Kālāśoka. The *Dīpavaṃsa* mentions that the bhikshus of Vaiśālī met in another Council. It was called the Great Council (Mahāsaṅgīti). According to the *Mahāvāṃsa*, the Council of seven hundred theras compiled the *Dhamma*. According to the *Samantapāsādikā* of Aśvaghosha, after the final judgment the seven hundred bhikshus recited the *Dhamma* and *Vinaya* to draw up their new edition which was only natural in the circumstances.

There are slight divergences in the Chinese and Tibetan versions of the Council but there is substantial agreement also on its genesis and the matters discussed and decided in it. Oldenberg doubts the genuineness of the Council. His argument against the historicity of the First Council and the answer to it given by Jacobi and others *mutatis mutandis* apply in this case also. According to most of the modern scholars the Second Council has every reason to be accepted as genuine.¹ It resulted in a schism in the Buddhist Church and the secession of the Mahāsaṅghikas which is confirmed by later evidence (*infra*).

The Third Council

The Third Council was held at Pāṭaliputra under the auspices of Aśoka, 236 years after the parinirvāṇa. It is not found mentioned in the Tripiṭaka. Its earliest reference is in the *Dīpavaṃsa*, the *Mahāvāṃsa* and the *Samantapāsādikā*. It was occasioned by the need of establishing the purity of the canon which was endangered by the rise of different sects (*infra*). Further, with the conversion of Aśoka, the material prosperity of the monasteries grew tremendously with the result that a large number of heretics, who had lost their income and honour, entered the saṅgha. They donned yellow robes, but continued to adhere to their old faiths and practices and preached their heretical doctrines as the doctrines of the Buddha. The discipline in the saṅgha so deteriorated that for seven years no Uposathā or Pavāraṇā ceremony was held in any of the monasteries. Aśoka was filled with distress and sent commands for the

¹Winternitz, *HIL*, II, p. 5.

observance of the Uposathā. But the minister, who was entrusted with this task, in his zeal beheaded several monks for their refusal to carry out the order of the Emperor. Aśoka was filled with grief. He requested the Venerable Moggaliputta Tissa whether or not he was guilty of their murder. Tissa answered that there was no guilt without evil intent. The king was satisfied with the answer. Thereafter Tissa taught the Emperor the doctrines of Vibhajjavāda. Monks of other sects, numbering sixty thousand, were expelled from the saṅgha. Finally Tissa elected a thousand bhikkhus as members of a Council (in the seventeenth year of Aśoka, according to the *Mahāvamsa*). For nine months he worked with them and completed the compilation of the true Tripiṭaka. In the midst of the Council Tissa set forth the *Kathāvattthupakaraṇa* wherein the heretical doctrines were examined and refuted.

One of the significant results of this Council was the dispatch of missionary bhikkhus to the different regions of India and the various countries of Asia for the propagation of Buddhism. Mahinda and Saṅghamittā, respectively the son and daughter of Aśoka, were sent to Ceylon for this purpose.

The very fact of the Third Council has been rejected by Keith.¹ The silence of Aśokan edicts, the Tripiṭakas and the Chinese travelers over it is given as the chief argument against its historicity. It is also argued that Aśoka could not have lent his support to a particular sect. According to N. Dutt² and Keith the Council was a sectarian one meant for the Theravādins and Aśoka or his minister had nothing to do with it. However as pointed out by D. R. Bhandarkar³ in his Schism edict Aśoka explicitly says that the heretical monks and nuns shall be ex-communicated and that was, according to tradition, the primary objective of the Council. It may also be pointed out that Aśoka probably did not have any occasion to mention the Council in his edicts. It may be, as G. C. Pande points out, that Aśoka was not as intimately connected with the Council as the Pali tradition would have us believe.⁴ As regards the *Kathāvattthu*, it is now generally agreed that it was not composed *en bloc*. Its compilation began but was not completed by Tissa.⁵

¹*Buddhist Philosophy*, p. 28 f.

²*AIU*, p. 383.

³*Aśoka*, pp. 96-102.

⁴*Origins*, p. 15.

⁵Upadhyaya, *op. cit.*, p. 52; *Origins*, p. 15.

The Fourth Council

The Fourth Council was held in c. 100 A.D. under the auspices of Kanishka I, the great Kushāna emperor, who is generally supposed to have ascended the throne in 78 A.D. The place of the Council, according to one authority, was Jalandhar and, according to another, recorded by Yuan Chwang and Paramārtha, it was Kashmir. The Southern Buddhists do not recognize the Council and it finds no reference in the chronicles of Ceylon. Most likely the Theravādin Buddhists did not take prominent part in it. According to a Tibetan record, one of the results of the Council was the settling of the dissensions in the Buddhist saṅgha. The eighteen sects, discussed by us in a subsequent section of this Chapter, were all acknowledged to be the repositories of the genuine doctrine. According to Yuan Chwang, perplexed by the contradictory teachings of the monks, Kanishka consulted the Venerable Pārśva, convened a Council of 500 monks at his suggestion under the presidentship of Vasumitra and vice-presidentship of Aśvaghosha, built a monastery for their accommodation and called upon them to write commentaries on the Piṭakas (known as Vibhāshāśāstras), commentary on each Piṭaka containing 100,000 ślokas.

The proceedings of the Council were thus confined to the composition of the commentaries. It appears also that the monks of the Sarvāstivāda school predominated at the Council. It is also very much likely that the major subdivisions of the Sthaviravāda schools, including the less orthodox sections, had some representation in it. There is no evidence that Mahāyāna Buddhism was represented in the proceedings.¹

According to Yuan Chwang the newly composed *Vibhāshāśāstra* treatises were inscribed on copper plates, enclosed in stone boxes and deposited in a stūpa constructed for the purpose. Paramārtha gives a slightly different account of the Council. According to him it was convened by Kātyāyanīputra, the author of the *Jānāpuras-thānasūtra*, the principal treatise of the *Abhidharma Piṭaka* of the Sarvāstivādins. Aśvaghosha gave literary form to it. The Council devoted twelve years in the composition of the *Vibhāshāśāstras*.

As regards the historicity of the Council, Poussin doubts it. According to him it was an "apologetic quasi-invention". Accord-

¹Cf. Jinananda, B., in *2500 Years of Buddhism*, p. 48, who places the birth of Nāgārjuna after the Third Council.

ing to N. Dutt it was a sectarian affair of the Sarvāstivādins.¹ But though its details may be exaggerated, it would not be reasonable to disbelieve entirely the tradition which persisted among the northern Buddhists for centuries. In fact the *Abhidharmakośa* of Vasubandhu is based upon these Vibhāshās and the commentary of Yaśomitra quotes the old Vibhāshā literature. From this it appears that the language used for writing the commentaries was Sanskrit.

Early Buddhist Sects

During the lifetime of Gautama Buddha himself certain monks did not accept his leadership or obey his instructions fully. Devadatta, his cousin, who was jealous of him, tried to discredit him and became his personal enemy. The frivolous utterances of Subhadda at the news of the demise of the Buddha have been noted above. Then there were always a few persons who tried to circumvent the Vinayic rules framed by the Master. When in the First Council the *saṅgāyanā* of his teachings was held under the presidentship of Mahākassapa, there were some dissident aged monks like Pūraṇa and Gavāmpati, who chose to remain aloof from the Rehearsal declaring that it did not fully accord with what they had heard from the Buddha. Thus it is evident that there were monks who did not fully co-operate with the Buddha during his life time, and with his chief disciples like Mahākassapa, Upāli and Ānanda, after his death. The refusal of the Buddha to appoint any person as his successor and his declaration that after him his *Dhamma* itself would be the Instructor of the Order, helped centrifugal tendencies, for different consideration led people to form different groups. Further, "The years following the Parinirvāṇa appear to have been marked by a process of growth both with respect to the rules of discipline as well as with respect to doctrine. The Saṅgha grew in wealth, membership and complexity of organisation."² The increase in wealth actually appears to have been the main cause of the dispute which led to the convening of the Second Council and the first schism which took place, as we have seen, a hundred years (according to a Tibetan source, a hundred and ten years) after the parinirvāṇa when a large number of Vajjin monks from the eastern regions like Vaiśālī

¹*AIU*, p. 385.

²*Origins*, p. 11.

advocated Ten Points, which were, according to the orthodox monks, opposed to the rules of Vinaya. The advocates of the Ten Points seceded from the original group called Sthaviravādins or Theravādins and styled themselves as the Mahāsaṅghikas.

In the Chinese or Tibetan translations of Vasumitra, Bhavya, and Vinītadeva quite a different account of the split is given. According to these sources the split arose on account of five propositions advocated by a Brāhmaṇa monk named Mahādeva of Pāṭaliputra. These were : the arhats are subject to (1) temptation, (2) ignorance, and (3) doubt; (4) the arhathood may be attained only through the help of a teacher, and (5) that the arhats attain the 'Path' with an exclamation of astonishment like 'aho'.¹ It may be noted that the western monks regarded the arhats as 'perfect' and fully emancipated. It is therefore possible that the easterners differed from the westerners with regard to doctrines also.²

Be that as it may, the Mahāsaṅghikas held their own Council separately in which they made their own recension of the sacred literature. Thus a split in the saṅgha became an accomplished fact. With the passage of time the division between the two groups grew wider, ultimately one paving the way for Hīnayāna and the other for Mahāyāna. The Theravādins were split up into eleven sub-sects known as Theravāda (or Ārya Sthaviranikāya), Mahīśāsaka, Dharmagupta, Sarvāstivāda, Sam, Kāśyapīya, Saṅkantika (Sautrāntika or Saṅkrāntika), Vātsīputrīya (or Sammitīya), Dharmottarīya, Bhadrāyānīya, and Shaṇ-ṇāgarika.³ The Mahāsaṅghikas were split into seven sub-sects known as the Mahāsaṅghika, Gokulika (Kukkulika), Paññattivāda (Prajñaptivāda), Bahuśrutīya, Chetiya-vāda, Ekvyavahārika and Lokottaravāda.

Besides these eighteen, we are told, there occurred a few more sub-divisions known as the Siddhatthika or Siddhārthika, Rājagirika, Aparasāila, Pūrvasāila (collectively called the Andhakas), Uttarāpathaka, Vetulyaka, Hemavatika (Haimavata), Vajirīya, Hetuvāda, Vibhajyavāda, Abhayagirivāsin, Mahāvihāravāsin, Dhammaruchika and Sāgalīya.⁴ The traditions slightly differ in

¹Bapat, in *2500 Years of Buddhism*, p. 98.

²Dutt, *AIU*, p. 379.

³Dutt, N., 'The Buddhist Sects: A Survey', *B. C. Law Volume*, I, p. 283; also see Warder, A. K., *Indian Buddhism*, Ch. 9; Chakraborty, *Asceticism in Ancient India*, Ch. 12; Bapat and Banerjee, in *2500 Years of Buddhism*, Ch. VI A.

⁴Dutt, *B.C. Law Volume*, I, p. 283.

naming the sects but according to N. Dutt on the whole there is a fair agreement, and the differences may conveniently be overlooked.¹

The oldest and the most orthodox sect was the *Theravāda* (Sans. *Sthaviravāda*) also known as *Achāriyavāda*. According to the Tibetan tradition it claimed *Mahākachchāyana*, a native of *Ujjayinī*, as its founder. It had its centre at *Kausāmbī* and *Ujjayinī* and adopted *Pali* as the sacred language. The doctrines found in the *Pali Tipiṭaka*, discussed above as 'early Buddhism', were really those of the *Theravādins*.² Its most important branch was *Sarvāstivāda*³ which claimed *Rāhulabhadra* as its founder, adopted *Sanskrit* as the sacred language, became popular in *Mathurā*, *Gandhāra* and *Kashmir*, was patronised by *Kanishka I*, and afterwards spread in *Central Asia* and *China*. It held that a being is composed of five *dharma*s, sub-divided into seventy-five elements, which are permanent in nature. When the Buddha spoke of impermanence, he meant the composite of elements and not the elements themselves. This sect later on became known as the *Vaibhāshika* because it attached more importance to the *Vibhāshās* than to the *sūtras*. Several other sects including the *Mahīśāsaka*, *Sammitīya* (or *Vātsīputrīya*) and the *Sautrāntika* had only minor differences with the *Theravāda*.

The *Mahāsaṅghika* sect, which originated during the Second Council, claimed *Mahākassapa* as its founder, had its early centre at *Vaiśālī*, later became more popular in *Āndhra* (which fact gave it the name *Andhaka* also) and adopted *Prakrit* as its sacred language. It differed from the *Theravāda* not only on some *Vinayic* rules but also on the nature of the Buddha. It deified the Buddha, asserted that he was supra-mundane (*lokottara*) so that *Gautama Siddhārtha* was only an apparition of the *lokottara* Buddha, and that *Arhathood* was not the fully emancipated state and therefore one should aspire for *Buddhahood* and not *Arhathood*. Among the main sects which branched off from it were the *Śailas* and their sub-sects, the *Chaityakas* and *Vaitulyakas*. They even maintained

¹*Ibid.*

²*Vidé Banerjee, A. C., 'The Theravāda school of Buddhism', Journal of Ganga Natha Jha Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha, 1976, pp. 185-93, for a detailed study of this sect.*

³*Cf. Banerjee, A. C., 'The Sarvāstivāda Sect', Calcutta Review, Vol. 175, No. I, pp. 1-4.*

had previously ousted the Theravādins.¹

Points on which the Various Sects Differed

As it is not possible to discuss the tenets of all the sects separately, we propose to discuss below the points on which they differed from each other. First *with regard to language*. As the Buddha had permitted his followers to use their own speech for the purpose of preaching, the various sects adopted different languages for their canon. The Sarvāstivādins, with some of their sub-groups, adopted Sanskrit. The Mahāsaṅghikas adopted Prakrit as their language. The Sammitīyas, who are often associated with Vātsīputriyas, used Apabhraṁśa which was understood in the Vatsa country. The Sthaviravādins used an 'intermediate' dialect.

That there was a certain amount of differences among the sects *with regard to disciplinary matters* also, is quite evident. In the account of the First Council, we read of the differences of opinion between Mahākassapa and Pūraṇa of Dakkhinagiri, relating to seven rules, and these seven rules were actually incorporated in the Vinayas of the Mahīśāsakas and Dharmagupta. The differences between the Theravādins and the Mahāsaṅghikas regarding the Ten Points have already been discussed. A remote cause of the Third Council was also that the monks of different sects refused to hold the Pātimokkha assembly together, as one group of monks was regarded as *apariśuddha* (unclean) according to the disciplinary code of another. I-tsing remarks that the Vinaya of the Sammitīyas had special rules regulating the use of undergarment, girdles, medicines, and beds. Thus the differences in the Vinaya rules were quite keen.

As regards the *doctrinal differences* according to Prof. G. C. Pande,² the various Buddhist sects appear to have differed from each other mainly on the following questions:

(i) The transcendentality (*lokottaratā*) of the Buddha together with the question whether every word of the Buddha could free the hearer from *samsāra*.

(ii) How to resolve the contradictions in the canon? Later on it led to the development of the theory of Two Truths in the Satya-siddhi school which was transitional between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna.

(iii) The manner of Buddha's birth. His relations with the saṅgha.

¹ EI, IX, p. 135, quoted by N. Dutt, p. 284.

² *Origins*, p. 563 f.

(iv) The status of the arhats. While the conception of Buddha was becoming more sublime, that of the arhat was declining. This became the most hotly disputed point in the whole range of early sectarian controversy.

(v) The problem of the existence of the *pudgala*.

(vi) The problem of *antarabhāva*, that is the existence after death and before rebirth.

(vii) The existence of past and future objects.

(viii) The functioning of *vijñāna*.

(ix) The number of *asaṃskṛtas*.

N. Dutt has explained some of these points as follows: The Theravādins and their offshoots usually conceived the Buddha as a human being who, after strenuous exertion, attained the *sambodhi*. He was subject to human frailties though by his yogic powers he could control the everyday events of human life. Those who subscribed to this view could not attribute to a Bodhisattva any superior qualities. According to them, Bodhisattvahood indicated only the previous lives of Gautama Buddha. Against this the Mahāsaṅghikas and their offshoots held that the Buddha is supramundane (*loko-ttara*) and is made of pure (*anāsrava*) *dharma*s. His body, length of life, powers, etc. are all unlimited. It is his created body that appears in the world. As a corollary, these schools conceived the Bodhisattvas also in semi-transcendental form. According to them Bodhisattvas are self-born, and not born of parents.

In the eyes of the Theravādins and their offshoots, arhathood marks the final stage of Śrāvakayāna, i.e. an arhat is a fully emancipated person, for he has attained *nirvāṇa*, the *summum bonum*. He is not subject to temptation and is above good and bad deeds. He cannot be said to acquire merits and can have no retrogression from arhathood. The Sarvāstivādins state that arhats are of two types, viz., *sa(sva)-dharmakuśala* (aware of one's own dharmas) or *paññāvimutta* and *paradharmakuśala* (aware of one's own as well as others' dharmas) or *ubhatobhāgavimutta*. The arhats of the former type acquire only *kshaya* and not *anutpāda jñāna* and they are subject to retrogression. Such arhats do acquire merits. Of the 12 links of the casual chain, only four, viz. *nāmarūpa*, *śaḍāyatana*, *sparśa* and *vedanā* remain active in the case of arhats. They are also subject to the effects of past karmans.¹

¹*Op. cit.*, p. 289 f.

On the other hand, the Mahāsaṅghikas and their offshoots generally hold that arhats can have no retrogression from arhathood. However there was a section of the Mahāsaṅghikas, who were probably followers of Mahādeva who attributed to the arhats the following frailties: that (1) they can be tempted by others; (2) they may have ignorance on certain matters; (3) they may have doubt; and (4) that they gain knowledge with others' help. The Śailaschools, however held, in agreement with the Sarvāstivādins, that an arhat is subject to the deeds of his former lives.

According to the Sarvāstivādins and Sammitīyas, the attainment of the four stages of sanctification takes place gradually but there is no bar to the realisation of the second and the third stages at one and the same time, while the Theravādins and the Mahīśāsakas agree with the Mahāsaṅghikas in holding that the realization of the four stages may take place all at once.

The Sarvāstivādins and the Śailas believe that the organs of sense by themselves perceive while the Theravādins and a section of the Mahāsaṅghikas hold that it is done by the *viññāna* of the organs of senses.

The Theravādins hold that there are only three *asaṃskṛtas*, viz. *pratisaṃkhyānirodha*, *aprasaṃkhyānirodha* and *ākāśa*. The Śaila schools increase them to nine by adding the four higher *samāpattis* (trances), *pratīyasamutpādaṅgikatva* (or the unchangeable law of causation), and the *āryamārgaṅgikatva* (or the fact of attainment of a *mūrga* or *phala*). The Mahīśāsakas also count the number of *asaṃskṛtas* as nine, and their list of the additional six is as follows: (i) *achala* (or immovability), (ii) *kuśaladharmatathatā* (or the eternal law of good dharma); (iii) *akuśaladharmatathatā* (or the eternal law of bad dharma); (iv) *avyākṛtadharmatathatā* (or the eternal law of indeterminate dharma), (v) *mārgāṅgatathatā* (or the eternal law of the path) and (vi) *pratīyasamutpādatathatā* (or the eternal law of causation.)¹

According to the Sarvāstivādins and others, this *antarabhāva* (temporary existences of being after death and before rebirth) serves as a link between one existence and another. The Theravādins and Mahīśāsakas, and the Śaila schools deny the existence of *antarabhāva*.

The Sammitīyas or the Vātsīputrīyas held the doctrine that "there is a *pudgala* (a self, a personality) besides the five elements

¹*Ibid.*, pp. 290-91.

(*skandhas*) composing a being. The *puḍgala* is indefinable and persists through the several existences of a being till it reaches *nirvāṇa*. It is, however, neither identical nor different from *skandhas*. It changes along with the *skandhas*, and disappears when the *skandhas* disappear in *nirvāṇa*. It is not *kṣaṇika* (momentary) like the *skandhas*, and it has not all the properties of a constituted object; again it is also not unchanging and ever-existing like *nirvāṇa*." The *Sautrāntikas* "hold a doctrine similar to that of the *Sammitīyas*. They assert the continued existence of the very subtle *citta* (or *bīja* or *vāsanā*). *Vasumitra* attributes to them the doctrine of the transference of *skandhamātra* from one existence to another, for which they may be identified with the *Samkantika* or the *Samkrāntivādins*."¹

All the sects and sub-sects mentioned above belong to the *Hīnayāna* Buddhism. Some of the sects, however, apparently held views which were partially *Mahāyānic* and may be regarded as the forerunners of *Mahāyāna*. For instance, the *Mahāsaṅghikas* and the *Lokottaravādins* deified the Buddha, introduced the *bodhisattva* concept, changed the ideal from arhathood to Buddhahood, and so forth. The *Sautrāntika* doctrine of the non-existence (*abhāva*) of the gross phenomenal objects of the world also brings to our mind the *Mahāyānic* doctrine of *dharma-sūnyatā*.²

The Hīnayānist Philosophical Schools

The principal *Abhidharma* text of the *Sarvāstivādins* was the *Jñānaprasthānasūtra* of *Kātyāyanīputra*. Later on the *Sarvāstivādins* of *Kashmir* and *Gandhāra* came to be designated as the *Vaibhāshikas* because they accepted the *Vibhāshās* or commentaries written on the above mentioned text as more authoritative than the original *sūtras*. They accepted the existence of phenomenal objects on direct perception (*pratyaksha*) and admitted examples as proofs of a hypothesis. The *vibhāshās* were put in literary form by *Aśvaghosha* and were translated into Chinese in 383-434 A.D. There were many distinguished teachers of the *Vaibhāshika* school, namely *Dharmottara*, *Dharmatrāta*, *Vasumitra* and *Buddhadeva*. The greatest of the *Vaibhāshika* teacher was, however, *Vasubandhu* who composed the *Abhidharmakośa* and its *Bhāshya*, first translated into Chinese by *Paramārtha* in the sixth century. The date of *Vasubandhu* is however controversial, the weight of modern scholarship

¹*Ibid.*, p. 292.

