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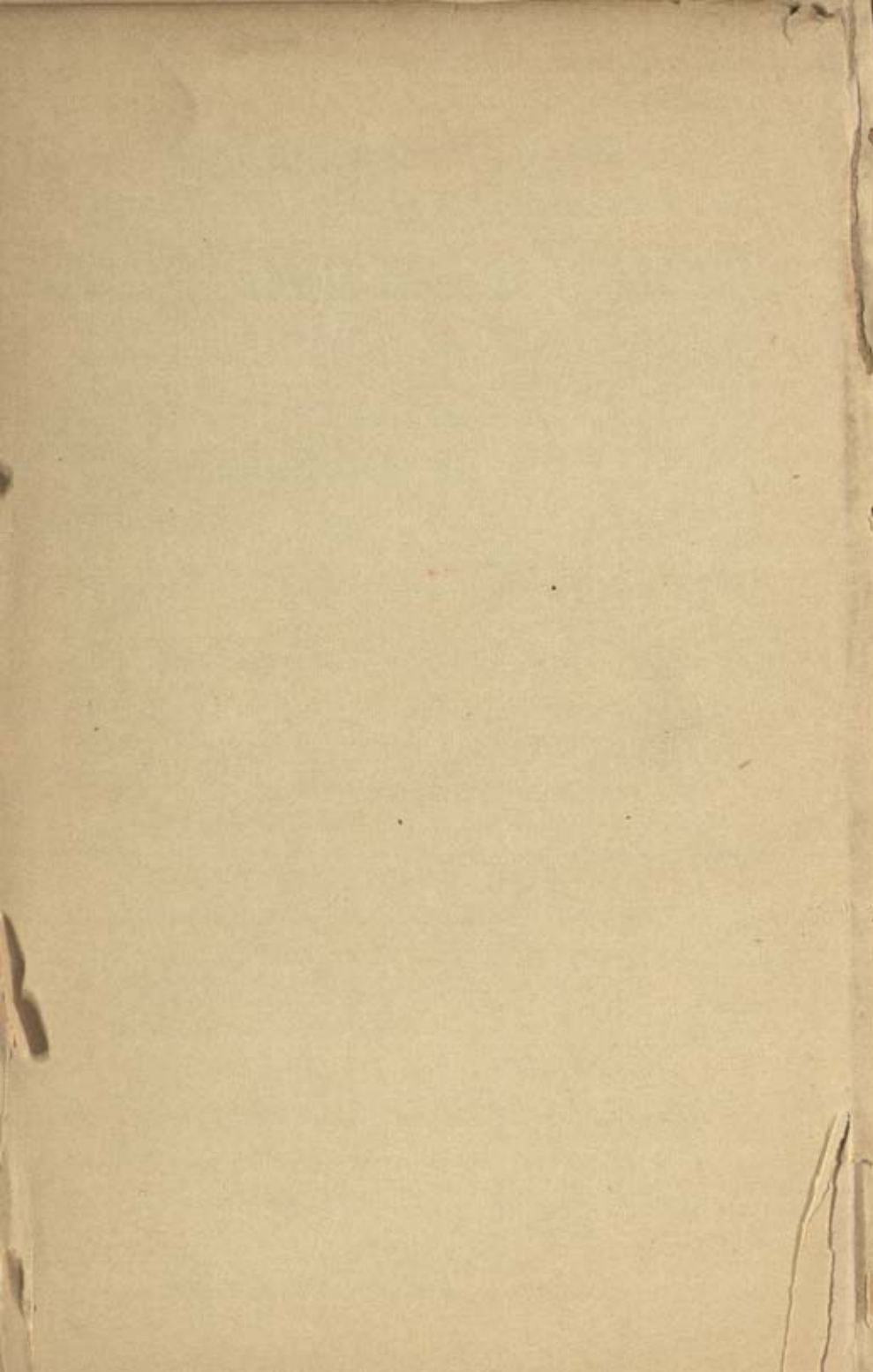
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A HISTORY OF INDIAN CIVILIZATION