²*CHI*, I, p. 478.

presently being in favour of accepting the existence of two Vasubandhus, the elder of whom is assigned to the fourth century and the younger to the fifth century.¹ Another important Vaibhāshika āchārya was Guṇaprabha who belonged to Matipura. He gave up his Mahāyāna leanings and became a staunch Vaibhāshika.

The Sautrāntika school of the Hīnayāna Buddhism came into existence in Kashmir and Gandhāra. It opposed the realism of Vaibhāshikas and gave emphasis on the *Sūtras* rather than on their commentaries—the *Vibhāshās*. It regarded the phenomenal objects as only appearances (*prajñāpti*) the existence of which could be known only by inference (*bāhyārthānumeya*). It admitted the transference of the *skandhamātras* from one existence to another, but asserted that they cease to exist in *nirvāṇa*.

The founder of the Sautrāntika school was Kumāralabdha, a native of Takshaṣilā. He flourished between Āryadeva and Vasubandhu. Another important teacher of the school was Śrīlābha who was an elder contemporary of Vasubandhu.

Expansion of Buddhism : pre-Aśokan Period

During the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. Buddhism could hardly be distinguished from other ascetic religions. It was evidently in the Maurya period that it emerged as a distinct current though even at the beginning of this period, its activities were mainly confined to Magadha and Kosala. Small communities of monks had come into existence in the West also, as in the Second Council held at Vaiśālī about a hundred years after the Buddha monks from distant places like Pāṭṭheya, Avanti, Kauśāmbī, Saṅkāśya and Kanauj participated. Mathura had also become an important centre of Buddhism in the early years of the Maurya supremacy.

In these two hundred years, owing to the gradual expansion of Buddhism and for want of regular communication between the distant communities, the saṅgha lost its inherent unity. Local influences slowly affected the conduct of the various communities and shaped them in different ways. This gave rise to various schools (*supra*). During the reign of Aśoka, the saṅgha showed symptoms of serious decline and his edicts tell us that he had to adopt

¹Cf. Frauwallner, E., *On the Date of the Buddhist Master of Law Vasubandhu*, Rome, 1951; Goyal, S.R., *HIG*, p. 214 ff.

special measures to maintain its unity.

Asoka and Buddhism

Asoka is rightly looked upon as the greatest royal patron of Buddhism. We have already discussed the Third Buddhist Council held in his reign and noted its missionary activities. Indeed, it was through his efforts that Buddhism came to occupy some prominence in India and spread abroad. He was not a born Buddhist; in his Thirteenth rock-Edict he says that at the end of eighth year of his reign, he invaded Kalinga (modern Orissa). In that invasion, many thousand of men were killed, several thousand were taken captive and thousands died from the effects of the war. It filled his heart with remorse and, probably due to the teachings of some able Buddhist monk at the right psychological moment, he became a Buddhist.¹

Some early modern historians doubted the conversion of Asoka to Buddhism. But now it is regarded as a certainty because in his Bhadrā Edict he specifically states his faith in the Tri-ratna—the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. In the same edict he suggests that all should study the *dharmma-piṭṭakā*, identifiable with certain Buddhist texts.² In the Minor-Kees Edicts he refers to his visit to the sangha³ and in the Maraura Minor-Kees Edict claims to have enshrined the relics of the Buddha.⁴ In the Nigahisagar Minor Pillar-Edict he refers to the repairment of the stupa of Kanakamuni Buddha and his own pilgrimage to it.⁵ In the eighth Kees Edict he mentions his pilgrimage to the *Sambodhi*⁶ and in the Maski Edict describes himself as a *Buddha-Sakya*.⁷ Further in the Kammuker Minor Pillar-Edict he describes his pilgrimage to the birthplace of the Buddha.⁸

But all this does not mean that Asoka preached sectarian Buddhism itself in his edicts. For nowhere does he refer to the Four Noble Truths, Eightfold Path, Dattiyasamutpada or any other special Buddhist doctrine. It is therefore generally believed that we

¹ See Dasgupta, *Remains of Asoka and the History of the Monks*, p. 137 ff.

² *Asoka*, S. K., *Chandragupta Maurya*, *Asoka*, p. 277-278.

³ *Id.*, p. 27.

⁴ *Id.*, p. 28; Narain, A. K., *Asoka*, 1924-25, p. 102.

⁵ *Id.*, p. 122.

⁶ *Id.*, p. 24.

⁷ *Id.*, K. M., *Asoka*, p. 202; *Asoka*, II, p. 202.

⁸ *Id.*, p. 118.

must distinguish between his public and personal religion and that the *dhamma* of his edicts consisted of points common to all religions. But now more and more scholars are becoming inclined to adopt the view that the *dhamma* of the edicts was also an aspect of Buddhism. According to D. R. Bhandarkar his *dhamma* may be traced back to Buddhism for the laity.¹ According to J. S. Negi the non-allusion to the distinctive teachings of Buddhism in his edicts is easily explained if we remember that it was not the purpose of Aśoka to expound the philosophical fundamentals of the creed but to inculcate its practical morality (*śīla*). The *dhamma* of Aśoka therefore was Buddhism of the householders.² According to G. C. Pandē³ also Aśoka's *dhamma* represents the quintessence of Śramaṇism for the laity. It rejects animal sacrifice, the theory of the Brāhmaṇical privileges (as is clear from the principle of *daṇḍasamatā* and *nyāya-samatā*), emphasizes *dhammamanga* and inculcation of 'freedom from depravity' (*apāsina*), 'much good' (*bahukayāne*), mercy (*dayā*), liberality (*dāna*), truthfulness (*sacche*), purity (*sochaye*), and moderation (*mādave*) and also avoidance of violence (*chaṇḍiye*), cruelty (*niṭhuliye*), anger (*kodhe*), conceit (*māne*) and envy (*isyā*). He also emphasizes self-restraint (*samavāya*) and purification of heart (*bhāvasuddhi*). All these were the essential features of the Buddhism for the laity.

Aśoka also took upon himself the task of making known to the people the teachings of the Buddha. He appointed religious officers (*dhammamahāmāttas*) of various grades and types to different regions to help the people to lead a pious life. He also tried to put an end to schism and corruption in the saṅgha, erected stūpas on the relics of the Buddha, provided immense stimulation to Buddhist art, gave huge donations to the saṅgha and helped Thera Tissa, either directly or indirectly, in convening the Third Buddhist Council. The Third Council sent missionaries to the land of the Yavanas (Ionian Greeks), Gandhāra, Kashmir and the Himalayan regions in the North; to the western part of India such as Aparāntaka; the southern parts such as Vanavāsī and Mysore, and further south to countries as far as Ceylon and Suvarṇabhūmi (Malay and Sumatrā). To Ceylon Aśoka sent his son Mahendra and daughter Saṅghamitrā. This literary tradition is confirmed by Aśoka's RE XIII which states

¹Bhandarkar, D. R., *Aśoka*, p. 107-16.

²Negi, J. S., *Groundwork of Ancient Indian History*, p. 237.

³Śramaṇa Tradition, p. 50 f.

that he tried to spread the dhamma not only in his territory (*vijitas*) or among the peoples of the border lands (*anitas*) but also in far off kingdoms such as those of Antiochus (Antiyoko) II, King of Syria and the kingdoms of four other kings, still farther off, i.e. Ptolemy (Turamaya) of Egypt. Antigonos (Antakini) of Macedonia, Alexander (Alikasudara) of Epirus (in northern Greece) and Magas of Cyrene (in North Africa). He also mentions the names of Yavana, Kambojas, Pāṇḍyas, Cholas, Āndhras, Pulindas, Ceylon, etc. in this context. In the RE II he informs that practically in all these countries he opened hospitals, both for men and beasts, dug wells and tanks and planted trees and medicinal plants for the welfare and happiness of all beings.

It is believed by some scholars that the Aśokan propaganda of Buddhism in Western Asia had some, though not much, influence also over Judaism. The pre-Christian monastic sects of the Essenes and the Theraputae (often identified with the Theras or elders of Judaism) probably bore some amount of Buddhist influence. However, it is also quite possible that in Western Asia Buddhism was looked upon with suspicion because it was sought to be propagated by a powerful monarch of a big neighbouring country.

The success of the Aśokan missionary activity might not have been very great so far as foreign countries were concerned, but within the Maurya empire these activities must have had great success. His propaganda signified the fulfilment of the prophecy of Brahmā Sahapati as given in the *Mahāvagga*.

T. W. Rhys Davids holds that Aśoka's conversion to Buddhism and his large-hearted benefactions and donations to the saṅgha were the first step on the downward path of Buddhism, the first step to its expulsion from India. At least partial secularization of the Buddhist saṅgha due to its having accepted the superiority of Aśoka became a source of weakness and might have led to the loss of some amount of popular sympathy.

Expansion of Buddhism in the post-Aśokan Period

The spread of Buddhism during Aśoka's time in the various regions of India resulted in the rise of Buddhist sects whose number is usually given as eighteen. We have discussed them in a separate section of this chapter. Since its inception in Vaiśālī, the Mahā-

¹Davids, *Buddhism*, p. 222.

saṅghika sect was mostly confined to the East from where it spread, especially to the South. The followers of this school probably did not constitute a strong community in the North as they are mentioned only in two inscriptions.¹ However, the existence of practically all the branches of the Mahāsaṅghikas mentioned literature in the region of Dhānyakaṭaka (Andhra Pradesh) shows that it became the most important stronghold of the Mahāsaṅghikas under the patronage of the Sātavāhanas and their successors. These schools continued to prosper till the 3rd or 4th century A.D.² In the North with the advent of the Śūngas, for some time royal patronage for Buddhism declined. The Buddhist accounts are unanimous in representing Pushyamitra Śūnga as a persecutor of Buddhists, though several modern scholars doubt this tradition³. Be that as it may, it cannot be denied that great progress was made by Buddhism during the Śūnga-Kaṇva period also. The large number of private donations recorded on the Buddhist monuments of the period and the Buddhist establishments of Bharhut, Karle and Sāñchī testify to the great prosperity which Buddhism enjoyed at that time. By now Buddhism had developed into a popular and theistic religion with symbols and the Buddha relics as cult objects.

At this time Buddhism was also adopted by the Greeks of the North-West. King Menander was a great champion of Buddhism. His Sinkot inscription testifies to his Buddhist leanings while the *Milindapañho* gives a vivid and detailed account of it in the form of the questions he put before Nāgasena. It is also recorded that he attained *arhathood*. The Pali texts represent the Greeks as taking part even in missionary activities. The Greeks in India were also responsible for evolving the Indo-Greek style of Buddhist art which flourished mostly in the Punjab and other parts of North-Western India.

After the Greeks, the Śakas and the Kushāṇas became great champions of Buddhism. The Śaka-Kushāṇa inscriptions testify to its popularity during their supremacy. Kanishka I's reign was a landmark in the history of Buddhism. Tradition not only represents him as a great patron of the religion but also associates him with the Fourth Buddhist Council and a galaxy of Buddhist masters who

¹Bagchi, in *2500 Years of Buddhism*, p. 63.

²*Ibid.*

³Vide Ghosh, N. N., 'Did Puṣyamitra Śūnga Persecute the Buddhists?' *B. C. Law Volume*, I, pp. 210-17.

shaped Buddhism in later times (*supra*). It was in this period that Mahāyāna was evolved, the Indo-Greek school of Buddhist art touched its greatest height and Buddhist monks from India carried their religion to Central Asia and China.

With the advent of the Gupta dynasty, Paurāṇika Hinduism acquired unprecedented popularity. The Gupta emperors were themselves Bhāgavatas, the adherents of Brāhmanical faith. But they were sympathetic towards Buddhism also. We have a number of important inscriptions of the Gupta period recording gifts of private donors in the regions of Kauśāmbī, Śāñchī, Bodh Gayā and Mathurā. Many seals, images, inscriptions and manuscripts found in archaeological excavations testify to the continued vigour of the Hīnayāna sects also—particularly the Sarvāstivādins, the Sammitīyas and the Theravādins.¹ The Chinese pilgrims Fa-hsien, Sung-Yun, Yuan Chwang, etc. who came to India in this age also throw light on the condition of the various sects of Buddhism. Moreover, Buddhist art relics from Mathurā, Sarnath, Nālandā, Ajanta, Bagh and Dhānyakaṭaka prove the prosperity of Buddhism in the Gupta age.

From the middle of the 7th century A.D. or even earlier Buddhism shows symptoms of decay also (see, section on the decline of Buddhism). Nevertheless, some of the great centres of Buddhist studies like Nālandā and Valabhī kept the light burning vigorously. King Harshavardhana is supposed to have become a follower of Mahāyāna.² In the West the rulers of the Maitraka dynasty at Valabhī patronised Buddhism from the middle of the 6th century A.D. Numerous Buddhist relics discovered at Valabhī prove the existence of Buddhism in that area up to the 10th century A.D.

The century that followed Harsha's rule saw a state of anarchy unfavourable to the growth of Buddhism, for it depended too much on the patronage of kings who were now themselves in trouble. However, it still lingered in Kashmir, Swat Valley, Valabhī and some other places in the North though its condition was far from prosperous. It experienced another great revival in eastern India under the patronage of the Pāla dynasty, the rulers of which were usually devout Buddhists.

¹CA, p. 373 f.

²Contra, Goyal, S. R., 'Did Harsha Ever Embrace Buddhism as His Personal Religion?', *K. P. Jayaswal Commemoration Volume*, 1981, pp. 373-93.

Mahāyāna and the Tāntrika Phase of Buddhism

Meaning of the Terms Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna

Buddhism may broadly be divided into three Yānas—Hīnayāna, Mahāyāna and Tantrayāna. The term Hīnayāna is usually adopted for early Buddhism which commenced with the parinirvāṇa of the Buddha. All the sects of Buddhism discussed in the preceding pages belonged to the Hīnayāna. The Mahāyāna grew out of the Hīnayāna though it traces its final authority to the Buddha himself. Other terms used respectively for these two branches of Buddhism are (i) Buddhayāna or Tathāgatayāna or Bodhisattvayāna and (ii) Śrāvakayāna or Pratyeka-buddhayāna. However the terms Mahāyāna and Hīnayāna are the most popular ones. The reason usually given for prefixing *mahā* (superior) and *hīna* (inferior) to *yāna* (vehicle) is that the former carries an adept to the highest goal of Buddhahood as was attained by Siddhārtha Gautama, while the latter carries a person only to the stage of an arhat, which is, in many respects, inferior to that of the Buddha. Further, as argued by Aśaṅga in his *Sūtrālaṅkāra*, the Mahāyānist never seek their own salvation before others have attained it.¹ They take the vow that they will attain *bodhi* only after they have done all that is necessary for making all other beings attain the goal. On the other hand, the Śrāvakayānist or Pratyeka-buddhayānist seek their own salvation first which Aśaṅga calls selfish and justifies thereby the use of the prefix *hīna* for their path, and *mahā* for his own creed.²

The Mahāyāna works also give a philosophical explanation of the two yānas. There are, they argue, two *āvāraṇas* (covers) that shield the Truth: the cover of impurities (*kleśāvaraṇa*) and the cover

¹*CHI*, I, p. 503.

²According to A. A. G. Bennett originally the term 'Mahāyāna' was used for the First Principle, *bhūta-tathatā* or *tathatā* by Aśvaghosha. Bennett, 'The Rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism', *Mahābodhi*, Vol. 71, No. 6, pp. 123-32.

of ignorance (*jñeyāvaraṇa*). The *klesāvaraṇa* is removable by the observance of the ethical laws and the practice of the various forms of meditation. The Mahāyānist believe that the Hīnayānist are taught only the means of the removal of *klesāvaraṇa* and, as such, they get free only from impurities, realize *puḍgala-sūnyatā* and become arhats. But the Mahāyānist are taught the means of the removal of *klesāvaraṇa* and *jñeyāvaraṇa* both. Therefore they become free from ignorance as well, realize both *puḍgala-sūnyatā* and *dharma-sūnyatā* and become buddhas. It is for this superior attainment that they deserve the distinctive appellation of 'Mahāyānist'.¹

Main Differences between Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna : the Doctrine of Sūnyatā or Tathatā

Briefly the Mahāyāna is characterised by the doctrine of universal emptiness (*sūnyatā*), the plurality of the buddhas and of their divinity, the ideals of bodhisattva and perfect virtues (*pāramitās*), the worship of the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and other gods and goddesses, the doctrine of salvation by faith, use of spells (*dhāraṇīs*) and mantras for attaining emancipation and the adoption of Sanskrit and mixed-Sanskrit for literary purposes. Further, the Mahāyāna makes little difference between an upāsaka and a bhikshu (for, both could develop bodhichitta and aspire for the highest goal). The laity, therefore, came to play an important part in it.²

It should, however, be remembered that Mahāyānism is not antagonistic to Hīnayānism, rather it accepts the teachings of the Hīnayāna in full and adds to them its new ideas and principles. It utilizes the same Buddha *vachana*, which are regarded by the Hīnayānist as authentic, for establishing its own point of view. With the Hīnayāna it accepts the Four Noble Truths, the theory that the worldly objects are transient (*anitya*), momentary (*kṣaṇika*), anātmaka and in perpetual flux (*santāna*), necessity of getting rid of *rāga*, *dvesha* and *moha*, the doctrine of the beginninglessness and endlessness of the world and the supremacy of the law of causation (*Pratītyasamutpāda*). In his *Mādhyamikakārikā* Nāgārjuna, the first great exponent of the Mahāyāna, has identified the law of causation with Dharma or the Highest Truth and Buddha (*yaḥ pratītyasamutpādaṁ paśyati, so dharmaṁ paśyati, yo dharmaṁ*

¹CHI, I, p. 504.

²Joshi, L. M., *Studies*, p. 4 f.

text to be called Mahāyānic is to ascertain whether or not it teaches *dharmasūnyatā* along with *pudgalaśūnyatā*, incorporates worship of countless Buddhas and bodhisattvas, advocates worship of gods and goddesses and recommends the use of mantras for attaining emancipation. "The earliest text to contain the above mentioned doctrines is the *Prajñāpāramitā*. The first Chinese translation of the text was made in 148 A.D. by Lokarakshā and so we can assume that the original was in existence in the first century A.D."¹, though according to a tradition preserved by Tārānātha, the *Ashtasahasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* was composed after the time of Mahāpadma Nanda (4th cent. B.C.).² In any case this text, the *Sukhāvātīvyūha* and the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* are generally placed in the first century B.C. or shortly after it. From the account of the Fourth Council held in the reign of Kanishka I towards the close of first century A.D. as given by Tārānātha and Paramārtha it appears that the Mahāyāna was then already a living force. Nāgārjuna, the earliest exponent of Mahāyāna, is also generally assigned to the first-second century A.D. Therefore it may be assumed that the Mahāyāna came into existence in the first century B.C. or the first century A.D.

However, on the basis of the statement made by the Buddha, immediately after the attainment of *sambodhi* that he was disinclined to impart his subtle teachings to the people at large, the Mahāyānists claim that the Buddha had set in motion the Wheel of Law a second time at Gṛdhra-kūṭa to communicate his deeper teachings of *Prajñāpāramitānaya* to a select few, the bodhisattvas, after he had imparted his less subtle popular ethical teachings to those who were spiritually less advanced, that is, the śrāvakas. In the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* the words of the Buddha have been slightly modified thus : The Buddha knowledge is too deep and difficult to be realized and comprehended by the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas.³ That is why according to Nāgārjuna the Hīnayāna represents the manifest (*vyakta*) teaching while the Mahāyāna represents the esoteric (*guhya*) doctrines of the Buddha.

The fact seems to be that both the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna derived their views from the same teachings of the Master, and it was their interpretation that made their religion different. As shown

¹*Ibid.*

²*Ibid.*, n. 1.

³Quoted in *CHI*, I, p. 506.

by N. Dutt,¹ there are in the Pali Nikāyas a few passages which may well be interpreted in the Mahāyānic sense of *dharmasūnyatā* (non-existence of objects) or *tathatā* (sameness or thatness of worldly objects). In one passage the Truth is said to be beyond fourfold proposition viz. 'after death Tathāgata exists', 'he does not exist', 'he both exists and does not exist', 'he neither exists nor does not exist'. The Mahāyānists argue that the only conceivable truth beyond this fourfold proposition is the inconceivable, inexpressible unity relating to which none of the four affirmations and negations is applicable.² Further, there are also positive assertions of this nature about the Truth in the Pali texts, e.g. "There is the unborn, unoriginating, uncreated, and unconstituted". In another passage, it has been stated that the consciousness (*viññāna*) of an arhat after death is locationless or supportless. The Mahāyānists assert that such passages support their interpretation that the Truth or Reality or nirvāṇa is the indeterminable, unique, non-dual totality or substratum of objective existences. It is perfectly calm and undisturbed by origination or destruction (*anutpāttika-dharma*).³

Original Home of Mahāyāna

According to the *Ashṭasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitā*,⁴ Mahāyānism had its origin in the South from where it spread to eastern regions, that is Orissa, Bengal and Bihar and then in the North. The Mahāsaṅghikas and their off-shoots, who are grouped with the Hīnayāna but who were in many respects the forerunners of the Mahāyāna, had their principal centre around Amarāvati and Nāgārjunikoṇḍa stūpas in Andhra. Further, the origin of the Mahāyāna is associated with Nāgārjuna who was probably a Brāhmaṇa of Āndhradeśa (or of Vidarbha?) and the centres of whose activities were Śrīparvata and Dhānyakaṭaka.⁵ "To clinch the evidence for the place of origin of the Mahāyāna sūtras the Ceylon tradition ascribes the

¹Dutt, N., *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, 1973, Ch. II on the Mahāyānic traces in the Nikāyas. Cf. also Keith, *Buddhist Philosophy*; Venkataraman, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, 1954; *ERE*, VIII, p. 33.

²*CHI*, I, p. 507.

³*Ibid.*

⁴Quoted in *CHI*, I, p. 517, n. 15.

⁵For Nāgārjuna vide Joshi, L. M., 'Life and Times of the Mādhyamika Philosopher Nāgārjuna', *Mahābodhi*, Vol. 73, No. 1, pp. 13-20; No. 2, pp. 42-49. Joshi thinks that Nāgārjuna lived for two hundred years from c. 80 B.C. to 120 A.D.!

Ratnakūṭa to the Āndhras" (the *Ratnakūṭa* being the collection of earliest extant Mahāyāna sūtras).¹ According to Warder "The idea that the sūtras had been confined to the south would of course have been a convenient way of explaining to Buddhists in the North why it was that they had not heard these texts directly from their own teachers, without admitting that they were recent fabrications."² One may conclude with N. Dutt that Mahāyānism originated in the South in Andhra, reached the North-West by the age of Kanishka I and blossomed first under the care of Nāgārjuna³ and Maitreya-nātha and later on of Āryadeva, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu.⁴

Deification of the Buddha

The first main point of difference between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna is the concept of the Buddha. For the Theravādins Gautama Buddha was an actual man living on the earth like any other human being, and subject to all frailties of a mortal body. He was no doubt a knower of the world (*loka vidu*), fully awakened one (*Sammāsambuddha*) and unsurpassed (*amuttaro*), but still a mortal, devoid of any transcendental or theistic elements. It is indeed true that the Theravādins sometime spoke of the Buddha as identical with Dhamma or as 'no-man', but such statements are only metaphorical, without any metaphysical implication. But within a century after the Buddha, the Theravādins began to look upon him more as a god than as a human being. The Mahāsaṅghikas raised the question whether the attainments of Gautama Siddhārtha and those of his disciples who had become arhats, like Śāriputra, Maudgalyāyana and Mahākaśyapa, were similar. The Theravādins themselves conceded that the Buddha's attainments were much higher than those of arhats, though they also asserted that as far as emancipation from worldly bondage was concerned there was no difference between a Buddha and an arhat. In their texts the special powers attributed to the Buddha which are unattainable by the arhats are the *daśabalas*, four kinds of self

¹Warder, A. K., *Indian Buddhism*, p. 354 and n. 1.

²*Ibid.*, p. 352.

³Nāgārjuna, the Tāntrika and alchemist contemporary of a Sātavāhana king, was different from Nāgārjuna, the Mādhyamika philosopher.

⁴*AIU*, p. 388. Aśvaghosa, the poet-dramatist, was not an exponent of the Mahāyāna. Aśvaghosha, the Mahāyānist author of the *Śraddhoṭpādasūtra*, was different from the poet Aśvaghosha and flourished much later.

confidences, four ways of attaining popularity and eighteen special attributes. In the *Mahāparinibbānasutta*, the devotees are directed to visit the four places sanctified by the Buddha's birth, attainment of *sambodhi*, first preaching of the Dhamma, and demise. Admittedly such directions were later interpolations but, in any case, earlier than the emergence of the Mahāyāna. Hence, it is apparent that the Theravādins had not only conceded the superiority of the Buddha over arhats, but had also started the deification of the Buddha.

The deification of the Buddha gave an opportunity to the masses to satisfy their emotional urge. Because in early Buddhism the Buddha was regarded as a human being with *pūṭikāya* (a body of impure matter), more importance was given to Dhamma and the Buddha had himself discouraged the practice of image worship, during the pre-Christian period the devotees had to remain satisfied with making and worshipping symbols only.¹ In the centuries succeeding the birth of Christ the worship of the Buddha and Bodhisattva images came into vogue with the result that the Buddhist devotees covered India with innumerable temples and image-containing vihāras.

The Trikāya Doctrine

The passages in the Pali texts alluding to the supramundane character of the Buddha² also gave an opportunity to the Mahāyānists to evolve their theory of Trikāya. The speculations on the kāyas of the Buddha commenced with the Sarvāstivādins but the Mahāsaṅghikas took this question in right earnest. The Mahāsaṅghikas preached that Gautama Buddha was not actually born in this world; he made only a show of existence for following the

¹Gupta, S. K., 'Causes of the Absence of the Buddha Image in Early Indian Art', *K. P. Jayaswal Commemoration Volume*, 1981, pp. 134-9.

²For example, where the Buddha says to Ānanda that Dhamma and Vinaya taught by the former would be the teacher of the latter, or the passage where it is said that just as a Brāhmaṇa may say that he is born out of the mouth of Brahmā, a Buddhist may say that he is born of Bhagavā, or the *Āṅguttara* passage where the Buddha says that he is neither god or gandhabba, nor a man. However, even though the terms *rūpakāya* and *dharmakāya* found their way into the later Pali works, yet the Theravādins did not interpret them in non-realistic sense (Dutt, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, p. 146). They continued to regard Buddha's *rūpakāya* as that of a human being and the *dharmakāya* as the collection of his teachings.

ways of the world (*lokānuvartana*). The *Mahāvastu*, an old text of the Mahāsaṅghika-Lokottaravādins, claims that "Supra-mundane are the particles of the Exalted. There should not be any doubt that the body of the Sugata . . . is also supra-mundane For following the ways of the world, Buddhas resort to both mundane and supra-mundane concepts". This doctetic view of the Mahāsaṅghika-Lokottaravādins was shared by the Vaitulyakas whose doctrines have been noticed in the *Kathāvatthu*, the composition of which began in Aśoka's Council. In the *Kathāvatthu* commentary, they are described as Mahāsūnyatāvādins, a common designation of the Mahāyānists.

The Mahāyāna Buddhism developed the doctrine of the Buddhakāya or Dharmakāya into Trikāya doctrine according to which the Rūpa or Nirmāṇakāya (human body) of the Buddha is to be differentiated from his Sambhogakāya (the divine refulgent richly adorned body with all the *mahāpurushalakṣhaṇas*, roughly corresponding to the concept of god in Brahmanism) and Dharmakāya (cosmic body, roughly corresponding to the concept of Brahman). In the beginning the Kāya doctrine was quite vague, the number and nomenclature of the kāyas uncertain and it did not make much appeal. In the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* and the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa*, Maitreya and Ruchirketu respectively play the role of the skeptic to ask how could Śākyamuni Gautama perform such great and so many meritorious deeds in such a short life. In answer it is explained that the Tathāgatas have no origin; they have only Dharmakāya; that the Śākyamuni Buddha attained *sambodhi* incalculable ages ago and since then has been preaching the dharma incessantly. It is only his Nirmāṇakāya that is visible to the people. There are such innumerable Nirmāṇakāyas presiding over countless worlds, Gautama being the Nirmāṇakāya Buddha of *sahā-lokadhātu*.¹ In other words, whatever was done by Śākyamuni was done by the created body of the Buddhakāya or Dharmakāya, Gautama Buddha was only a shadowy image of the Buddhakāya which followed the ways of the world (*lokānuvartana*). According to the Chinese sources, Nāgārjuna in his commentary on the *prajñāpāramitā*, also spoke only of two Kāyas—Rūpakāya (human body) and Dharmakāya (metaphysical or cosmic body). According to N. Dutt also upto the time of Nāgārjuna the conception of Sambhogakāya was not dis-

tinguished from that of Rūpakāya or Nirmāṇakāya. According to the *Abhisamayālaṅkārikā*, however, there are four kāyas of which Svābhāvika-kāya is real and the Dharmakāya, Sambhogakāya and Nirmāṇakāya are unreal. The Sambhogakāya is a subtle body which the Buddhas use for imparting higher knowledge to the bodhisattvas. The *Sūtrālaṅkāra* calls it Svābhāvika-Dharmakāya thus identifying the two.

The concept of the Dharmakāya was of special interest for the Mahāyānists. The *Kārikā* and *Siddhi* call it Svābhāvika or Svabhāvika-kāya. It is, according to them, immeasurable and illimitable. It fills all space. It is the basis of Sambhoga- and Nirmāṇa-kāyas. It is devoid of old marks (*mahāpurushalakṣaṇas*) and inexpressible. It is eternal, real and indescribable Absolute. It can be realized in one's own self. "A buddha is to be seen in the sense of *dharmatā* (nature of dharmas) for the leader (of men) have only Dharmakāya. That *dharmatā* is unknowable (so also is the Tathāgata)." It is one and the same kāya in all the Buddhas. The Chinese commentators of the *Siddhi* state that Dharmakāya is the metaphysical principle of real *chitta* and can be equated with Tathatā, Dharmadhātu or Tathāgatagarbha. The goal of bodhisattva is to realize Dharmakāya.

Thus the Mahāyānists contend that the Buddha only made a show of existence as Siddhārtha Gautama. The various Buddhas, including Gautama Buddha, being identical with Nirvāṇa or Śūnyatā, have no form or body. The body of a Buddha, if any, is the Dharmakāya or Svabhāvika-kāya, the eternal substances, the cosmic body or the body composed of all substances. The Buddhas appearing in the mortal world are merely phantoms—Nirmāṇakāya created by the real for the benefit of mortals while the Sambhogakāya is the subtle divine god-like aspect of Dharmakāya which the Buddhas use for imparting higher knowledge to the bodhisattvas. The variegated world is an imaginary super-imposition over this Dharmakāya, and the aim of a Mahāyānist is to realize this fact of superimposition or non-existence of the phenomenal world.

The Bodhisattva Doctrine

The conception of the Bodhisattva in the Mahāyāna was a corollary to its Buddhological speculation. The Hīnayānists believe that only Gautama Buddha was born as bodhisattva in his previous existences, commencing with his birth as Sumedha Brāhmaṇa (when

purposes of worship with elaborate rituals and mythological conceptions were woven around them much on the same lines as around the Brāhmaṇical gods. Thus the bodhisattva doctrine introduced and strengthened the element of devotion and worship in Buddhism.

With this conception of bodhisattva, the Mahāyāna writers have chalked out in detail the career of a bodhisattva in which they have laid stress not only on the fulfilment of the *pāramitās*, but also on several forms of meditation with a view to training the mind for the realization of *dharmasūnyatā* or *tathatā*. Thus, it is apparent how did the Mahāyānists magnify the Hīnayānist conception of bodhisattva.

In order to determine the period when the bodhisattva conception originated, we have to ascertain the time of the composition of the Jātakas and Avadānas, which contain the Hīnayānist account of the various existences of the Buddha as bodhisattva. In the Pali texts neither the conception of bodhisattva nor the doctrine of the *pāramitās* is mentioned. The *Aṅguttara Nikāya* and the *Mahā-parinibbānasutta* and other suttas are completely unaware of them. According to N. Dutt, "It seems that only in the post-Aśokan days the bodhisattva conception was engrafted on the original teachings of the Buddha and this led to the composition of the Jātakas and the Avadānas. The Jātaka stories were included in the *Vinaya Piṭaka* of some of the sects other than Theravāda, and appear intermixed with the life of Gautama Buddha, before as well as after his attainment of *bodhi*. In the Pali Piṭakas, these have been collected to form an independent text while the Sanskritists i.e. the Sarvāstivādins, compiled the Avadānas which contained the accounts of the previous lives not only of Gautama Buddha, but also of his noted disciples and devotees. The Jātakas and Avadānas furnished the motifs to the sculptors of the Bharhut and Sanchi railings, which are dated about the second or first century B.C. So the origin of the *bodhisattva* conception, along with the composition of the Jātakas and Avadānas, may be placed between the third and second century B.C. It must be some time after this date that the Mahāyānists developed their conception of *bodhisattva* and converted it into a creed known as *Bodhisattvayāna*."¹

¹CHI, I, p. 512; cf. Bagawat, N. K., 'Did the Buddha Kill the Child in Man (Bhūṣa)', *B.C. Lar. Volume*, II, pp. 61-75. He argues that the teachings of Gautama did not tend to kill 'Child in Man', but rather helped to build it up for the altruistic ideal of serving others.

Daśabhūmis : The Scheme of Spiritual Advancement

In spite of their extremely altruistic ideals, the Mahāyānists did not reject the scheme of progressive spiritual advancement prescribed by the Hīnayānists. In the Mahāyāna texts like the *Laṅkāvatāra*, the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* and the *Sūtrālaṅkāra*, the course of training to be adopted by a bodhisattva is given in detail. It is said that it is not possible to acquire all virtue-perfections (*pāramitās*) in one life. It is in and through his several existences that a bodhisattva perfects himself in the six virtue-perfections or *pāramitās*, namely charity (*dāna*), observance of precepts (*śīla*), perseverance or forbearance (*kshānti*), energy (*vīrya*), meditational exercises (*dhyāna*), and knowledge (*prajñā*), attains several other virtues and powers, practises various kinds of meditation and develops his intellectual powers. Gradually he progresses from one *bhūmi* (stage of spiritual progress) to another till he reaches the tenth *bhūmi* (according to the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, twelve), where he attains *bodhi* (perfect knowledge)¹ and becomes a *Samyaksambuddha*.

The early stages of the spiritual progress in the Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna are almost similar. The most difficult task of an adept in both is the fulfilment of the condition laid down for passing from the pre-spiritual stage of a common man of the world (called the stage of *prthagjana* in the Hīnayāna and *prakṛticharyā* in the Mahāyāna) to that of an Ārya (a man capable of attaining the highest truth). The Hīnayānists maintain that a *prthagjana* must comprehend the Four Noble Truths and have firm faith in the teachings of the Buddha and get rid of the belief in the existence of self before he becomes a Sotapanna or Śrota-āpanna (i.e. one who is on the stream of nirvāṇa).² The Mahāyānists insist that one must develop bodhichitta before he leaves the stage of *prakṛticharyā* and becomes an Ārya or bodhisattva, that is the one who is entitled to commence the cultivation of *bhūmis* (called *bodhi-prasthāna*). In the Hīnayāna a Sotapanna reduces his *rāga*, *dvesha* and *moha* to the minimum by ethical and meditational practices (*śīla*) and enters the second stage of *sakṛdgāmin*. On the complete removal of all these three by the perfection of *chitta* or *samādhi* he enters the third stage of *anāgāmin* and on attaining the perfection in *prajñā* i.e. realization of truth he removes all the *kleśāvaraṇas*, realizes *pudgala-*

¹CHI, I, p. 480.²Dutt, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, p. 92 f.

sūnyatā and becomes an arhat. In the Mahāyāna texts such as the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* of Asaṅga, the *Mahāvastu* and the *Prajñāpāramitā* texts, a similar course for the bodhisattva is chalked out. After leaving the state of *prakṛticharyā* the bodhisattvas gradually pass through three stages in order to purify themselves in acts and speech (*adhiśīla*, corresponding to *sīla* of the Hīnayāna), acquire complete control over mind (*adhichitta*, corresponding to *chitta* of the Hīnayāna) and acquire an analytical knowledge of the constituents of a being or of the world (*adhiprajñā*, corresponding to *prajñā* of the Hīnayāna). On completion of these three, the bodhisattvas, like the śrāvakas, attain *nirodha* (removal) of *kleśāvaraṇa* (veil of impurities).¹ In the Mahāyāna texts these four stages are divided into six *bhūmis*, respectively called *Pramuditā* (joyous stage), *Vimalā* (immaculate stage), *Prabhākarī* (stage of illumination), *Archishmatī* (radiant stage), *Sudurjayā* (hard to win stage) and *Abhimukhī* (the stage when the bodhisattva is right in front of *bodhi*). Till this point the career of a bodhisattva is virtually no different from the career of a Hīnayānist śrāvaka. It is in the next four higher stages that the bodhisattvas acquire the special powers of a buddha, realize sameness (*tathatā*) of all phenomenal objects, and prepare themselves as teachers of the world.

The four higher stages for the realization of *tathatā* or *dharma-sūnyatā*, through the removal of *jñeyāvaraṇa* (the veil which covers the truth) are the last four *bhūmis*. Thus the higher Mahāyānic practices commence after *adhiprajñāvihāra*, i.e. in the seventh *bhūmi* called *Duraṅgamā* (far going stage). Henceforward the bodhisattva continues the practice of the four brahma-vihāras, viz. *maitrī* (friendliness), *karuṇā* (compassion), *muditā* (joy at others' success), and *upekshā* (equanimity), tries to realize the substancelessness (*nairātmya*) and non-duality (*advaya*) of all objective existences, and tries to visualize the cosmic body (*Dharmakāya*) of the Buddha. He follows the ways of the world, but remains dissociated from them. He now goes beyond the śrāvaka and pratyeka-buddha stages².

In the eighth *bhūmi* called *Achalā* (immovable stage) the bodhisattva attains the knowledge of sameness (*tathatā*) of all objects, gives up all thought-constructions, and is thoroughly convinced of the non-origination of all worldly objects (*anutpattika-dharma-*

¹CHI, I, p. 515.

²For details, see Dutt, *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, p. 86 f.

kshānti). He then attains the special powers of the buddhas. He now knows where and when he will become a Buddha. Now he makes only a show of observing the rules of conduct and is almost omniscient, having a detailed analytical knowledge of everything.

In the ninth *bhūmi* called *Sādhumati* (stage of good thought) the bodhisattva develops the *daśabala* of a buddha, perfect wisdom and the faculty of minutely observing the mental inclinations of different beings. He prepares himself to devise ways and means (*upāyakaūśalya*) for helping them in their spiritual advancement. Thus now he perfects himself for the task of leading all beings to nirvāṇa.

In the tenth or the last *bhūmi* called *Dharma Meghā* (cloud of law) or *Abhisheka bhūmi* he becomes omniscient, perfect in all meditational exercises. He attains perfection in knowledge (*prajñā pāramitā*). Now his Dharmakāya is complete. He becomes possessed of the resplendent body from which issue forth rays of light to illuminate the whole universe and to make all beings happy. At this stage he receives consecration (*abhisheka*) as a buddha, a tathāgata, from all the Buddhas. Thus ends the career of a bodhisattva.¹

Mahāyāna Pantheon and Mode of Worship

In the Hīnayāna Buddhism there was no systematic pantheon. The early Buddhist texts sometimes refer to thirty-three gods of the Brāhmanical religion and some other deities. They are said to reside in the Trāyatrimśa heaven.² But the Buddha did not encourage their worship. That is why in early Buddhism neither the Buddha and nor any other deity was worshipped in the form of images; only stūpas and other symbols of the Buddha were paid respect. But in the Mahāyāna a large number of deities were conceived. Their number grew larger in the Tāntrika Buddhism. In the Mahāyāna individual soul is known as *bodhichitta* while the universal soul is called *sūnya*. The deities play their role when these two combine in the state of meditation.

With the Mahāyānic conception of the *lokottara* nature of the Buddha and also the development of the bodhisattva doctrine a well-defined and well-classified pantheon and concept of heavens

¹Dutt, *op. cit.*; cf. Kak, R. N., 'Religious Growth in the Mahāyāna', *Mahābodhi*, Vol. 72, Nos. 3-4, pp. 59-64.

²Cf. Haldar, J. R., 'Characteristics of Buddhist Gods in Pali Literature', *JAIH*, V, pp. 33-35.

and hells came into being.¹ The *Guhyasamāja*, probably for the first time, describes the five Dhyānī Buddhas (representing the five skandhas), namely Vairochana, Akshobhaya, Ratnasambhava, Amitābha, and Amoghasiddhi, and their mantras, maṇḍalas (circles of deities) and Śāktis (female counterparts). The five Dhyānī-Buddhas issued out of Ādi-Buddha through contemplation. The emanations or offsprings of these Dhyānī Buddhas constitute the families (*kulas*) of gods and goddesses. The five *kulas* are *dvesha*, *moha*, *rāga*, *chintāmaṇi* and *samaya*. Each deity of these families was given various forms, colours, companions, etc. In the *Sukhāvativyūha*, Amitābha Buddha appears for the first time as the presiding deity of the Sukhāvati heaven, where he brought Avalokiteśvara, the personification of compassion, into existence. Fa-hsien mentions the names of Mañjuśrī, Avalokiteśvara, and the future Buddha Maitreya, while Yuan Chwang refers to Avalokiteśvara, Hārīti, Kshitigarbha, Maitreya, Mañjuśrī, Padmapāṇi, Vaiśravaṇa, Śākyā Buddha, Śākyā Bodhisattva, and Yama together with several deified saints. Mañjuśrī was a popular bodhisattva. He was regarded as ever young (Kumārabhūta), the personification of wisdom and was usually associated with Lakshmī or Sarasvatī or both. Among goddesses Tārā was the most popular. She was regarded as the personification of *prajñā*; hence she is also called goddess Prajñāpāramitā.

According to the Chinese pilgrims, the Hīnayānist monks and nuns usually made offerings at stūpas, while the Mahāyānists paid homage to the images of the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and other gods and goddesses. The first Buddha images were conceived and made either in Gandhāra or Mathurā as a result of the Mahāyānic ideology, probably in the beginning of the Christian era.² The Mahā-

¹Cf. Haldar, J. R., 'Links between Early and Later Buddhist Mythology', *Religious Life in Ancient India*, ed. by D. C. Sircar, pp. 142-157.

²Foucher, Grünwedel, Benjamin Rowland and many other scholars have propounded the view that the Buddha images were carved for the first time by Greek sculptors of Gandhāra on the model of the Apollo images. On the other hand Coomaraswamy, V. S. Agrawala, S. K. Gupta, etc. have tried to prove that origin of Buddha image took place in the Mathurā school of sculpture on the model of the Yaksha images and with the help of the yogi and chakravartin ideals. They have pointed out that the making of a Buddha image was much more than carving of a human figure. In western art a beautiful figure was sought to be portrayed by depiction of physical perfection; Indian art, on the

yānists built temples for these images and carried them out in processions. I-tsing gives an account of the daily ceremony of the bathing and worshipping of the images.

Mahāyāna Monastic Life

Unlike the Hīnayāna, the Mahāyāna did not insist on a person becoming a monk or nun and allowed even an animal to begin the career of a bodhisattva. Probably that is why in the collection of

other hand, sought to translate spiritual concepts, depict mental peace and incorporate mahāpurushalakṣhaṇas including *ushṇīsha* on the skull and *urṇā* between the eyebrows, etc. In the *Mahāpadāna* and the *Lakkhanasuttana* of the pre-Christian period 32 major lakṣhaṇas are enumerated. Indian art also sought to reproduce hand-postures that were associated with various actions of the Buddha. Further the sacred figure of the Buddha had to be made in certain proportions laid down in the canon. These features are found in the Gandhāra image also, for we have a number of standing and seated images of the Buddha from Sahari-Bahlol, Jaulian, Haddha, Charsadda, Sahji-ki-dheri and other places which usually depict him with *ushṇīsha*, *urṇā*, *saṅghāṭi*, mahāpurushalakṣhaṇas, *prabhāvalī*, hand raised in *abhaya mudrā* and seated on a *kuśāsana* or *siṃhāsana* in yogic posture with *chāmaradhāriṇīs* and with a *pīpala* tree in the background. All these elements are Indian in origin and were not known to Greek mythology. Further, according to many Indian scholars there is no similarity in Apollo and Buddha images—neither in their appearance and nor in concept.

As regards the Mathurā images, as pointed out by V. S. Agrawala, its artists made the Buddha image with the obvious help of the mahāpurushalakṣhaṇas and the yogī and chakravartī ideals. The earliest seated images of the Buddha have been found from Katarā (Mathurā) dated in the 9th year of Kanishka. In it the Buddha is seated in *padmāsana* on a *siṃhāsana* under the Bodhi tree with his right hand in the *abhayamudrā* and the left hand touching the left knee. He wears *saṅghāṭi* and *ushṇīsha* and *urṇā*. His head is surrounded by a halo and he is flanked by two *chāmaradhāriṇīs*. Thus both the Mathurā and Gandhāra images were basically characterised by the same features. Therefore, the origin of the Buddha image could not have been the handiwork of the Greek artists. At the most it can be argued that in the Gandhāra school the Greek artists incorporated several elements of the Hellenistic tradition in the Buddha image. As far as their chronology is concerned, generally both the regions, Gandhāra and Mathurā, started producing Buddha images in the first decade of Kanishka's rule as Kanishka's coins show standing 'Boddo' and several Mathurā Buddhist images are dated from 3rd to 9th year of Kanishka (81-87 A.D.). Therefore, it is not unreasonable to assume that the Buddha image originated somewhere in the beginning or middle of the 1st century A.D. in Mathurā and Gandhāra simultaneously.

the Mahāyāna texts there is no *Vinaya Piṭaka*.¹ In the later texts such as the *Sikshāsamuchchaya*, the *Bodhicharyāvatāra* and the *Bodhisattva prātimokshasūtra* there are only some rules of general nature. From them it appears that the Mahāyāna monks followed the general rules of the Hīnayāna in their monastic life, modifying some of them according to their needs. That is why, as Yuan Chwang reports, the monks of both the sects lived together in a number of monasteries. I-tsing, however, refers to some differences between the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna monks regarding the eating of meat, though he also notes that generally everywhere the Mahāyānist monks followed the Hīnayānist *Vinaya*. The additional features of the Mahāyānist way of life such as having a spiritual guide (*kalyāṇamitra*), practising four kinds of mindfulness (*smṛtyu-paṣṭhāna*), learning the ways of good conduct (*bhadracharyā*), practising worship (*vandanā*) of and devotion (*śraddhā*) to the Buddha images and chaityas, entreating Buddhas to be the guide of all beings, etc. did not create any difficulty in the adoption of the rules of the Hīnayānic *Vinaya*. However, it should be remembered that the Mahāyānists theoretically believed that all these rules were mere expedients (*upāyakauśalya*) adopted by the Teacher in order to attract the uninitiated into his way of thinking. When these rules had served the purpose of elevating the *chitta* of the uninitiated, their utility was exhausted. Then the initiated were told that the rules they had so long practised were unreal, and they should regard them as *śūnya*, as mirage, a dream.

The Mādhyamika School

In course of time the Mahāyānist philosophers became divided into two schools : Mādhyamika and Yogāchāra. Nāgārjuna was probably the founder and the earliest exponent of the Mādhyamika doctrine of Śūnyatā though Takakusu believes that Aśvaghosha, the author of the *Śraddhotpādasūtra*, preached the philosophy of *ālaya-vijñāna* (store-consciousness) and the sameness (*tathatā*) of all things of the world earlier than him, Nāgārjuna was born in a Brāhmaṇa family of Andhra² or Vidarbha about the first or second

¹Vide Chakraborty (*op. cit.*, pp. 299-333) for a detailed study of the Mahāyāna monkish discipline.

²Joshi, *Studies*, p. 3.

century A.D.,¹ and was well-versed in the Brāhmanical Śāstras. He became a bhikṣhu and was for a long time the abbot of the Nālandā monastery which acquired great fame during his leadership. His commentary on the *Prajñāpāramitā* (*Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā*), entitled *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra*, is a monumental work on Hīnayānic and Mahāyānic lore which is now available only in its Chinese translation rendered by Kumārajīva. Its gist is found in his *Mūlamadhyamakārikā*. The principal object of these texts is to establish that any positive description of Reality or Śūnyata is impossible; at the most one can describe it by negating everything conceivable. All so-called objects and qualities—*nirvāṇa*, buddha, or bodhisattva, are non-existent in the highest sense (*paramārtha*) (*śūnyāḥ sarva-dharmā niḥsvabhāvyogena*). Nāgārjuna held that the phenomenal world is a misconceived super-imposition on the Reality or Śūnyatā. In answer to the question as to why did the Buddha teach all the spiritual practices and analyse the phenomenal objects if they are all mere figments of imagination, Nāgārjuna says that the teachings of the Buddha are dependent on two kinds of truth: one is the worldly conventional truth, and the other is the highest Truth (*paramārtha*), the Absolute. The conventional truth differentiates between the recipient and the received, subject and object; it acts only as a cover of the Truth and is not the Truth in itself. The Buddha did not preach anything about Reality. Actually he never preached any doctrine to anybody. Therefore, what an aspirant for the realization of the truth of *śūnyatā* should do is to dissociate himself completely from worldly things, be it the gross worldly pleasure or the highest attainments of an arhat, bodhisattva, or buddha.

The successor of Nāgārjuna at Nālandā was Āryadeva (2nd cent. A.D.) who was a foster-son of a king of Sīmhala. He wrote several treatises, one of which, the *Chaturḥ śataka* has been preserved in

¹Dutt, N., *CHI*, I, p. 480. For the date of Nāgārjuna see Rao, B. S. L. Hanumanta, 'The Contemporaneity of Kanishka and Nāgārjuna', *JAHRS*, XXVIII, Pts. 3-4, pp. 23-29. He suggests that Kanishka I ascended the throne in 130/4 A.D. and that Nāgārjuna flourished at his court. See also, Lal, G. Jawahar, 'Was Kanishka a Patron of the Buddhist Philosopher Nāgārjuna?', *ibid.*, XXX, Pts. 1-4, pp. 21-31. He places Kanishka in 78 A.D. and makes Nāgārjuna his contemporary. For the study of the theory that Nāgārjuna was a contemporary of Gautamīputra Śātakarṇi vide Nema, S. R., 'Nāgārjuna and his Contemporary Śātavāhana King', *Nagpur University Journal*, XVI, No. 1, pp. 23-31.

Sanskrit. His disciple was Mātṛcheṭa (alias Durdharsha Kāla, alias Piṭṛcheṭa), a great scholar of the Brāhmanical lore. After his defeat at the hands of Āryadeva he became a great Mahāyāna preacher and composed several works. His contemporary Rāhulabhadra was a Śūdra disciple of Āryadeva. He was a devotee of Amitābha Buddha. Between Āryadeva and Saṅgharakshita (beginning of the 5th cent. A.D.) no contribution of note seems to have been made by the intervening teachers to the Mādhyamika system. In the fifth century Kumārajīva propagated Mādhyamika system in China and Buddhapālita, who hailed from Dantapura (Kaliṅga), wrote a commentary on the *Mūlamadhyamakasūtra* of Nāgārjuna, while his contemporary Bhāvaviveka wrote a similar commentary called *Prajñāpradīpa*. Buddhapālita established the *śūnyatā* doctrine by *prāsaṅgika* method while Bhāvaviveka adopted the *svātantrika* method. Among other famous teachers of this system was Chandra-kīrti who is regarded as the incarnation of Buddhapālita. He was a rival of Chandragomin of the Yogāchāra school. His successors were Dharmapāla (635 A.D.), Jayadeva and Śāntideva. Śāntideva was a prince from Saurashtra and the author of a large number of works including the *Śikshāsamuchchaya* and the *Bodhicharyāvātāra*.

The Yogāchāra School

Yogāchāra is the second school of Mahāyāna philosophy. It appeared some time after Nāgārjuna. According to Takakusu the earliest treatise dealing with its philosophy is the *Śraddhotpādasūtra* of Aśvaghosha composed about 1st cent. A.D., but such an antiquity for this work is not generally accepted.

The earliest exponent of this school of philosophy was probably Maitreya-nātha of Ayodhyā (c. 270–350 A.D.). Tārānātha and Buxton identify him with Maitreya, the future Buddha. His disciple was Asaṅga (c. 310–390 A.D.) who systematized and developed his thoughts; and then Asaṅga's brother Vasubandhu dealt with this philosophy more scientifically. Asaṅga and Vasubandhu were the sons of a court-priest of Purushapura. Asaṅga was formerly a member of the Mahiśāsaka sect. Later he became a disciple of Maitreya-nātha, wrote commentaries on the works of his teacher and persuaded his younger brother Vasubandhu, an intellectual giant of the age, to give up his faith in Sarvāstivāda and espouse the cause of the Yogāchāra. Vasubandhu became a great exponent of the

Vijñānavada.¹ Among his disciples were included Guṇamati, Sthiramati, Dīpaṅga, Saṅghadeśa, Dharmapāla, etc. Guṇamati's disciple was the famous scholar Paramārtha of Ujjayīni. A great name of the period is that of Chandragomin, the disciple of Sthiramati. All these great scholars composed a large number of works on philosophy, metaphysics, logic, grammar, etc.

The difference between the Mādhyamika and the Yogāchāra philosophy is very subtle, as the Yogāchāra conception of nirvāṇa or arhatā and the non-existence of the phenomenal world is almost similar to that of the Mādhyamikas. The Yogāchārinis support the Mādhyamika view that the external world is non-existing. However, they hold that it is a mere ideation or extension of the *chīnamātra* or vijñānavāda. They believe that the diversified world is the mental creation of a being in whose mind from times immemorial some ideas, desires, and misapprehensions are stored up. They do not dismiss the world as absurd or as non-existent as a barren woman's son, but regard it as the snake super-imposed on the rope. They concede a certain amount of reality to the snake but only as long as the actual identity of the snake and the rope is not established.

The Yogāchārinis developed the doctrine of the three kinds of bodies or kāyas of the Buddha, namely *nirvāṇakāya*, *sambhoga-kāya*, and *dharma-kāya* (*supra*). The first kāya (body) is apparitional; the second, though apparitional, is caused and conditioned by the accumulated merits of a bodhisattva; and the third is the real one and without any characteristics.

Mahāyāna Literature

The Mahāyānikis do not question the authenticity of the Hīnayāna Tripiṭaka. But they have produced quite a voluminous literature of their own for popularising their own ideals and teachings. Most of the earlier Mahāyāna texts are attributed to the Buddha himself who is said to have given his Mahāyānic discourses only at Gṛhīrakūṭa. Each text is introduced by the words 'Evam mayā śrutam' (Thus have I heard) and it is claimed that the audience included not only the bodhisattvas but also distinguished śrāvakas and lay upāsakas. The earlier Mahāyāna texts usually reproduce

¹For the view that there were two scholars of this name vide Frauwallner, E., *On the Date of the Buddhist Master of Law Vasubandhu*, 1951: Goyal, S. R., *A History of the Imperial Guptas*, pp. 214-5.

all the dharmans dealt with in the Hīnayāna Piṭakas, but only to prove that they are useful to a certain extent; when the bodhisattvas go beyond the Hīnayāna *bhūmis*, they should regard them as mirage and should give them up.

The basic, oldest, most famous and most representative text of the Mahāyānists is the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra*, of which there are several versions, large (the biggest is said to be in one lakh ślokas), medium, and small (the smallest being of one śloka only); but all of them emphasize the same theme, viz. *dharma-śūnyatā*.

Equally important are the nine sacred texts famous in Nepal. They are: *Lalitavistara*, *Samādhirājasūtra*, *Laṅkāvatāra*, *Ashṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*, *Gaṇḍavyūha*, *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, *Daśabhūmika*, *Suvarṇaprabhāsa*, and *Tathāgataguhyaka*. Equally famous are *Sukhāvativyūha*, the *Aparimitāyus-sūtra*, the *Karaṇḍavyūha* and the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*. The *Aparimitāyus-sūtra* or *Sukhāvativyūha* contains an account of Amitābha and his paradise while the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*, which is also an old text, argues that though the śrāvakas make some spiritual progress yet they need further training for the realization of the highest Truth. An important place in early Mahāyāna literature is occupied by the *Avadānas* and the works of Aśvaghoṣa and Mātṛcheṭa.

A large number of Mahāyāna texts was translated into Chinese during the Western Tsin Dynasty (265–316 A.D.), including the *Daśabhūmikasūtra* which describes the ten stages (*bhūmis*) of spiritual progress of a bodhisattva, and the *Samādhirājasūtra* which deals with the conception of the highest meditation leading to the realization of *śūnyatā*. The work of translating the Mahāyāna texts into Chinese continued for about a thousand years more. The Tibetans began the work of translation much later than the Chinese, but almost equalled the achievements of the latter in this field.

The Mahāyānists attached great significance to magical spells and charms. These were collected together in the treatises called *dhāraṇīs*. The spells and charms were not unknown to the Hīnayānists. But these were few in number and were probably adaptations of pre-Buddhist Vedic or non-Vedic spells and charms. In Mahāyānism, the dhāraṇīs occupied an important place and, in course of time, overshadowed the ethical and philosophical doctrines.

With the growth of Mahāyāna, Buddhism tended to return to the mainstream of Indian culture. The adoption of Sanskrit for literary and scholastic purposes, employment of the style and the method of

the Purāṇas, the concept of heavens and hells, emergence of a Buddhist pantheon and the hierarchy of divinities and the emphasis on *bhakti*, all these features of Mahāyāna brought it considerably near to Brāhmaṇism. It showed and proved that Buddhism was not a different religion : it was merely an aspect, a facet, of Hinduism.

Esoteric or Tāntrika Buddhism : Meaning and Nature of Tāntrikism
Historically 'esoteric' Buddhism, usually described as Tāntrika Buddhism, was the last phase of Buddhism in India. Its various aspects are known as Mantrayāna, Vajrayāna or Sahajayāna, etc. The first European scholar who rehabilitated the Tantras (especially the Hindu Tantras of the Kuṇḍalinī-Yoga) in modern times was Sir John Woodroffe, who published his famous series of works on Tāntrikism under the pseudonym of Arthur Avalon¹.

Etymologically the term '*tantra*' is connected with the idea of 'loom' or 'weaving' and 'propagation'. It is also used for a book (e.g. the *Pañcha-tantra*). Śaṅkara used the word in the sense of a philosophical system, while the *Amarakośa* refers to the various treatises as '*tantrāṇi*'.² In the *Kāmikāgama*, '*Tantra*' is explained as a class of texts that deal with profound matters concerning *tattva* and *mantra*.³ Monier-Williams in his 'Dictionary' describes the tantras as a class of works teaching magical and mystical formularies.

The religion expounded in the Tantras is "a peculiar mixture of mystic syllables (*mantras*), magical diagrams (*yantras*), ritualistic circles (*maṇḍalas*), physical gestures (*mudrās*), sex-play (*maithuna*), psycho-physical discipline (*yoga*), a fearful pantheon, elaborate worship and ritualism, magical sorcery, necromancy, symbolism, astrology, alchemy, coefficient of female element and a monistic philosophy. The affirmation of the material world; the dogma that all gods together with the supreme truth reside in the human body; the assumption of the principle of an apparent duality in an essential non-duality; the dogma of the coefficient female partner (*śakti-sāhacarya*) as a *sine qua non* in the process of liberation; a radical

¹For a detailed study of Tāntrika Buddhism see B. Bhattacharya, *An Introduction to Buddhist Esoterism*, 1950; S. B. Dasgupta, *An Introduction to Tantric Buddhism*, 1974; Joshi, L. M., *op. cit.*

²Joshi, L. M., *Studies*, p. 235.

³*Ibid.*

ethics that every thing is pure for a pure man or *omnia sancta sanctis*; and, above all, the concept of the *summum bonum* of life in terms of the Great Delight (*mahāsukha*) born of the union (*yab-yum*) of 'male' (*upāya*) and 'female' (*prajñā*)—would appear to be some of the fundamental postulates of 'Tāntrikism' or 'Esoterism' of the Buddhists and the Hindus alike."¹ In Tāntrikism debased practices like the use of five *makāras* (i.e. the five practices the names of which begin with the letter 'ma'), that is the use of *madya* (wine), *māṃsa* (flesh), *matsya* (fish), *mudrā* (finger gestures or physical postures) and *maithuna* (sexual intercourse) were openly recommended and were apparently indulged in even by men who supposedly led highly religious lives. In the *Guhyasamāja*, not only falsehood and theft but even murder is recommended.

Was Tāntrikism Foreign in Origin?

According to several scholars Tāntrikism was of foreign origin. H. P. Sastri believed that "Tantra came from outside India. Most probably it came with the Māgī priests of the Scythians." Bhattacharya opines that "The introduction of Śakti worship in religion is so un-Indian that we are constrained to admit it as an external or foreign influence."² P. C. Bagchi also points out to some possible foreign elements, specially Tibetan, in the Tantras. He feels that the mystics of India used to have regular intercourse with Tibet; it is for this reason that we find in the Tantras vestiges of Lamaist doctrines.³ In recent years Alex Wayman has attempted to prove the existence of some Graeco-Roman concepts in the Buddhist Tantras.⁴ But most of the scholars generally trace the origin of Tāntrikism in the pre-Buddhist religion of India. According to John Woodroffe, Tantra is that development of the Vaidika karma-kāṇḍa which under the name of the Tantrasāstra is the scripture of the Kali age.⁵ According to Charles Eliot Tāntrikism is a species of religious magic, rather than principle.⁶ Monier-Williams sees the origin of Tāntrikism in the popularity of the Sāṅkhya theory of Purusha and

¹*Ibid.*, p. 236.

²Quoted in *Studies*.

³Bagchi, P. C., *Studies in the Tantras*, 1975, p. 55.

⁴Wayman, Alex, *The Buddhist Tantras*, pp. 19-23.

⁵Woodroffe, *Principles of Tantra*, p. xxviii.

⁶*Hinduism and Buddhism*, II, p. 190.

Prakṛti.¹ Gopīnātha Kavirāja believes that the Tāntrika Mantra-śāstra is rooted in Vedic religion.² According to G. C. Pande the earliest religion of man was more or less Tāntrika in nature. He has pointed out that a large number of Tāntrika elements may be traced in the pre-Buddhist religion of India.³ L. M. Joshi follows him closely.⁴ It has rightly been pointed out by modern scholars that the most important aspect of Tāntrikism is the dogma of *śakti-sāhacharya*⁵ which has always been closely related with the cult of the mother goddess on the one hand, and the phallic worship and Śaiva cult, on the other. But, as we have seen, both these elements were present in the Indus religion. Further the Vedic literature shows that both phallic worship and the worship of mother goddess had acquired increasingly greater acceptance in the Vedic society itself (*supra*, p. 99 f.). A large number of Tāntrika elements, such as mantras, sacrifice, priestly sorcery and magical charms, use of wine, worship of semi-divine and demoniac beings, etc. were known to the Vedic people. About a dozen hymns of the *RV* itself are concerned with magic. Magic is the main and essential subject-matter of the *AV* (*supra*, pp. 82-6). In the *Tai. Upa.* (I.7) the entire universe (macrocosm) is equated with the human body (microcosm). In the *Br. Upa.* (I.1.1) the 'sacrificial horse' is compared with the universe. A similar symbolical account of the human body is given in the *Cha. Upa.* (VIII.1.3) while the *Śvetāśvatara* (II.12) presupposes a 'Siddha-body'.⁶ The *Pañchavidyās* described in the Upanishads also have obvious Tāntrika significance.⁷ From these facts it is apparent that a large number of elements of Tāntrikism, both theoretical and practical, had early indigenous origin, though in its evolved form it was certainly a later development.

Did the Buddha Teach Tāntrikism Himself?

Here it may be noted that the Tantras themselves, whether Hindu or Buddhist, usually make no claim to historicity. They claim to be revelations and the Hindu Tantras are often equated with the Vedas.

¹Williams, M., *Hinduism*, p. 88.

²*Bhāratiya Saṃskṛti aurā Sādhanā*, I, Ch. XVII.

³*Bauddha Dharma*, pp. 459-61.

⁴*Op. cit.*, p. 237 f.

⁵Shastri, H. P., *Modern Buddhism*, Intro., p. 10 f.; Kavirāja, G. N., *Bhāratiya Saṃskṛti aurā Sādhanā*, I.

⁶Pande, *Bauddha Dharma*, p. 461, n. 27.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 460.

As regards the Buddhist Tantras, they are traced to the Buddha himself. According to the *Sekoddeśatīkā*, a comment on the *Sekoddeśa* section of the *Kālachakratantra*, Mantrayāna was first taught by Buddha-Dīpaṅkara and was adapted for our age by Śākyamuni Buddha. At the request of Suchandra, king of Śambhala, Gautama Buddha convened a Council at Śrī Dhānyakaṭaka, turned the Wheel of Law for the third time and delivered a discourse on esoteric path or Mantranaya (Mantrayāna), just as he had earlier delivered discourses on the Hīnayāna and the Prajñāpāramitānaya (Mahāyāna), respectively at Rshipattan and at Gṛdhrakūṭa. However, the Tibetan authorities give different dates for this event—according to some of them it took place in the first year of the sambodhi, according to others in the sixteenth year after sambodhi and according to a third tradition only shortly before the parinirvāṇa.

But as pointed out by Joshi the tradition of a third Dharma-chakra-pravartana, like that of a second, is apparently a later fabrication. There is no reliable proof to show that the Buddha ever went to the Andhra region. The *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, possibly the earliest *Vaipulyasūtra*, which contains many elements of the Mantrayāna, does not know the third turning of the Wheel of Law, although it is aware of Śrīparvata and Śrī Dhānyakaṭaka as the centres for the practice of *mantra-siddhi*. The *Guhyasamājantra*, perhaps the earliest known Buddhist Tantra, which gives all essential elements of Tāntrikism, also does not refer to it. Rather it seems to contradict the Tāntrika Buddhist tradition when it states that Dīpaṅkara Buddha did not teach the tenets of the *Guhyasamāja* and gives a graphic description of the astonishment and shock to the bodhisattvas when they heard the radical Tāntrika teachings.¹

However, despite these facts, the Tāntrika Buddhists attribute a number of sādhanās and mantras to Gautama Buddha and make him a Tāntrika of the first order going to the extent that he had discovered himself the great truth that the Buddhahood abides in the female organ and had delivered the secret discourse while enjoying the blissful state with the Vajrayoginī.² Some modern scholars such as B. Bhattacharya also believe that “the Tantras and Mantras, Mudrās and Dhāraṇīs were taught by the Buddha to the

¹Cf. Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 240 f.

²*Ibid.*, p. 241.

lay-brethren".¹ But the Tāntrika sādhanās cannot be regarded as Buddha's creations or revelations. As pointed out by Winternitz there is no proof to believe in the existence of Tantras, maṇḍalas and dhāraṇīs in the age of Buddha. The Buddha discouraged superstition and blind faith and encouraged the spirit of critical enquiry. The *Kevaṭṭasutta* shows that he was not in favour of magical and superhuman feats, and regarded these as black arts. In the *Brahmajālasutta* a long list of pseudo-sciences is given which the Buddha apparently condemned as low arts.

But the supposition that the Buddha was generally disinclined towards magic and mantras does not mean that he did not believe in their efficacy or that the early Buddhism was completely free of those elements which later on acquired the form of Tāntrikism. If those elements existed in the Indian society in the Vedic, nay even in the pre-Vedic period and were present in the Brāhmaṇical and even Jaina² societies in the age of early Buddhism, how can it be maintained that the Buddha and his followers remained immune from them, specially in view of the fact that in later ages Tāntrikism transformed Buddhism beyond recognition? It is true that in the *Brahmajālasutta*, the *Kevaṭṭasutta*, etc. the Buddha condemns certain magical arts as *tirachchhāna vijjā* or *michehhā-ājīva*, but their very condemnation proves their existence. Further, the Buddhists claimed that the aspirant for arhathood attains some supernatural powers (*ṛddhis*). The Buddha himself recognised *ṛddhis*, and practised *āsphānakayoga*. He took recourse to the display of superhuman feats to influence the laity. He is said to have converted the Jaṭilas by living in a room with a dragon whom he converted into an insect, showed the miracle of sending the same pot of fire to several mendicants who were suffering from cold while taking bath in a river, walked on a river, and converted Nanda by showing him heavenly nymphs. In the *Pāṭikasutta* he boasts of his miraculous powers. His disciple Moggallāna was also famous for such powers.³ In the *Dīgha Nikāya* there is a complete sutta (*Āṭṭhāṇīya*) which is described as *parittā* or *rakkhā* (protecting spell) to be memorised for averting evils. According to the *Vinaya Piṭaka* Bharadvāja, a

¹*Buddhist Esoterism*, p. 19.

²B. Bhattacharya in *CHI*, IV, p. 260; Buddha Prakash, *Aspects of Indian History and Civilization*, p. 307 f.

³Cf. Sengupta, S., 'Magic and Miracle in Buddhism', *Religious Life in Ancient India*, ed. by D. C. Sircar, pp. 22-38.

disciple of the Buddha, rose up into the air miraculously and brought down the begging bowl which was held high above by a seṭṭhi. In the *Chullavagga* V.6 a mantra is given as being prescribed by the Buddha to be used as a means of warding off the fear of snake bite. The Triratna formula was also recited to ward off dangers and bring prosperity.¹ In a slightly later period, the magical spells or dhāraṇīs formed a section of the Mahāsaṅghika texts. In the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinaya*, the Mahāmāyūrīdhāraṇī appears in extenso. Hence it is evident that the mind of the early Buddhists was not fully disabused of the belief in the efficacy of mantras and mantrāic rituals. The Buddha did not permit the use of mantras, mantrāic rituals, and of fish, meat, wine, association with the opposite sex, etc. on the part of the monks; yet it appears that there were many who violated his instructions in secret. It led to the emergence of secret (*guhya*) conclaves of Buddhist monks who secretly practised things that were forbidden by the Buddha. In course of time these secret conclaves developed into big organizations known as Guhyasamājas which composed their own text known as the *Guhyasamājatantra*.

Historical Emergence of Tāntrika Buddhism

The generally accepted view among modern scholars is that the Tāntrika Buddhism appeared in the seventh century A.D. However B. Bhattacharya, Tucci, Gopīnātha Kavirāja and G. C. Pande are inclined to push the date of the emergence of Buddhist esoterism back to the time of Maitreya and Asaṅga.² Rahula Sankrtyayana has also drawn attention to the great antiquity of the Mantrayāna.³ In proof, these scholars recall that Tārānātha believed that the Tantras and Tāntrika ideas of a secret nature were as old as the time of the Mahāyāna teacher Nāgārjuna and that they were handed down from gurus to disciples secretly for nearly three hundred years. Further there are strong Tibetan and Chinese traditions concerning the intimate connection of Asaṅga and Maitreyanātha and of both with esoteric Buddhism.⁴ Further, there are a number of texts

¹Sengupta, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

²See *JASB*, XXVI, p. 128 f.; Kavirāja, G. N., *op. cit.*, I, pp. 570 f.; Pande, *Bauddha Dharma*, p. 464-5.

³*Purātattva Nibandhāvalī*, p. 111 f.

⁴Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 248; Pande, *Bauddha Dharma*, p. 465.

which are Tāntrika or semi-Tāntrika in nature and belong to pre-0 A.D. period. The earliest available texts on Tāntrika Buddhism are the *Guhyasamājatantra* (3rd cent. A.D.?)¹ and the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*. The former deals with *yoga* (ordinary meditation) and *uttarayoga* (Tāntrika forms of meditation), and the latter with *āṅgārās* (finger and bodily poses), *maṇḍalas* (mystic diagrams), *mantras* (mystical spells) *kriyās* (rites), *charyās* (duties of an officiating priest in worship), *śīla* (observance of moral precepts), *vratas* (vows), *śucichāra* (cleanliness in acts), *niyama* (religious observances), *homa* (offering of oblations), *japa* (muttering of prayers), and *dhyāna* (meditation). The *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* also gives directions for painting of the different gods and goddesses of the Tāntrika pantheon.² Thus it reflects not only the developed popular Mahāyānism, but also shows the growth of Tāntrika ritual and worship. Though this work was revised in the post-Gupta period, its original form may date as early as the second century A.D. Among other early Tāntrika texts are also included the *Karaṇḍavyūhasūtra* which possibly existed before the 4th century A.D., the *Nīlakaṇṭhadhāraṇī*, discovered from Central Asia, and the *Mahāpratyaṅgirādihāraṇī*, which invokes Tārā and probably belongs to the 6th century A.D.

From the above discussion it is apparent that the Tāntrika Buddhism had made its appearance several hundred years before the 1st century A.D. Actually the beginning of Tāntrika Buddhism appears to be connected with the beginnings of the Mahāyāna. Indeed the Tibetans never made any difference between Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna³ and Nāgārjuna himself described the Mahāyāna as *esoteric—supra*.

Early Centres of Tāntrika Buddhism

According to B. Bhattacharya, S. K. De, Winternitz, etc. the original centre of Tāntrika Buddhism was Eastern India, specially Bengal, Assam and Orissa.⁴ But Rahula Sankrtyayana believes that Matrāṅga and Vajrayāna originated around Śrīparvata and Dhānyavāṇī. Cf. Wayman, Alex, *The Buddhist Tantras*, p. 13 ff. who places it in 4th century.

Dutt, N., in *AIK*, pp. 265–66.

Cf. Dasgupta, N. N., in *Struggle for Empire*, p. 406.

Winternitz, *HIL*, II, p. 400; B. Bhattacharya, *B. C. Law Volume*, I, p. 354–

S. K. De, *Indian Studies—Past and Present*, I, No. 4, p. 604. N. K. Sahu

Bhism in Orrisa, p. 68 f.) believes that Orissa was the cradle of both Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna.

kaṭaka in Andhra.¹ In the Tantras there is a tradition that Kāmā-khyā, Śrīhaṭṭa, Uḍḍiyāna and Pūrṇagiri were the centres (Śākta-pīṭhas) of esotericism where Śakti worship was first revealed.² B. Bhattacharya places all these Pīṭhas in eastern India, locating Uḍḍiyāna of this list in Vaṅga-Samataṭa region.³ According to L. M. Joshi, however, Buddhist Tāntrikism originated at two places—in the far south and the north-west.⁴ The early association of esotericism with Andhra is indicated by the following facts: (1) According to *Ashṭasāhasrikā*, the oldest Prajñāpāramitā text, the Prajñāpāramitānaya, which gave birth to Mantrayāna, originated in Dakṣiṇāpatha. (2) The *Sekoddeśatikā* records that Mantrayāna was promulgated in Śrī Dhānyakaṭaka. (3) The various Buddhist traditions associate Nāgārjuna, who rescued the esoteric science, with Śrīparvata. (4) The Mahāsaṅghikas, who according to Yuan Chwang had a whole *Piṭaka* of dhāraṇīs, flourished in Andhra. (5) The *Āryamañjuśrīmūlakalpa* was discovered, and was probably composed also, in South India. (6) Yuan Chwang records that Bhāvaviveka went to Dhānyakaṭaka where he recited the Vajrapāṇidhāraṇī for a long time. (7) The *Harshacharita* and the *Kādambarī* of Bāṇa, the *Mālatīmādhava* of Bhavabhūti and the *Rājatarāṅginī* of Kalhaṇa record that Śrīparvata was a great centre of Tantra and Mantra.

Another great early centre of Tāntrikism was Uḍḍiyāna or Udyāna, mentioned as one of the four Tāntrika Pīṭhas. Many scholars identify Uḍḍiyāna with Orissa (Oḍivisha) or locate it in Vaṅga-Samataṭa region,⁵ but Waddell, Lévi, Tucci, Bagchi and Joshi have shown that it was the same as Udyāna of Yuan Chwang and was identical with the modern Swat Valley in Pakistan.⁶ Yuan Chwang says that the people of Udyāna held magical arts and spells in high esteem. The Pali canon mentions Gāndhārivijjā as an art of sorcery and exorcism. Yuan Chwang relates the legends concerning four sacred places in Uḍḍiyāna where the Buddha in his former

¹*Purātattva Nibandhāvalī*, p. 106 f.

²Sircar, D. C., 'Śākta Pīṭhas', *JASB (L)*, XIV, p. 8 ff.

³*B. C. Law Volume*, I, p. 359–60.

⁴Joshi, *Studies*, pp. 255–60; 'Original Homes of Tāntrika Buddhism', *PIHC*, 1965.

⁵Bhattacharya, B., *B. C. Law Volume*, I, p. 359 f.

⁶Waddell, *Lamaism*, p. 15; Tucci, *East and West*, IX, p. 279 ff., Lévi, *JA*, 1915, p. 105; Bagchi, *IHQ*, VI, p. 576 ff.; Joshi, *op. cit.*; p. 258 ff.

existences dismembered his limbs (cf. the legend concerning the dismemberment of the body of Sati, Śiva's wife). The archaeological explorations and excavations have also yielded Tāntrika antiquities in the North-West. Lastly, Asaṅga (who had much to do with esoterism), Padmasambhava (the apostle of Tibetan Buddhism), Indrabhūti (a Tāntrika author) and Chaṅkuṇa (the exorcist Prime Minister of Lalitāditya of Kashmir) all belonged to the Tukhāra country.

Was Tāntrikism Originally Brāhmaṇical or Buddhist?

Before we proceed further, the question whether or not Tāntrikism was introduced in Buddhism as a result of the Brāhmaṇical influence may briefly be discussed. According to Austin Waddell Buddhist Tāntrikism is nothing but Śaiva idolatory, Śakti worship and demonology. On the other hand, B. Bhattacharya, in his *Introduction to Buddhist Esoterism*, has concluded that the Buddhists were the first to introduce the Tantras into their religion, and that the Hindus borrowed them from the Buddhists in later times. According to Anagarika Govinda also, the influence of Tāntrika Buddhism upon Hinduism was so profound that up to the present day the majority of Western scholars have laboured under the impression that Tāntrikism is a Hinduistic creation which was taken over later by more or less decadent Buddhist schools. "To declare Buddhist Tāntrism as an offshoot of Śaivism," he asserts, "is only possible for those who have no first-hand knowledge of Tāntric literature. A comparison of the Hindu Tantras with those of Buddhism (which are mostly preserved in Tibetan and which therefore for long remained unnoticed by Indologists) not only shows an astonishing divergence of methods and aims, in spite of external similarities, but proves the spiritual and historical priority and originality of the Buddhist Tantras".¹ But we do not agree with both these views. We feel that the question of the priority of Buddhist Tāntrikism over Brāhmaṇical Tāntrikism should not be raised at all because both of them developed concomitantly out of the seeds which are traced to the religious ideas of the pre-Buddhist period (*supra*).

Main Features of Tāntrika Buddhism

The first main characteristic feature of Tāntrika Buddhism is the

¹Anagarika Govinda, in *2500 Years of Buddhism*, p. 360 f.

use of mantras. Actually mantras are so fundamental for Tāntrika Buddhism that in its primary stage it is often called Mantrayāna. The term *mantra* means a 'hymn' or 'prayer' sacred to a deity; it is also understood to mean a 'spell', a 'charm' or an 'incantation'. A mantra is a symbol. Thus 'Pram' symbolises the Prajñāpāramitā. A mantra often symbolically represents a deity or even Reality. Thus 'Om' denotes the Lord through its sound. The *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* is full of mantras and their merits. The *Guhyasamāja* and the *Hevajra-tantra* devote a whole chapter each to Mantracharyā. The mantras appear to have developed from dhāraṇīs. The Mahāsaṅghikas are known to have developed a Dhāraṇī Piṭaka. The dhāraṇīs are found quoted in several early Mahāyāna texts. A number of manuscripts discovered in Gilgit and assignable on palaeographical grounds to the 5th and the 6th centuries A.D., contain dhāraṇīs¹ and mantras. The contents of the texts are obviously older than their script. The *Karaṇḍavyūha* attributes a dhāraṇī to the Buddha. The *Laṅkāvatāra* contains many magical formulae and the *Bodhisattva-bhūmi* dwells at length on the meaning and mystic aspect of the syllables.²

Besides the mantras, a vast and varied pantheon is another characteristic feature of Tāntrika Buddhism. Although the Mahāyānist had been worshipping Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, some demigods and a number of deified sages since long yet the further evolution of a well-classified Buddhist pantheon may well be attributed to the Tāntrika phase of Buddhism. In the Tāntrika Buddhist texts is usually given an elaborate discussion on complex liturgy, iconography and theology of the Dhyānī Buddhas (Akshobhaya, Vairochana, Amitābha, Ratnasambhava and Amoghasiddhi). Each of them is associated with one Śakti or female counterpart with a human Buddha, a Bodhisattva, a family, a seed-syllable, an element, a colour, a skandha, a vehicle, a particular direction and location in the human body.³

The Śakti-worship is the *raison d'être* of Tāntrikism. According to some scholars⁴ the main difference between Brāhmanical and

¹Cf. Sircar, D. C., 'Buddhist Dhāraṇīs from China in Inscriptions and Manuscripts', *JAIH*, III, pp. 36-9.

²See Dutt, N., 'Tantric Buddhism', *Bulletin of Tibetology*, I, No. 2, pp. 5-17; Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 244; cf. *AIK*, p. 260.

³*AIK*, p. 261 f.

⁴Anagarika Govinda, in *2500 Years of Buddhism*, p. 363.

Buddhist Tāntrikism is that the latter is not Śaktism. The concept of divine power, of the creative female aspect of Śiva, does not play any role in Buddhism. To the Buddhist Śakti is māyā, the very power that creates illusion from which only prajñā can liberate us. But we fail to agree with this observation. The Buddhists emphasize Śakti-sāhacharya as much as the Hindu Tāntrikists do, and even believe that the Śākyamuni had himself discovered that the Buddhahood abides in female organ and had delivered the secret doctrine while in the blissful state with the Vajrayoginī. To quote L. M. Joshi, "one of the important aspects of Buddhist Tāntrika culture is its emphasis on the female counterpart; we may call it 'Śakti-Worship' or worship of female energy, or association with coefficient female partner in spiritual effort. The consensus of opinion among acknowledged scholars is that Śakti-sādhanā is the essence of Tantra, whether Hinduistic or Buddhistic."¹

In Tāntrikism *sādhanā* means calling forth a god or goddess usually by means of repetitive recitation of the appropriate mantra and by meditating over his or her form or symbol. A large number of *sādhanās* now available in mixed Sanskrit contain eulogies of various deities, their prayers, different forms, iconographic details, attributes, mantras and modes of worship, etc.²

An important concept of Tāntrikism is that of *maṇḍala*. Literally *maṇḍala* means circle. But in Tāntrikism it technically signifies one of the subtlest concepts of Indian mysticism. Here *maṇḍala* denotes 'an idealised representation of existence', a 'mystic circle', a 'magical diagram', or 'a sphere of divinity'. "A *maṇḍala*", says Tucci, "delineates a consecrated superficies and protects it from invasion by disintegrating forces symbolised in demoniacal cycles."³

Almost every Tāntrika text describes the *importance of guru* or teacher. It is impossible to tread the path of *sādhanā* without the guidance and kindness of the guru. Guru has to be respected and obeyed as the very incarnation of Truth; he is to be revered as the Lord.

In Tāntrika Buddhism the supreme Reality is often described as the *Unity of Prajñā (Wisdom) and Upāya (Means)*; it is the 'Non-Dual', 'Two-in-One', the state of final realisation. "*Prajñā* is the same as *śūnyatā* (voidness) and *upāya* is the same as *karṇā* (com-

¹Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 279 f.

²*Ibid.*, p. 286; Dasgupta in *The Struggle for Empire*, p. 407.

³Quoted by Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 291.

heavens, etc.¹

The Buddhist Tāntrikists, who flourished between the eighth and twelfth centuries, developed the theory of eighty-four Siddhas, who had attained supernatural powers through the practice of yoga. The *Vaṛṇaratnākara* of Jyotirīśvara (14th century) mentions them while the Tibetan sources give a systematic biographical sketch of each of them. Their names are (1) Luhī or Lūhi-pā, (2) Līlā-pā. (3) Virū-pā, (4) Ḍombī-pā, (5) Śabara (Śabarī-pā), (6) Saraha-pā (Rāhulabhadrā), (7) Kaṅkāli-pā, (8) Mīna-pā, (9) Goraksha-pā, (10) Chau-raṅgī-pā, (11) Viṇā-pā, (12) Śāntī-pā, (13) Tanti-pā, (14) Charmāri (Charmarī)-pā, (15) Khaḍga-pā, (16) Nāgārjuna, (17) Kāṅho-pā, (18) Karṇarī-pā (Āryadeva), (19) Ṭhagaṇa-pā, (20) Nāro-pa (Nāḍapāda), (21) Śāli-pā, (Śṛgāla-pāda), (22) Tilo-pā (Tailika-pāda), (23) Chhatra-pā, (24) Bhadrā-pā, (25) Dvikhaṇḍī-pā, (26) Ajogī-pā, (27) Kāḍa-pāda (Kāla-pā), (28) Dhovī-pā, (29) Kaṅkaṇa-pā, (30) Kambala-pā, (31) Gengi-pā (Teṅki-pā), (32) Chhade-pā, (33) Taṇḍhi-pā, (34) Kukkurī-pā, (35) Chujbi (Kusūlī)-pā, (36) Dharma-pā, (37) Mahī-pā, (38) Achinti-pā; (39) Babhahi or Bhalaha-pā, (40) Nalina-pā, (41) Bhūsūkū-pā, (42) Indrabhūti, (43) Meghapāda (Meko-pā), (44) Kuṭhārī-pā or Kuṭhālī-pā, (45) Karmāra-pā, (46) Jālandhara-pā, (47) Rāhula-pā, (48) Garbharī-pā, (49) Dhakarī-pā, (50) Medinī-pā, (51) Paṅkaja-pā, (52) Ghaṇṭā-pā, (53) Yogī-pā, (54) Chelukā-pā, (55) Vāguri (Guṇḍarī)-pā, (56) Luñchaka-pā, (57) Nirguṇa-pā, (58) Jayānānda, (59) Charpaṭi-pā, (60) Champakapā, (61) Viṣaṇa (Bhīkhana)-pā, (62) Bhali (Teli, Taili)-pā, (63) Kumārī-pā, (64) Charṣaṭi or Chavarī or Javāri-pā, (65) Maṇibhadrā (Yoginī), (66) Mekhalā-pā (Yoginī), (67) Maṅkhalā-pā (Yoginī), (68) Kalakala-pā, (69) Kanthaḍī-pā, (70) Dauḍī or Dhahuli-pā, (71) Udhali-pā, (72) Kapāla-pā, (73) Kīla-pā, (74) Pushkara or Sāgara-pā, (75) Sarvabhaksha-pā, (76) Nāgabodhi-pā, (77) Dārika-pā, (78) Puttālī or Putuli-pā, (79) Pānaha or Upānaha-pā, (80) Kōkālī-pā, (81) Anaṅga-pā. (82) Lakshmīṅkarā (yoginī), (83) Samudrapā, and (84) Bhali or Vyāli-pā.

According to some scholars the list of eighty-four Siddhas has no historical value. They argue that on account of the mystic implication of the number eighty-four so many names, whether fictitious or historical, have been put together to make up a list. But it is also a fact that many teachers mentioned in this list were actual perso-

¹Bagchi in *CHI*, IV, p. 273; cf. Upadhyaya, N. N., *Gorakshanātha* (in Hindi), Ch. II.

nages, known in the Buddhist world of those days for their learning and spiritual attainments. Many texts or songs composed by them have been preserved partially in original but mostly in Tibetan translations (in the Tanjur, Volumes XLVII and XLVIII).

As regards the dates of the various Siddhas, the first of them namely Luhī-pā was, in all likelihood, the same as Matsyendranātha of other traditions,¹ who flourished about the beginning of the 10th century A.D. Siddha Nāgārjuna lived in the tenth century, and Charpaṭi also belonged to about the same time. Tilo-pā was a contemporary of King Mahipāla I of Bengal (c. 988–1038) and Naro-pā was his disciple. Jālandhara-pā and Kāṅho-pā lived also about the middle of the eleventh century. Thus the most famous Siddhāchāryas belonged to the tenth and eleventh centuries though some of them probably flourished in the twelfth.² The great majority of them may apparently be assigned to the eleventh century.

The general trend of the teachings of the Siddhāchāryas was Tāntrika. Nobody, except a qualified guru was allowed to initiate the disciple in the mysteries of their *sādhanā*. The guru had to find out the special spiritual aptitude of the disciple and suggest to him the mode of *sādhanā* most suitable for him. *Kula* symbolized the special spiritual leaning of a disciple. There were five such *kulas*, technically called *ḍombī*, *naṣī*, *rajakī*, *chaṅḍālī*, and *brāhmaṇī*. The nature of these *kulas* was determined by the five skandhas or the essences of the five basic elements (*mahābhūtas*). The five *kulas* are thus the five aspects of *prajñā*. The śakti assumes five different forms according to the predominance of each of the five skandhas or constituents. The best way for the initiate is to follow up his special *kula* or śakti during his *sādhanā*.

The siddha *sādhanā* involved the practice of a new form of yoga developed by the Siddhāchāryas. According to it, there are thirty-two nerve-channels (*nāḍīs*) within the body. The psychic energy, which has its seat below the *nābhi* (navel), flows up into the top-most station within the head called *mahāsukha-sthāna* (the place of great bliss) through these channels. Various names are given to the *nāḍīs* such as *lalanā*, *rasanā*, *avadhūti*, *pravaṇā*, *kṛshṇarūpiṇī*, *sāmānya*, *pāvakī*, *sumanā*, *kāminī*, etc.³ There are also a number of other stations, called either lotuses or wheels, within the body.

¹See Bagchi, in *History of Bengal*, I, ed. by Majumdar, p. 423.

²*Ibid.*, p. 419.

³CHI, IV, p. 277.

They are compared with the places of pilgrimage like Uḍḍiyāna, Jālandhara, Pūrṇagiri and Kāmarūpa. In its upward march the psychic energy has to pass through them.

The ultimate goal of sādhanā is the attainment of the state of *sahaja* which is one of great blissfulness, without beginning and without end, free from duality. In this state the sādhanika finds himself to be the sole reality, identical with the universe, identical with the Buddha—a being who is ever free. Everything else dwindles into nonentity.¹

The attainment of the highest goal also meant certain physical perfections. Therefore a good deal of emphasis was placed on the *kāya-sādhanā* involving transubstantiation of the body. Later followers of the Siddhāchāryas carried it to the extreme and concerned themselves only with the means of attaining a perfect, changeless and imperishable body which would help them to live long. It could be attained in various ways, the most important of them being an upward movement of the *bodhichitta* (semen virile).

The cultivation of the *bodhichitta* was related with certain alchemical practices. Siddha Nāgārjuna was famous for introducing alchemy in matters of sādhanā. The Siddhāchāryas introduced many other innovations in spiritual exercises, but at present it is difficult to follow them on account of the symbolic character of the language in which they are described.

Nāthism

Nāthism derived its inspiration from the Vajrayāna and 84 Siddhas. The propounders of the Nātha school Hinduized the teachings of the Buddhist Tantras. Actually Tāntrikism proved to be a great synthesizing force and the synthesis of Śaivism and Buddhism is best reflected in the Nātha sect.² The Nāthas were originally nine in number. Sometimes they are included in the list of the eighty-four Siddhas of the Buddhists, though it will be a mistake to believe that the Nātha school was substantially the same as the Tāntrika Buddhism. The Nāthas introduced many new theories in the sphere of *haṭhayoga* and *yoga* which were different from those propounded in the Tantras.

During the middle of the seventh century Nāthism became

¹*Ibid.*, p. 278.

²Vide, Buddha Prakash, *Aspects of Indian History and Civilization*, pp. 293–301; Dwivedi, H. P., *Nātha Sampradāya* (in Hindi), p. 1 ff.

popular through the teachings and mystic songs of the eighty-four Siddhas. It travelled to Nepal and Tibet and Tāntrika works were translated into Tibetan. Some of its works also travelled to China and are now found in their Chinese translations.

Sahajayāna

The Vajrayāna also gave rise to several later Yānas such as the Sahajayāna and Kālachakrayāna.

The Sahajayāna is believed to have started with the great Siddha Saraha. By Sahajayāna he meant easy path. According to him perfection can be attained while eating, drinking and merry-making. It implied rejection of religious formalities for obtaining nirvāṇa.¹ Lakshmīnkaradevī (A.D. 729), the sister of King Indrabhūti of Uḍḍiyāna was another great Sahajayānist. She declared in her *Advayasiddhi* that no suffering, fasting, rites, bathing purification, or obedience to the rules of society are necessary for the purpose of obtaining emancipation. It is useless to bow down before the images of gods which are made of wood, stone, or mud. The worshipper should offer worship only to his own body where all gods reside. The movement exerted great influence on Vaishṇavism also.²

Kālachakrayāna

The Kālachakrayāna seems to be a later development of the Vajrayāna. According to the *Kālachakratantra* and its commentary *Vimalaprabhā* written by Puṇḍarīka, Kāla or Time is a phenomenal expression of Karuṇā and Chakra is the world of objects. Kālachakra is a fierce deity, an embodiment of Śūnyatā³ and Karuṇā (compassion), embraced by the Śakti or goddess Prajñā. Thus Kālachakrayāna represents the philosophical conception of *advaya* or non-duality, a union of *Prajñā* and *Upāya*.⁴ Kālachakra is regarded as the Adibuddha or the progenitor even of the Buddhas, that is to say, the Dhyānī Buddhas. The doctrine that in "one's own body, the whole world is manifest" has a resemblance to the

¹*Struggle for Empire*, p. 413; Upadhyaya, N. N., *Tāntrika Bauddha Sādhana āura Sāhitya*, p. 163 ff.

²For Sahajiyās of Bengal, see P. C. Bagchi in *History of Bengal*, I, ed. by R. C. Majumdar, p. 424.

³Cf. Banerjee, R., 'Śūnyatā as Viewed by the Kālachakra School of Buddhism', *POC*, II, Gauhati Session, 1966, pp. 147-49; Upadhyaya, *op. cit.*, p. 155 ff.

⁴Yadava, B. N. S., *Society and Culture in Northern India*, p. 344 f.

doctrines of the Sahajayāna and Nāthism. The system became popular in the eastern and Himalayan regions.

Here reference may also be made to the Dharma cult, the followers of which mainly came from the lower strata of society—the Ḍomas, Chaṇḍālas, etc. It derived its main elements from Buddhism—Vajrayāna and Mantrayāna.¹

Criticism of Buddhist Tāntrikism

Buddhist Tāntrikism has been severely criticised by a number of modern scholars. According to N. Dutt, in Tāntrikism “The religion lost itself in the maze of mysticism and was engulfed by a host of *mudrās* (finger-gestures and ceremonies), *maṇḍalas* (mystical diagrams), *kriyās* (rites and ceremonies) and *charyās* (meditational practices and observances for external and internal purity). The teachings of one of the noblest minds were thus deformed into a system of magical spells, exorcisms, spirit-beliefs, and worship of demons and divinities.” Further, “in the name of religion and philosophy, necessity and circumstances have debased human mind to the lowest conceivable vulgarity.”² Many other scholars including Kern, R. L. Mitra, Winternitz, Charles Eliot and Poussin have denounced the Tāntrika practice of Śakti-sāhacharya, ceremony of secret initiation of young yogin and yoginī, and the use of the diverse kinds of food and drinks including flesh and wine, that find frequent mention in the pages of esoteric texts. B. Bhattacharya stigmatises the Tantras as examples of ‘the worst immorality and sin’ and Tāntrikism as a ‘disease’.

However many critics of Tāntrikism have conceded that the Tāntrika sādhanā “did confer on the adepts some superhuman powers and also led many to the realization of high spiritual states” and that Tāntrikism also “envisaged something very deep and subtle to be realized by those who were initiated into the secrets by their spiritual teachers”. It has also been pointed out that the Tantras themselves make it quite clear that their language is not to be interpreted literally and that the darker aspects of their practices were not meant for the ordinary men. Then there are a number of scholars who have showered great praise on Tāntrikism. According to Tucci, apart from some exceptions, “the Tantras contain one of

¹*Ibid.*, p. 377.

²Dutt, in *AIK*, p. 258 f.

the highest expressions of Indian mysticism, which may appear to us rather strange in its outward form, chiefly because we do not always understand the symbolical language in which they are written." Snellgrove and Lāmē Anāgarika Govinda¹ have also tried to defend Tāntrikism from the attack launched against it by modern scholars. To us it appears that despite our ignorance about the mysteries of Tāntrikism it cannot be denied that whatever is known about it is sufficient to generate a sense of repulsion. The doctrines that the Buddhahood resides in the female organ, that lust is crushed by lust, that Nirvāṇa is found in the embrace of a young girl and that a mother or sister is no different from any other enjoyable girl and that the use of the five makāras is essential in religious practices can hardly be defended despite the sublime heights which the philosophy of Tantra obviously touched.

Tāntrika Religion as a Factor of Social Change

The Tantras appear to have specially spread among the outcastes, voluntary outcastes and carefree wanderers. The Tāntrika thinkers reflect a disregard for caste system. In the *Kulāratnamāntra*, caste is regarded as a *pūṣa* which a *sādhaka* has to cut off. In many cases Tāntrika priestly functions were performed by people of low castes.² In the works of the Siddhas Nairātmya is imagined as a Dombī girl. The fact that a large number out of the 84 Siddhas reportedly belonged to lower castes (about half of them being of the rank of Domba, Chamāra, Chaṅḡāla, washerman, oilman, tailor, fisherman, wood-cutter, cobbler, and so forth) indicates that Tāntrikism was chiefly patronized by the members of the inferior classes. Evidently they cared little for conventions and social taboos and taught that all classes are one, there being no difference between a Brāhmaṇa and a Domba, a king and a slave. Some of them, including Saraha who was a Brāhmaṇa by caste, became outcastes voluntarily. Saraha is said to have married the daughter of an arrowmaker who belonged to a mean caste. In his very first *śūlī*, he attacks his own former high caste. He also disregarded intellectualism and externals of religion. The use of the local vernaculars—

¹Govinda, Lāmē Anāgarika, 'Principle of Buddhist Tāntrism', *Essays of Tibetology*, II, No. 1, pp. 9-16.

²See, Yadava, B. N. S., *Society and Culture in Northern India*, p. 380; cf. Renou, L., *Religions of Ancient India*, p. 87; Buddha Prakash, *Aspects of Indian History and Civilization*, pp. 265-73.

Apabhraṁśa instead of Sanskrit—was another aspect of the same mentality.

Was Buddhism a New Religion and Culture?

In recent years some Buddhist scholars have tried to propound the thesis that there was something like Buddhist culture which was 'distinct and different from Hindu culture'.¹ "A well-defined *weltanschauung*", L. M. Joshi, a Buddhist scholar, asserts, "originally peculiar to the Śramaṇic tradition, moral and ascetic ideas, religious practices and institutions, art and literature, education and learning, inspired by the teachings of Śākyamuni Buddha, constitute what has been called the Buddhist culture."² According to him this Buddhist culture may be viewed as constituting "the dominant strand" of Indian culture.³ It obviously implies that the Hindu culture is a comparatively less important element of the complex fabric of Indian culture. But the attempt to prove the existence of Buddhist culture in ancient India as something different from Hindu culture and make the former as comparatively more important than the latter can hardly be substantiated. It is obviously a projection into the past of the desire of modern Buddhist scholars to establish a separate cultural identity of their own. The attempt begins with the rejection⁴ of the well-established view that the Buddha himself was merely a reformer of "the Hindu religion as practised in his time".⁵ Against this L. M. Joshi has urged that "the use of the term 'Hindu' and 'Hinduism' in the context of the age of Buddha is entirely wrong, both historically and doctrinally. There were neither Hindus nor Hinduism in the 7th and 6th centuries before Christ."⁶ But such a view conveniently denies or overlooks that by the same token Buddhism did not exist as a separate religion in the age of the Buddha. The Buddha did not renounce Brāhmanical religion, referred to the Brāhmanical sages and took over several beliefs current among the Hindus of his day. He did not feel or claim that he was forming a new religion. A substantial portion of his teachings, such as the doctrine of karman,

¹Joshi, *Studies*, p. 329.

²*Ibid.*, p. 328.

³*Ibid.*, p. 329.

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 327.

⁵Kane, *op. cit.*, p. 1004.

⁶Joshi, *Studies*, p. 327.

rebirth and cosmological theories, was common with and formed part of the tenets of the Upanishads.¹ According to R. C. Dutt it would be historically wrong to suppose that Gautama Buddha consciously set himself up as a founder of a new religion. On the contrary he believed to the last that he was proclaiming only the ancient and pure form of religion.² It is of course true that he did not accept the authority of the Vedas but, as we have seen, the Upanishads themselves were hesitant to accept the authority of the earlier Vedic texts and many later religio-philosophical sects included within the Hindu or Brāhmaṇical fold, did not at all accept the Vedas as authoritative. Similarly, the opposition to the cult of sacrifice and the Brāhmaṇical claim of superiority on the basis of birth is found within Hindu society itself. The Buddha himself called his teachings the ancient way (*purāṇam maggam*) trod by ancient enlightened men (*pubbakehi sammāsambuddhehi*). As Coomaraswamy has contended, the more profound is one's study of Buddhism and Brāhmaṇism, the more difficult it becomes for him to distinguish between the two.³ P. V. Kane asserts that the Buddha himself was merely a reformer of "the Hindu religion as practised in his time."⁴ According to Rhys Davids "Gotama was born, brought up and lived and died a Hindu" and "Buddhism grew and flourished within the fold of orthodox belief."⁵ R. G. Basak goes to the extent of maintaining that "It may be declared that Buddhism is another phase of Hinduism and not a heterodox system of Indian philosophy."⁶ K. N. Upadhyaya maintains that Buddhism "was a departure from the orthodoxy of the tradition, though not from the tradition as a whole."⁷ Mrs. Rhys Davids has also opined that the Tripitakas do not show any rupture with Brāhmaṇas and what the Buddha preached was in agreement with the central tenets of Brāhmaṇism.⁸ According to R. C. Mitra also the Buddha was the child of that noble culture

¹Kane, *op. cit.*

²Dutt, R. C., *Buddhism and Buddhist Civilization in India*, 1983, pp. 3, 5.

³Coomaraswamy, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, p. 452.

⁴Kane, *op. cit.*, p. 1004.

⁵*Buddhism*, pp. 83, 85.

⁶Basak, R. G., 'The Contribution of Buddhism to Indian Thought', *Bulletin of Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture*, Calcutta, XIV, No. 9, 1963, pp. 333-4.

⁷Upadhyaya, K. N., *Early Buddhism and the Bhagavadgītā*, p. 105.

⁸*IHQ*, X, pp. 276-84.

which is generally known as Brāhmaṇism¹. Similarly Radhakrishnan has opined that “the Buddha did not feel that he was announcing a new religion. He was born, grew up, and died a Hindu. He was restating with a new emphasis the ancient ideals of the Indo-Aryan civilization”. Further, “Buddhism did not start as a new and independent religion. It was an offshoot of the more ancient faith of the Hindus, perhaps a schism or a heresy. The Buddha came to fulfil, not to destroy.”² Against this almost unanimous opinion of modern scholars, the claim that Buddhism existed as a separate religion in the age of the Buddha appears to be as inaccurate as the assertion that Makkhali Gosāla founded a new religion. If Buddhism became a separate religion at all, it was a later development in its history.

But Buddhism probably never became a fully separate religion, at least in ancient India, though it may be conceded that it acquired a distinct character of its own in other countries, where it could develop outside the pale of Hinduism. Despite the attempts of some modern Buddhists, who emphasize the differences between Buddhism and Brāhmaṇical sects, our ancients believed that they belonged to a common cultural heritage. That is why in the same family different individuals could worship different deities. As is well-known, most of the Buddhist philosophers came from the Brāhmaṇa families. Further, kings in ancient India apparently regarded Buddhism as a part of the Hindu cultural world. Aśoka, though personally a Buddhist, gave help and support to the Brāhmaṇas and Śramaṇas both. Similarly the rulers of the Imperial Gupta dynasty, who were generally Paramabhāgavatas, patronized Buddhism also. Narasiṃhagupta was officially a Paramabhāgavata, though according to Yuan Chwang he personally followed the path of the Buddha. Similarly Harsha of Kanauj and Bhāskaravarman of Kāmarūpa were the worshippers of Śiva but showed every respect to the Buddha. In the family of Harsha his ancestors worshipped Sūrya, his elder brother worshipped the Buddha and he himself was a devotee of Śiva. The Maitraka rulers were also generally Śaivas, but gave lavish grants to the Buddhists. The Bhauma-kara kings of Orissa and the Kārkoṭas of Kashmir also followed Brāhmaṇical religion, but patronised Buddhism also.

¹Mitra, R. C., *Viśvabhāratī Annals*, VI, pp. 150-5.

²Radhakrishnan, Foreword (p. ix, xiii) of *2500 Years of Buddhism*, ed. by Bapat.

The common man in ancient India worshipped Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist gods simultaneously (unless one happened to be an *ekāntika* in his religious beliefs). Thus, despite the attempts of some modern Buddhists to the contrary, it would seem that our ancients looked upon Buddhism as a part of general Hindu world. The same point emerges from the fact that the historical development of Buddhism has been parallel to Hinduism: under the impact of devotional Paurāṇika religion it developed devotional Mahāyānism and under the impact of Tāntrikism it developed its own Tāntrika sects. The complete assimilation of Buddhism by Paurāṇika Hinduism, which is a fact of history and which scholars like L. M. Joshi are constrained to accept, could have taken place only if the two belonged to the same culture-complex and had a common basis. That is why for the ancient Hindus the change over to the worship of the Buddha was no more different than the change from the worship of Viṣṇu to the worship of Śiva. There were no doubt fierce disputations between the Brāhmaṇical and Buddhist philosophers but such disputations took place also among the various Buddhist philosophical sets, as well as among orthodox schools. Therefore one can hardly subscribe to the view that Buddhism in ancient India was not a part of the larger Hindu tradition and that there was something like a separate Buddhist culture. Buddhism was an off-shoot of the Śramaṇa tradition which was certainly non-Vedic, but it was one of the two main strands of our religious tradition the various facets of which collectively produced the complex fabric of Hindu civilization.

Impact of Buddhism and Brāhmaṇism on Each Other

However one can easily concede that Buddhism has contributed a lot to the formation and evolution of the various aspects of Indian culture. But now-a-days there is a tendency among Buddhist scholars to exaggerate its contribution which we wish to controvert here. For example, as noted above Joshi has asserted that Buddhism constituted "the dominant stand" of Indian culture. He also maintains that "the Hindus worship the Buddha because their religion is largely based on the teachings of the Buddha"¹ and that as a result of "assimilation of Buddhism the Vedic Brāhmaṇism reshaped itself into Paurāṇic Hinduism"². But to regard Buddhism (the history of

¹Joshi, L. M., *Studies*, p. 330.

²*Ibid.*, p. 329.

which began in the sixth century and which disappeared from the country altogether in the twelfth century) as constituting the dominant strand in the fabric of culture as compared to Brāhmaṇical tradition (the known history of which began about two thousand years earlier than the birth of the Buddha, which is still the most popular and dominant strand of our culture and in which Buddhism itself was merged) is, to say the least, illogical and historically inaccurate. It can scarcely be doubted that the essential features of the main current of post-Buddha Hinduism—the doctrines of Bhakti and *avatāra*, *pūjā* ritual, image worship, etc.—could not evolve from the main teachings of the Buddha—sorrowism (*dukkhavāda*), Four Noble Truths, Eight-fold Path, etc. The Hindu thinkers deduce the main features of their religion from the various Vedic and Upanishadic texts, Smṛtis, Epics and Purāṇas. The later Brāhmaṇa texts (which refer to several *avatāras*), the *Ashṭādhyāyī* of Pāṇini (which refers to Bhakti), the *Mahābhāshya* of Patañjali and the *Gītā* (which provides the classical exposition of these doctrines and also sanction for the *pūjā* ritual) prove the antiquity of Paurāṇika religion. The *Indica* of Megasthenes and the Ghosundi, Besnagar and Nanaghat inscriptions also prove that some sects of Paurāṇika Hinduism had already emerged in the pre-Christian centuries. Therefore the emergence of devotionalism in Mahāyāna Buddhism (which cannot be placed much earlier than first century A.D.) must have been the result of the impact of Paurāṇika Hinduism on it, and not the *vice-versa*.

It however does not mean that Buddhism did not play any role in the religious evolution of the country. The point which we want to emphasize is only that the impact of Buddhism and Brāhmaṇism has been mutual and that borrowing by Buddhism from Brāhmaṇism has been far more than the *vice-versa*. Firstly, it may be noted that even in the hey-day of its popularity Buddhism did not enjoy absolute supremacy as a religion. Further, as pointed out by Satkari Mookerjee the intellectual power of the Buddhist saṅgha “was maintained only by the continual accession of learned Brāhmaṇas into the Buddhist fold. From the very beginning, the pillars of the Church were constituted by its Brāhmaṇa adherents. Śāriputra, Maudgalyāyana, and Mahākaśyapa were Brāhmaṇas. In the later career of the Buddhist Order, the intellectual stalwarts in philosophy, logic, ethics, poetry, and drama were almost entirely recruited from the priestly class”. Buddhism maintained its import-

ance, and commanded the admiration and reverence of the intelligentsia and aristocracy, so long as it possessed men of surpassing spiritual power and intellectual acumen. "The Buddhist patriarchs, such as Āśvaghoṣa, Nāgārjuna, Āryadeva, Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, Dīnāga, Dharmakīrti, Dharmottara and their like, were born in Brāhmaṇa families, educated in Vedic lore, and reared in orthodox tradition. They were intellectual giants and produced works of subtle dialectic and overpowering logical cogency in support of Buddhist tenets."¹ Secondly, several tenets of the Upanishadic teachings were adopted by Buddhism. For example, the Buddha agreed with the earlier Upanishadic thinkers in criticizing the Vedic animal sacrifices, priest-craft and worship of nature deities. Like the Upanishadic thinkers he emphasized the superiority of inner awakening² over external ceremonies, and stressed the operation of laws of karman, moral retribution and rebirth. Here Buddhism was more influenced by the earlier Śramaṇic ideology which had already influenced the Upanishads themselves. In its turn Buddhism might have influenced the philosophy of the *Gītā*. For example its concept of nirvāṇa, which was itself modified version of the Upanishadic concept of the Absolute might have influenced the notion of Brahma-Nirvāṇa of the *Gītā*³. It is also remotely possible that the concept of the *sthītaprajñā* of the *Gītā* was influenced by Buddhism.⁴ On its part the *Gītā* appears to have influenced several verses of the *Dhammapada*.⁵ Some scholars believe that the Buddhist approach "found a deeply sympathetic response in the *Rāmāyaṇa*",⁶ while Fausböll and Max Müller have found parallels between certain passages belonging to *Dhammapada* on the one hand and the *Manu Smṛti* and the *Mahābhārata* on the other.⁷ However, the vexed question of literary chronology makes it impossible to determine as to which was the borrower side. Similarly, it is difficult to assess as to how far the emphasis in Bhāgavatism on the principle of *ahiṃsā* as found in the *Mahābhārata* and the *Gītā*, which was the direct result of Upanishadic teachings, was strengthened by Buddhism (and

¹CHI, I, p. 578.

²*Ibid.*, p. 598.

³*Gītā*, II.72; V.24-26.

⁴Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

⁵Cf. *Gītā*, VI.5-6 with *Dhammapada*, 160, 165.

⁶Gokhale, V. V., 'Kṛṣṇa and Buddhist Literature', *Cultural Forum*, 1968, ol. 36, p. 73.

⁷Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 334 f.

Jainism). With *ahimsā*, the popularity of vegetarianism also increased in all the Indian religions, though here it must be remembered that in Buddhism *ahimsā* meant non-killing, not non-meat-eating; for the Buddha himself remained a meat-eater throughout his life.

In the historical period, with the advent of the Paurāṇika religion, the worship of images and symbols was introduced in India. Buddhism also became a positive force in the early centuries of the Christian era. Inspired by the Paurāṇika religion the Mahāyāna theology propounded the doctrine of the eternal Buddha, which was not distinguishable from the absolute Brahman of the Upanishads. The cult of bodhisattvas, who make it the mission of their life to bring solace to suffering mankind and to elevate their moral and spiritual equipment, exercised a powerful influence upon the popular mind.¹ It represented a positive reaction against the extreme pessimism and other-worldliness of the early exponents of Buddhism.² The emergence of Mahāyāna "led to the creation of poetry, drama, philosophy, and an exalted code of selfless ethics. Instead of seeking private and personal salvation, people came to value the service of fellow-beings to be the surer and better path to higher life. In the Gandhāra school of sculpture and architecture, and in its national orientation, which found its consummation in the Gupta period, and in the cave-paintings of Ajanta, we find a resurgence of positive devotion and love."³

Buddhism also borrowed the pantheon of Brāhmaṇism. Not only the demi-gods such as the Yakshas, Gandharvas, Kinnaras and Nāgas are common to both, the old Vedic gods Indra and Brahmā were also worshipped by the Buddhists. In Buddhism Avalokiteśvara is called Maheśvara (an epithet of Śiva), and Mañjuśrī is often called Kumārabhūta (Kumāra Kārttikeya). The Tāntrika pantheon of both the religions is almost identical. Tārā, Kālī, Chāmuṇḍā, Sarasvatī, Vārāhī, Hārītī, Mahākāla, Gaṇeśa, etc. were worshipped by both.⁴

The practice of visiting *tīrthas* is as old as the Vedic age, though in that period it signified a place where animal sacrifice was performed. In the Paurāṇika religion *tīrthayātrā* concept was trans-

¹Mookerjee, S., *CHI*, I, p. 590.

²*Ibid.*

³*Ibid.*, p. 590 f.

⁴Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 337.

formed probably under the impact of Buddhism.¹

The problem whether or not the Advaita Vedānta philosophy as expounded by Gauḍapāda, Śāṅkara and Śrī Harsha was influenced by the Mādhyamika philosophy with which it shows unmistakable points of contact and similarities, is highly controversial. Some ancient scholars believed that Śāṅkara borrowed much from the Buddhist so much so that they accused him of being a Buddhist in disguise (*prachekkhanna Buddha*). But Śrī Harsha vigorously controverted this accusation. Several modern scholars also agree with Śrī Harsha. For example T. R. V. Murti excludes the possibility of doctrinal borrowing by the Vedāntins altogether because "each had a totally different background of tradition and conception of reality." He concedes the possibility of the borrowing of technique only.² According to S. Mookerjee "it is almost a truism that the reorientation of idealistic thought by Aśvaghōṣa, Asaṅga, and Vasubandhu brought it perilously near to the absolutism of the Upaniṣads It would be a mistake to suppose that Śāṅkarācārya was indebted to Vasubandhu or Aśvaghōṣa for his monistic philosophy. The Buddhist philosophers owed their inspiration to the Upaniṣads, when they gave a monistic interpretation to the doctrines of the Buddha. Śāṅkarācārya derived his monistic inspiration direct from the Upaniṣads, and only worked out the negative logic in order to vindicate his position. In this negative enterprise, he was assuredly influenced by the Mādhyamika polemics, and he utilized them for reinforcing his logical standpoint. This was previously done also by Gauḍapāda in his *Māṇḍūkya-kārikā* and Śāṅkara only followed in the footsteps of this mastermind, who is by tradition accredited to have been the teacher of Śāṅkara's own teacher Govindapāda."³ G. C. Pande also subscribes to this theory.⁴ However it may still be conceded that "though victorious, Śāṅkarācārya adopted many things of value from the Buddhists. The differentiation of reality into three grades, viz., absolute (*pāramārthika*), empirical (*vyāvahārika*), apparent (*prātibhāsika*), is obviously influenced by the similar procedure adopted by the Mādhyamikas. We do not find any allusion to such distinction in the original

¹*Ibid.*

²*Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, pp. 116-7.

³*CHI*, I, p. 593 f.

⁴*Origins*, p. 555 f. (quoted *supra*).

Upaniṣads.”¹

The Decline of Buddhism

The causes of the decline of Buddhism in India and also the period when its decline commenced have been a matter of controversy. Some modern scholars such as P. C. Bagchi² and R. C. Mitra³ have traced the decline of Buddhism from the seventh century A.D. According to L. M. Joshi, however, the decline of Buddhism in India had started at a considerably earlier date.⁴ A comparative study of the writings of the Chinese Pilgrim-scholars, viz. Fa-hsien, Sung-yun, Yuan-Chwang and I-tsing, who visited India in the fifth, sixth and seventh centuries respectively, testify to the gradual decadence of Buddhism in several parts of the country. In a tradition preserved in the Pali canon itself the Buddha is said to have prophesied that his *dhamma* would begin to decay five hundred years after him i.e. about the first century A.D.⁵ Bu-ston also records extracts from some older works which tend to suggest 1,000 years life-span of Buddhism. A similar tradition is found in the *Vinaya-Kshudraka*, the *Abhidharmasūtra*, and the *Abhidharmakoshavyākhyā*. According to the *Bhadrakalpikasūtra*, “the real Doctrine is to exist for 500 years and the next 500 years there will be only a resemblance of it.”⁶ Yuan Chwang who visited India in the seventh century A.D. has recorded a number of legends which were current in India at the time of his visit about the catastrophe that was to befall on the Doctrine. These legends and prophecies concerning the decline of Buddhism and also the actual decline as witnessed by the Chinese pilgrims in the form of deserted monasteries and flourishing Brāhmaṇical temples seem to suggest that the tendency of the decline of Buddhism appeared in about the fifth century after Nirvāṇa.⁷ It is therefore not proper to fix any particular point of time for the beginning of decline. We feel that it was a gradual and slow process. Kane is, therefore, right when he states that “No single

¹CHI, I, p. 594; cf. Swami Ganeshwarananda, ‘Buddhism and Vedānta’, *Vedānta and the West*, 180, July 1966, pp. 7-16.

²Bagchi, P. C., ‘Decline of Buddhism and its Causes’, *Asutosh Mukerjee Silver Jubilee Volumes*, III, p. 412.

³Mitra, R. C., *Decline of Buddhism in India*, p. 2.

⁴Joshi, L. M., *Studies*, p. 302.

⁵Cf. section on Buddha’s attitude towards women, p. 269.

⁶*Studies*, p. 303.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 304.

cause, not even a few causes can fully account for this phenomenon. A combination of causes, both internal and external, must have been in operation for a pretty long time to bring about this remarkable event."¹

Internal Factors in the Decline of Buddhism

According to K. W. Morgan,² Rāhula Sāṅkṛtyāyana³ and many others one of the most important causes of the decline of Buddhism was the moral decadence of the Buddhists. It is reflected in the accounts of the Chinese pilgrims and in Indian literature. Yuan Chwang refers to the careless moral conduct of the Buddhist monks of Bolor or Balti. In Sindh he found that the monks killed animals, reared cattle and maintained wives and children. Kalhaṇa refers to this feature among the monks of Kashmir. In the *Milinda pañha* Nāgasena admits that some people joined the saṅgha to gain a livelihood⁴. In the *Mṛchchhakaṭika* of Śūdraka, the *Mālatīmādhava* of Bhavabhūti and the *Daśakumāracharita* of Daṇḍin the Buddhist nuns appear as the 'go-betweens' and experts in procuring lovers. In the *Mattavilāsa prahasana* of Pallava Mahendravarman (a contemporary of Harsha) the Buddhist monks are criticised for their lack of self-control. In the *Chaturbhāṇi*, the Buddhist bhikshus are described as going to the houses of courtesans. In this work the Buddhist terminology is used for sex purposes in a vulgar way. The 'Sūtra of the Face of Lotus', translated into Chinese in A.D. 584, states that the monks took pleasure in doing only evil deeds. They were given to theft, pillage, and cultivation of lands. Bu-ston records from the *Chandragarbhapariṣchchhāsūtra* that 1,300 years after the death of the Buddha (i.e. in 'about 800 A.D.) the monks shall covet riches and articles of enjoyments. The *Rāshṭrapālapariṣchchhāsūtra*

¹Kane, *HD*, V, Pt. ii, p. 1003; for a discussion on the factors responsible for the decline of Buddhism, vide Kane, *op. cit.*, pp. 1003-30; Barth, A., *Religions of India*, pp. 133-39; Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, pp. 157 f.; 319; 'Persecution of Buddhists in India', *Journal of Pali Text Society*, 1896, pp. 87-92; Kern, *Manual of Buddhism*, pp. 133-34; Mitra, R. C., *The Decline of Buddhism in India*, pp. 125-64; Morgan, K. W., *The Path of the Buddha*, pp. 47-50; Joshi, L. M., *Studies*, Ch. XVI; Majumdar, A. K., *Concise History of India*, 1983, pp. 455-67.

²Morgan, K. W., *op. cit.*, p. 48.

³*Journal Asiatique*, Vol. 225, 1934, pp. 209-30 (Quoted by Kane, *op. cit.*, p. 1022 f.).

⁴Kane, *ibid.*, p. 1023, n. 1651.

(usually assigned to the 6th century A.D.) describes the lax morals of the Buddhist monks. For example, in the form of Buddha's prophecy, it states: "My monks will be without shame and without virtue, haughty, intoxicating themselves with alcoholic drinks." Non-religious activities of the monks and nuns are also found mentioned in the accounts of the early Arab invasions on India. According to Arabs, a 'Samani' (śramaṇa) of Sindh had a family and was actively associated with the political and military affairs of the king.¹

Another very harmful factor for Buddhism leading to its decline were schism and fierce disputes in the saṅgha. By the seventh century A.D. Buddhism was no longer one system; it had become a family of several schools and communities. The Buddha had himself visualized the danger of schism and had condemned it as one of the five deadly sins. As we have seen, the history of schism in Buddhism dates back from the time of the Buddha himself. Yuan Chwang found that the Hīnayānists of Sindh were criticising the Mahāyāna and Prajñāgupta, one of the most famous teachers of Hīnayāna, had composed a treatise of 700 ślokas against the Mahāyāna. Yuan Chwang himself was inspired by the Mahāyānists to destroy the Hīnayāna by composing a work in 16,000 ślokas. Śāntideva devoted a number of verses of his *Bodhicharyāvātāra* to the criticism of Vijñānavāda. Similarly, Chandrakīrti attacked all non-Mādhyamika systems of Buddhist thought and Śāntarakṣita devoted a long section of his *Tattvasaṃgraha* to demolish the tenets of the Vātsīputriyas. He as well as Kamalaśīla declared that the Puḍgalavādins have no claims to be called the followers of the Buddha.² Thus the disputes among the various sects of the Buddhists were as bitter as between the Buddhists and the non-Buddhists.

According to Charles Eliot "it was to the corruptions of the Mahāyāna rather than of the Hīnayāna that the decay of Buddhism in India was due."³ L. M. Joshi feels that this "remark can hardly be regarded to be without some substance in it." For, "the growth and popularity of Mahāyānism resulted not only in the increase of the votaries of the religion, but also in a corresponding qualitative decay The Great Vehicle laid emphasis on the

¹For references to these works see Joshi, L. M., *Studies*, p. 305 f.

²For references, see *ibid.*, p. 308 f.

³Eliot, *Hinduism and Buddhism*, II, p. 6.

image-worship, prayers and incantations, pompous ceremonies and rituals; it incorporated many folk-beliefs and made room for the emotional demands of the laity, and in doing so, the Buddhists made a near and clear approach to Hinduism; this process ultimately led to the destruction of distinction between the two faiths. The laymen and lay-women of India found no difference between the worship of Viṣṇu and Buddha, of Śiva and Avalokita, and of Tārā and Pārvatī.¹ The Bodhisattvayāna seems to have given birth to the institution of 'married monks' mentioned by Yuan Chwang, Kalhaṇa and the *Chācha-nāmā*.² The Buddhist ascetic now went to his teacher along with a female partner. This tendency developed further in Tāntrika Buddhism. Almost all the 84 Siddhas of Tāntrika Buddhism were either married or had a yoginī as their partner. The Vajrayāna texts reveal a radical departure from classical Buddhism. The world of senses, which was earlier regarded as the cause of evil, was now taken as the proper field for making spiritual progress. Nirvāṇa, according to Vajrayāna, is to be attainable here and now, in this life and through the saṃsāra. The Vajrayāna advocated a moral anarchy among the yogins and yoginīs. The place of Five Moral Precepts (Pañchaśīla) is now taken by Pañchamakāras, the ideal of Nirvāṇa gives way to that of Mahā-sukha (Great Delight) attainable not through *śīla*, *samādhi* and *prajñā*, not even by the noble Eightfold Path but by a mystic union with the yoginī.³ In Tāntrika Buddhism the *dukkhavāda* of the Buddha was replaced by hedonism associated with the revelations of *Vajra sattva*. The rationalism of early Buddhism gave way to superstitious sorcery and erotic esoterism comes to the foreground. According to Joshi, among "the internal factors in the decay of Buddhism in India, the abuses of Vajrayāna perhaps occupy the foremost place."⁴

An important factor in the decline of Buddhism was the migration of many of the ablest and most vigorous exponents of Buddhist thought and faith from India for propagating their religion in other lands⁵. It tended to weaken the strength of Buddhism in India. Radhakrishnan names 24 eminent Indian scholars who went to

¹Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 309.

²For references, see *ibid.*, p. 308 f.

³*Ibid.*, p. 310.

⁴*Studies*, p. 311.

⁵*HD*, V, Part II, p. 1022.

China for propagating Buddha's teachings from the 3rd century A.D. to 973 A.D.¹ According to Joseph Edkins in the beginning of the 6th century A.D. the number of Indian Buddhists in China was more than three thousand.² So far as Buddhism is concerned it may be regarded a sort of 'brain drain' in ancient India.

As pointed out by P. V. Kane, for ordinary men the Hindu ideal of ordered scheme of life with peculiar duties and rights, particularly the importance attached to *gṛhasthāśrama* was quite attractive³. In comparison to it Buddhism had nothing to offer. According to G. C. Pande, one of the important factors in the decline of Buddhism in India was its 'social failure'.⁴ N. Dutt also remarks that "Buddhism was never a social movement."⁵ The laity continued to practise the current practices and ceremonies, prescribed largely by the Brāhmaṇa priests. This attitude tended to restrict Buddhism to the monasteries. Consequently when these monasteries were destroyed by the Muslims the Buddhists, who were never made free from the influence of the Brāhmaṇa culture, turned more and more towards the latter. On the other hand, the strength of Brāhmaṇism lay in the fact that its religion and varṇāśrama-based society were inseparable. Therefore Hinduism survived even when the Muslims killed its ascetics and destroyed its temples; it survived in society.⁶

According to Pt. Umesh Mishra "both the rise and the decline of Buddhism began almost simultaneously"⁷. But as argued by L. M. Joshi, this statement is contradictory in nature. 'Rise' and 'decline' are two mutually opposed events, and can never take place simultaneously⁸. Umesh Mishra also opines that one of the main causes of the decline of Buddhism in India was that the Buddhists hated Sanskrit and adopted Pali language. But history of Sanskrit Buddhist literature from cir. 200 B.C. to cir. 1200 A.D. is against this view. Some of the greatest names in the history of Sanskrit

¹*India and China*, p. 27.

²Edkins, J., *Chinese Buddhism*, p. 99.

³Kane, *op. cit.*, p. 1026.

⁴Pande, *Buddha Dharma ke Vikāsa kā Itihāsa*, pp. 491-2; for the attitude of the Buddha to lay devotees cf. 'Barua, D. K., 'Buddhism and Lay Worshipers', *Mahābodhi*, LXXIV, No. 3-4, pp. 39-44.

⁵*Buddha Jayanti Souvenir*, p. 97 (quoted by Joshi, p. 323).

⁶Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 323.

⁷*Journal of G. N. Jha Research Institute*, IX, Pt. i, pp. 111-22.

⁸Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 326.

literature are those of Āsvaghosha, Āryaśūra, Bhartṛhari and Śāntideva, who were Buddhists by faith.

External Factors in the Decline of Buddhism

The Brāhmaṇas usually looked at Buddhist monks with contempt. Yājñavalkya (I. 271-72) declares that the very sight of a Buddhist monk, even in dreams, is inauspicious. The *Bṛhannāradyapurāṇa* lays it down as a principal sin for a Brāhmaṇa to enter the house of a Buddhist even in times of great perils. The drama *Mṛchchhakaṭīka* shows that in Ujjain the Buddhist monks were despised and their sight was considered inauspicious. The *Agnipurāṇa* (XVI.1, 37) declares that the son of Śuddhodana beguiled the daityas to become Buddhists. The *Vishṇupurāṇa* (XVIII, 13-18) also regards the Buddha as Māyāmoha who appeared in the world to delude the demons. Kumārila is said to have instigated King Sudhanvan of Ujjain to exterminate the Buddhists. The Tibetan historians Bu-ston and Tārānātha record his wars against the Buddhists. The *Kerala-utpatti* describes how he exterminated the Buddhists from Kerala. A greater role in the decline of Buddhism was played by Śaṅkara. The *Śaṅkaradigvijaya* of Mādhava tells us that Śaṅkara led a religious expedition against the Bauddhas and caused their destruction from the Himalayas to the Indian ocean. Śaṅkara has himself described the Buddhist system as 'vaināsika' or 'sarva-vaināsika'.¹ According to the Tibetan tradition, at his approach "the Buddhist monasteries began to tremble and the monks began to disperse pell-mell."² But one must remember, as Gopinātha Kavirāja has observed, that "The struggle between Buddhism and Hinduism was a war of pen and not of sword."³ It is just impossible to conceive that scholars like Kumārila or Śaṅkara resorted to force in their struggle against Buddhism.

The growth of Brāhmaṇical cults like those of the Bhāgavatas and the Śaivas and re-establishment of varṇāśrama dharma during the Gupta and post-Gupta periods had a corresponding declining influence on Buddhism. Now Hinduism was made more appealing and more attractive to the common people by prescribing various *vratas*, *upavāsas*, *saṁskāras*, etc.⁴

¹Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 313.

²*Ibid.*, p. 314.

³Quoted by L. M. Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 313.

⁴*Kane op. cit.* p. 1024 f.

A number of scholars including P. V. Kane¹, V. A. Smith², S. Radhakrishnan³, B. M. Barua⁴, P. C. Bagchi⁵, R. C. Majumdar⁶, R. C. Mitra,⁷ S. Lévi⁸ and others, have rightly opined that the most important factor in the decline of Buddhism in India was a 'gradual assimilation of Buddhism to Hinduism'. P. V. Kane and Radhakrishnan feel that the two religions were never very much different and the Buddha himself did not feel that he was announcing a new religion. He was born, grew up, and died a Hindu. According to Coomaraswamy "more profound is one's study of Hinduism and Buddhism, more difficult it becomes for him to distinguish between the two." The Mahāyāna was specially nearer to Brāhmaṇism. It laid emphasis on image-worship, prayers, incantations and rituals; it incorporated many folk-beliefs and made room for the emotional demands of the laity, and in doing so, the Buddhists made a nearer and clearer approach to Hinduism. This process tended to remove the distinction between the two faiths. The laymen and lay women of India found no difference between the worship of Viṣṇu and the Buddha, of Śiva and Avalokita and of Tārā and Pārvatī.

Tāntrikism further narrowed down the distinction and difference between Buddhism and Hinduism. Buddhist Tantras, in spite of their being 'proclaimed by the Buddha', are almost identical with the Śaiva and Śākta Tantras. A large number of gods and goddesses became common to the pantheons of Hinduism and Buddhism. The Śākta Pīṭhas became equally important and holy places for Hindu and Buddhist Tāntrikists.

On its side Brāhmaṇism also took some steps to assimilate Buddhism. The acceptance of the Buddha as an incarnation of Viṣṇu by Hinduism, though only as the beguiler of the demons, cut the ground from under the feet of Buddhism. The disapproval of animal sacrifice, the relaxation of caste rules and the organization of monastic community on the lines of Buddhist saṅgha by Śaṅkara, further helped the merger of Buddhism into Hinduism. Common

¹*Op. cit.*, pp. 1004-5.

²*EHI*, p. 368.

³Foreword to *2500 Years of Buddhism*, p. xiv-xv; *Indian Philosophy*, I, p. 609.

⁴Barua, *Prolegomena to a History of Buddhist Philosophy*, p. 19.

⁵*Asutosh Mukerjee Volumes*, III, pp. 4-20.

⁶Majumdar, *CHI*, IV, pp. 47-8.

⁷*Viśvabhāratī Annals*, VI, pp. 150-55.

⁸*Le Nepal*, II, p. 317 (quoted by Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 322).

patronage of Hinduism and Buddhism by kings of the Gupta, Vardhana (Pushyabhūti), Maitraka and Pāla dynasties also made it possible for both the Buddhists and the Hindus to borrow heavily from each other. Yuan Chwang found non-Buddhists of Simhapura copying the customs of the Buddhists. In Gayā he saw this sacred Buddhist place completely populated by the Brāhmaṇas. The acceptance of the Buddha as an incarnation of Viṣṇu had been accomplished probably in the sixth century A.D., perhaps first in the *Matsyapurāṇa*. A *Matsyapurāṇa* verse is found engraved on Pallava monuments of cir. 700 A.D. at Mahābalipuram in which the Buddha is mentioned as the 9th *avatāra* of Viṣṇu. The *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* mentions the Buddha as a deity and also as a god who deluded the demons.

Thus Buddha became a Hindu divinity. Gayā is now one of the foremost Hindu tīrthas. Śāṅkara organized the maṭha institution partly on the model of the Buddhist saṅgha. His philosophical terminology, his concepts of Māyā and of the 'non-dual', though based on the Upanishads are very much like those of the Mādhyamikas. That is why he is accused of being a 'Buddhist in disguise'. His grand guru's attempt to synthesize Vedānta and Buddhism is well-known. Lastly, the Tantra practices harmonized the two systems so completely that Buddhism's independent existence might have appeared needless or even impossible.

Decline in the royal patronage of Buddhism is also regarded by some modern scholars as one of the important factors in the disappearance of Buddhism from the land of its birth. And it is true also that after the Guptas no strong and whole-hearted patron of Buddhism in India is known, except some of the Pāla kings.¹

One of the minor factors contributing to the decline of Buddhism in the country was royal persecution though it occurred only rarely. Yuan Chwang has recorded a legend concerning the harassment of a Buddhist philosopher Manoratha, a teacher of Vasubandhu, by a certain king Vikramāditya. The historicity of this legend is highly doubtful because all the Gupta Vikramādityas are known to have been extremely tolerant and respectful to Buddhism.

¹The present writer does not believe that Harsha was personally a Buddhist, though it is accepted that he was generous to Buddhism also. See, Goyal, S. R., 'Did Harsha ever Embrace Buddhism as His Personal Religion?', *K. P. Jayaswal Commemoration Volume*, 1981, pp. 373-393.

Mention has already been made of king Sudhanvan of Ujjain, who is allegedly said to have ordered the slaughter of the Buddhists all over the country. As pointed out by Kane, of all the cases of alleged persecution this is the weakest, and no more than a boastful and rhetorical exaggeration.¹ The only early indigenous Indian king who can be accused of harassing the Buddhists is Pushyamitra Śuṅga, though some modern scholars doubt the Buddhist tradition about him. However, the greatest of royal persecutors of Buddhism in India was Mihirakula; but he was a barbarian of Hūṇa origin. His activities against Buddhism are recorded by Kalhaṇa and corroborated by Yuan Chwang and the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*. The ruins of the Ghoshitārāma monastery at Kauśāmbī and some other *vihāras* in North India indicate that some Buddhist establishments were destroyed by the Hūṇas.

After the Hūṇas the only notable example of anti-Buddhist activities was presented by Śaśāṅka, the king of Gauḍa. No other significant example of the persecution of Buddhists by Indian kings is known. As pointed out by P. V. Kane², the cases of persecution of Buddhists are very few while the proofs of the policy of toleration adopted by Indian kings are copious. Most of the scholars agree with Kane on this point.

According to P. V. Kane and K. W. Morgan Muslim invasions of India delivered the final blow to Buddhism about and after 1200 A.D. by ruining the famous Buddhist universities like those of Nālandā and Vikramaśilā. The monks were mercilessly killed in large numbers. Those who escaped fled to Tibet and Nepal. The *Tabakāt-i-Nāsarī* records that Mohammad-ibn-Bakhtiyar Khalji led his army to Bihar and ravaged it. Great plunder fell into his hands. Most of the inhabitants of the place were 'Brāhmaṇas with shaven heads', that is the Buddhist monks. They were put to death and large numbers of their books were burnt.

Contribution of Buddhism to Indian Culture

The contribution of Buddhism to many aspects of Indian culture³

¹*Op. cit.*, p. 1010.

²*Ibid.*, p. 1011, n. 1645 a. For the policy of religious toleration followed by Hindu kings see *ibid.*, pp. 1011-18.

³For the contribution of Buddhism to Indian thought vide also the section on the mutual impact of Buddhism and Brāhmaṇism. See also Basak, R. G., 'The Contribution of Buddhism to Indian Thought', *Bulletin of Rama Kṛshṇa*

may be regarded as truly remarkable. We discuss its contribution to Indian languages and literature first. The development of Pali was almost wholly due to Buddhism. The Pali authors were also first to write traditional histories. The output of Buddhist Sanskrit authors was also second only to that of the Brāhmanical authors. The numerous works on Abhidharma, the Vinayas of so many Buddhist schools, the Prajñāpāramitāsūtras, hundreds of Mahāyāna sūtras and philosophical treatises and commentaries are in Sanskrit. The history of Buddhist literature from cir. 200 B.C. to cir. 1200 A.D. is an essential and important part of the growth of Sanskrit literature.¹ The first dramatist in the history of Sanskrit literature was the Buddhist poet Aśvaghoṣa. Āryaśūra, another Buddhist poet, was among the forerunners of classical Sanskrit poetry. Buddhist poets also contributed much to the composition of hymns of praise (*stotras*, *stavas*, *stutis*) in Sanskrit. The contribution of the Buddhists to the study of psychology, Sanskrit grammar and lexicography was also quite significant.

The Buddhist monasteries were regulated by the rules of monastic life. But in course of centuries they were transformed into seats of learning. In the words of S. Dutt they "partook of the character of the *studium generale* of mediaeval Europe, and from the fifth or sixth century onwards, several of them were organized as universities and functioned as such."² Of them, the University of Nālandā is described in detail in the *Si-yu-ki* of Yuan Chwang who himself was one of its most distinguished *alumni*. The fame of Nālandā and other Buddhist universities spread over the greater part of Asia through the works and achievements of the eminent scholars they produced. The Nālandā University remained a source of attraction to the foreign Buddhists even to its last day. It was the greatest centre for the study of Buddhist logic and Mahāyāna philosophy. Sanskrit was the medium of instruction here. It had a wide academic outlook and grammar (*vyākaraṇa*), logic (*hetuvidyā*), and idealism (*Vijñānavāda*), besides other branches of humanities and sciences, were taught with zeal and devotion. The scholars produced by Nālandā were treated with consideration and its professors were

Mission Institute, Calcutta, XIV, No. 9, 1963, pp. 333-34; Joshi, L. M., 'Aspects of Buddhism in Ancient Indian Culture', *Mahābodhi*, LXXV, No. 5-6, pp. 162-70.

¹Joshi, *Studies*.

²Dutt, S., in *2500 Years of Buddhism*, p. 193.

held in respect throughout Asia. Under the Pālas, who were devout Buddhists, the glory of Nālandā as a centre of learning was maintained for several centuries at a high level.¹

The role of Buddhism and Buddhist educational institutions in the propagation of Indian culture in Asian countries can hardly be overstressed. Yuan Chwang took home with him hundreds of bundles of manuscripts and devoted the rest of his life to translating into Chinese as many of them as he could. He was also the founder of one of the Ten Schools of Chinese Buddhism, the Fashiāng school, which claims the Nālandā scholar Śīlabhadra, Yuan Chwang's instructor at that university, as its founder.² A fellow student of Yuan Chwang at Nālandā was a Tibetan scholar, named Thonmi Saṁbhoṭa, who had been sent by the Tibetan monarch to study Buddhism in the land of its birth. As a result of his efforts the king was converted to Buddhism and for the first time this religion was declared the state religion of Tibet. A few centuries later, Dīpaṅkara went from the University of Vikramaśīlā and gave the religion its present Lamaist organization.³

Thus the outflow of influence from the Indian Buddhist universities led to the propagation of Indian art, literature, thought, myths and morals and appreciation of the teachings and tenets of Buddhism in other Asian lands. Buddhism went a long way in the task of propagating the principles of Indian culture in other uncultivated races of Asia which were notorious for their ferocious nature.

Buddhist contribution to the development of Indian art and architecture is well-known. Innumerable rock cut sanctuaries, monasteries, stūpas, icons, sculpture, paintings and emblems prove the magnitude of its contribution in this field. But in it the Buddhists were greatly influenced by their Brāhmanical counterparts. From the *Brahmajālasutta* and the *Pātimokkha* it is clear that early Buddhism regarded arts and crafts as unworthy of those who seek ultimate liberation. But as a result of the educational and devotional needs and urge (as evidenced in the early period in the construction of the stūpas over the relics of the Buddha) and strengthened by the impact of Brāhmanism, the Buddhists developed their own art-traditions and constructed stūpas, pillars, votive-

¹CHI, p. 594.

²Dutt, S., *op. cit.*, p. 194.

³*Ibid.*

chaityas, excavated- and brick-built vihāras, temples, etc. The worship of the Buddha images began in the first century A.D. and very soon several schools of it (Gandhāra, Mathurā, Sārnātha, etc.) came into being. The earliest and best sculptural pieces of India (exemplified by Aśokan pillars) are also of Buddhist origin. As regards painting, it is a well-known fact that the earliest and the best paintings of India found at Ajanta were produced by the Buddhists.

Buddhism also considerably influenced ancient Indian political theory, social thought and socio-political institutions. The Buddhist theory of the origin of state and government as related in the *Aggañña sutta* is of democratic import¹ and was probably influenced by a similar theory as found in the Śāntiparvan of the *Mahābhārata* which appears to be chronologically earlier. It is also sometimes argued that the democratic organisation of the Buddhist Church had an impact on the democratic states of ancient India.² But the republican states of eastern India of the sixth century B.C. (Vajji, Malla, etc.) can hardly be called 'Buddhist'. They usually extended their adherence to Jainism and other Śramaṇic sects as well. Further, it must be remembered that as these republics had been in existence for about a century or more before the advent of Buddhism³, there arises no question of their having been influenced by the democratic organisation of the Buddhist Church; rather it should be presumed that the Buddhist Church adopted the democratic pattern of these republics (or of the Jaina Church which came into existence long before the foundation of the Buddhist *saṅgha*).

It is also believed by some that India owes to Aśoka the ideal of a welfare state as well as the idea of a secular state in the sense that the administration of a state should be free from sectarian principles.⁴ But without belittling the efforts of Aśoka for the welfare of the people and his almost secular outlook and without entering the controversy whether or not his policy of *dharmavijaya* was beneficial for the country, one may reject the hypothesis that India owes the concept of welfare and secular state to him. It is a well-known fact, conceded even by Joshi, that as a rule most of the ancient Indian kings followed a policy of religious toleration and

¹Joshi, *Studies*, p. 361.

²*Ibid.*

³Mishra, Yogendra, *An Early History of Vaiśālī*, p. 98 ff.

⁴Joshi, *op. cit.*, p. 362 f.

worked for the welfare of their subjects¹. These concepts were imbibed in our national outlook; one can hardly give credit for them to any individual king.

As regards the role of Buddhism in the field of social thought and institutions, it is somewhat difficult to appreciate it. For, (a) the Buddha tended to strengthen the view that women are one of the major causes of suffering and that they are not as reliable as men. We have discussed this point in detail elsewhere (pp. 266-72). (b) He raised his voice against caste system but only to prove superiority of the Kshatriyas over the Brāhmaṇas. Otherwise the four-fold division was accepted by him as such. We have already discussed this point in detail (pp. 272-80). (c) Buddhism did not raise its voice against slavery; rather the Buddha accepted the existence of this institution tacitly. We have elaborated this point also in detail (pp. 280-82). (d) It may be accepted that the emergence of the fourth or sannyāsa āśrama in the Brāhmaṇical society was the result of the Śramaṇic ideology, including Buddhism. But the emergence of this ideal does not appear to have been a gain for society. Rather it undermined the basis of family life over which the organization of society was based.

Some aspects of the political role of Buddhism in Indian history need also be put in proper perspective. Firstly, Buddhism was always a great financial burden both on the state and society, for from the very beginning it depended on state support and patronage of the rich for its existence. The Buddhist monasteries were huge establishments and monks lived on large scale government and public charities. Consequently, as early as the age of Aśoka the monasteries became the haunts of the indolent on account of the assurance of sumptuous food, etc. The Buddhist tradition itself testifies to it and also to the fact that Aśoka's exchequer had become empty as a result of these benefactions. Such a situation must have been faced by other Buddhist kings also. Here it would be illogical and improper to compare the support extended to the Buddhist Church with the charities made by ancient Indian kings to the Brāhmaṇas, because Brāhmaṇas lived in society and performed their social obligations, something which cannot be said with equal force about the Buddhist monks. Therefore there was a qualitative difference between the charities made to the Brāhmaṇas and the

¹*Ibid.*, p. 362.

Buddhist Church.

Secondly, the influence of Buddhism on Indian polity was not always healthy; it tended to generate revulsion in such mighty emperors as Aśoka against political glory which could not but result in the arrest of the process of political growth. But it is a fact of life that like Dhanalakshmī, Rājyalakshmī (in the form of kingdoms and empires) either grows and expands or becomes weak and declines. That is what happened during the reign of Aśoka. Due to the impact of Buddhism on him the process of the expansion of empire which was going on with success since the days of Bimbisāra suddenly stopped. It is of course true that Aśoka did not disband his army, but he certainly stopped its military activities. It does not need much effort to imagine that the number of officers who had practical experience of warfare must have been considerably smaller at the time of Aśoka's death than it was at the time of his Kaliṅga war. Similarly, in the absence of actual participation in warfare the preparedness, alertness and morale of the army must have gone down. No wonder if it could not check the advance of the Bactrian Greeks immediately after Aśoka. In modern times we also experienced a similar fate when, in our enthusiasm for *pañchaśīla* we neglected our defence-preparedness and had to taste the bitter fruit of defeat in 1962.

That the impact of Buddhism on political thinking was not always very desirable is proved by the example of Narasiṃhagupta Bālāditya II a devout Buddhist king. During his reign Mihirakula, the Hūṇa tyrant whose brutality on the Indians has become legendary, invaded. Narasiṃhagupta not only did not face the tyrant, but fled to the jungles and marshes, as Yuan Chwang puts it, to save his 'poor person', and when his subordinates succeeded in defeating the barbarian invader after much bloodshed, he not only freed him but also gave him girls and money in order to earn merit for the next world.¹ Probably it was due to the same perverted psychology that the Sindh monks supported the Arab invaders against the ruling Brāhmaṇa dynasty in 712 A.D. The Buddhists are also known to have willingly submitted to the wholesale conversion whether in Sindh or Bengal whereas the Hindus survived this onslaught and succeeded in preserving their old faith.

In the end in order to summarize the whole discussion on the

¹Goyal, S. R., *A History of the Imperial Guptas*, p. 348 ff.

role of Buddhism in Indian history the present author would like to echo the sentiments expressed by Prof. P. V. Kane : "In these days", Prof. Kane writes, "it has become a fashion to praise Buddha and his doctrines to the skies and to disparage Hinduism by making unfair comparisons between the original doctrines of Buddha with the present practices and shortcomings of Hindu society. The present author has to enter a strong protest against this tendency The Upaniṣads had a nobler philosophy than that of Gautama the Buddha; the latter merely based his doctrines on the philosophy of the Upaniṣads. If Hinduism decayed in course of time and exhibited bad tendencies, the same or worse was the case with later Buddhism which gave up the noble but human Buddha, made him a god, worshipped his images and ran wild with such hideous practices as those of Vajrayāna." In this connection Kane quotes the following lines from Swami Vivekananda with approval : "thus in spite of the preaching of mercy to animals, in spite of the sublime ethical religion, in spite of the hair-splitting discussions about the existence or nonexistence of a permanent soul, the whole building of Buddhism tumbled down piecemeal; and the ruin was simply hideous. I have neither the time nor the inclination to describe to you the hideousness that came in the wake of Buddhism. The most hideous ceremonies, the most horrible, the most obscene books that human hands ever wrote or the human brain ever conceived, the most bestial forms that ever passed under the name of religion have all been the creation of degraded Buddhism."¹

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several other facts. Firstly, in his suttas and other Buddhist texts in the enumeration of the castes the Khattiyas are always mentioned first.¹ In the *Dīgha Nikāya* (III.1.15) even a Brāhmaṇa mentions Khattiyas before Brāhmaṇas though it does not fit well with his following words: "Of these (four castes) three, Khattiya, Vessa and Sudda, exist only to serve the Brāhmaṇas." In this belief the Buddha had the good company of the Jainas who also claimed higher status for the Kshatriyas. As we have seen, the Śvetāmbaras held the belief that the embryo of Mahāvīra was transferred from the womb of the Brāhmaṇī Devānandā to that of the Kshattriyāṇī Triśalā, since it was held that "a Brāhmaṇa or another woman of low family was not worthy to give birth to a Tīrthanāra." A similar attitude is found in early Buddhism for in the *Nidānakathā* and the *Lalitavistara* it is said that when the future Buddha reflected in which caste he will be re-born, he decided in favour of the Khattiya caste because at that time it was the highest.² It is an open advocacy of the superiority of the Kshatriya caste. In the *Ambaṭṭha sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya* we are told that the Brāhmaṇa Ambaṭṭha went to the Buddha and accused the Śākyas of being rude to the Brāhmaṇas. In answer the Buddha praised the Śākyas and tried to humble the pride of Ambaṭṭha by describing the Kāṇhāyana gotra to which he belonged as having been founded by a slave of the king Ikshvāku. He went on to declare that the status of the Kshattriyas was higher than that of the Brāhmaṇas because the Brāhmaṇas accept the offspring of an inter-marriage between the Brāhmaṇas and the Kshattriyas while the Kshattriyas do not.³ The Buddha then quotes a *gāthā* supposed to have been enunciated by Brahmā Sanatkumāra according to which "among those who follow the lineage or gotra, the Kshatriya has superiority. However, the person who has learning and character is superior to men as well as gods. It is interesting that in order to prove the low origin of Ambaṭṭha, the Buddha cited the (incorrect) proof from the early Vedic age. Apparently he believed that no one with a lowly birth could improve his social status by *jātyutkarsha*; the Brāhmaṇa society believed in such a possibility.

¹Fick, R., *The Social Organisation in North-East India in Buddha's Time*, p. 84.

²*Ibid.*, p. 85 f.

³Pande, *Śramāṇa Tradition*, p. 53. This statement of the Buddha is incorrect. It finds no parallel in the Brāhmaṇical literature.

(3) The hostility of the Buddha to the Brāhmaṇas becomes apparent from the following facts also : In his various suttas we find repeated assertions that the Brāhmaṇas lost their honour in society (in which they enjoyed only the second place) because they had become corrupt. But nowhere does he refer to the decline of the Kshatriyas. In other words he tacitly assumes that the Kshatriyas were still as pure and worthy of their status as they were in the earlier ages. In the Jātaka stories also Kshatriyas of degraded character are rarely, if at all, mentioned; in them it is only the Brāhmaṇas who are usually described as of mean character. They not only eat beef (e.g. in the *Matakabhata Jātaka*) but indulge in the most despicable deed—even the Brāhmaṇa housewives are shown as grossly corrupt behaving like prostitutes (e.g. in the *Rādha Jātaka*, the *Kosiya Jātaka* etc.). In the words of Fick, “in many cases the Brāhmaṇas are pictured as greedy, shameless and immoral and serve as a foil to the Khattiyas who play the part of virtuous and noble humanity.”¹

(4) Acceptance in marriage and commensality have been the touch-stone of caste system. But the Buddha was a firm believer in them—at least so far as his own Kshatriya caste was concerned. Thus according to him the Brāhmaṇas were inferior to the Kshatriyas not only because a woman of impure ancestry could be accepted by the former and not by the latter, but also because the latter would not eat with her or her progeny while the former would. The Buddha was thus loud in denouncing the superior birth theory if it helped the Brāhmaṇas, but changed his stand if it helped his own caste.

(5) In the *Vāsetṭhasutta* when the Brāhmaṇa Vāsetṭha, apparently basing his view on the Purushasūkta of the *RV*, claims that the Brāhmaṇas are superior to others because they were born out of the mouth of Brahmā (not neuter *Brahma*), the Buddha ridicules him by saying that like other human beings Brāhmaṇas are also given birth by women. Here the Buddha gives a populist argument and takes the Purushasūkta imagery literally which can hardly be regarded as the intention of the Vedic *ṛshis*. Similarly his argument that the fourfold caste system was not universal, states the obvious and does not prove anything.

(6) What the Buddha gave with one hand, took away with the

¹Fick, *op. cit.*, p. 183.