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE INDIAN SCHEME OF LIFE  
THE INDIAN WORKING CLASS  
PLANNING THE COUNTRYSIDE  
THE LAND PROBLEMS OF INDIA  
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THE DYNAMICS OF MORALS  
THE SYMBOLIC LIFE OF MAN  
THE LORD OF THE AUTUMN MOONS  
THE HISTORY OF INDIAN CIVILIZATION, VOL. I

~~1122~~

# A HISTORY OF INDIAN CIVILIZATION

VOLUME II  
MEDIEVAL AND MODERN SYNTHESIS

74603

By

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मयक नई दिल्ली



## P R E F A C E

The great civilizations of mankind are marked by a series of Renaissances in their history that are not encountered in less advanced societies and cultures. Renaissances occur in privileged epochs of history, and embody universal truths and values that dramatically resolve tensions and contradictions in human culture and inject new enthusiasm and consecration into its soul. All Renaissances in India not merely achieved unity amongst her different kingdoms and regions but also carried the gospel of a new universalism far beyond her geographical confines through the centuries. The history of Indian civilization, with special reference to these Renaissances, is exceedingly relevant today in order to dispel many current false notions as regards historical and cultural cleavages between the North and South, West and East.

The Mahayana Renaissance, born in India's northern-most territories, Jammu, Kashmir and Gandhara, spread the gospel of Indian altruism and compassion from Turkestan to Korea and from Java to Japan for a whole millennium from the first century A.D. to one thousand A.D. The Gupta Neo-Brahmanical Renaissance unified the Indian land and culture and Indianized South-East Asia for five centuries (fourth to eighth century A.D.). The Post-Gupta age saw the mythopoeic interpretation of the Puranas and the Agamas. It introduced the medieval phase in Indian religious and cultural history. Religious eclecticism and synthesis have since become a part of the Indian heritage.

A marvellous product of the Puranic Renaissance was the phantasmagorical cave-style in the Deccan, unique in the history of world art. Indian cave-sculpture spread to Ceylon, Indonesia, China and Korea, where in hundreds of natural or artificial cave-shrines Buddhas and Bodhisattvas were sculptured, giving full scope to the interplay of light, shade, and vibrant volume with the same magical effects.

The great Religious Reformation led by Sankara (788-828 A.D.) gave to India the Advaita Vedanta which is one of her great metaphysical

sical interpretations of the highest metaphysical consequence and still unifies her *elite* intellectually and spiritually. Eighth to the eleventh century A.D. witnessed the Tantrika Renaissance under the Pala and the Sena Empires. This played a vital part in the spread of Indian Tantrikism, art and culture to Nepal, Tibet, Burma and Indonesia. All these lands since then had been integral parts of the same humanist cultural expression.

The vehicle of the spread of Eastern Indian culture was the Pala Gothic art-style which was the outcome of the same sort of spiritual upheaval that produced High Gothic in France in the thirteenth century. Pala Gothic influenced Nepal, Tibet, Siam, Cambodia, Indonesia and even China. It superbly reconciled the classic Gupta massiveness and solidity with suavity and lyrical charm, born of mystical religious and social currents.

The course of the later Renaissances was equally distinguished by a rich humanist harvest. The Pallava, the Chalukya and the Chola Renaissances, having contributed splendidly to the development of temple architecture and sculpture in South India, largely directed the course of Indian cultural expansion in the Pacific. Later on the Renaissance of literature and the fine arts under the Empire of Vijayanagara (1336-1614) moulded the tastes, manners and qualities of the people of Karnataka and the neighbourhood. Vijayanagar undertook for three centuries the historic role of providing an impregnable bulwark against Muslim invasion and conquest. From Southern India also came the social and religious egalitarian Renaissance of Ramananda, the leader of the Bhakti movement (1299-1410). This spread to the entire North and East from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries. The religious upsurge which it caused for half a millennium from Maharashtra and Gujarat to Bengal and Assam, moulded one mind, one vision and one language of the spirit for the whole of India from the fourteenth to the eighteenth century.

The Bhakti and Sufi movements mingled together producing a wholesome reaction against both asceticism and priesthood and an equality of the faithful before God, especially among the lower strata of society. Five centuries of eclectic idealism brought about an extraordinary spiritual intimacy between Hinduism and Islam which bore a rich harvest in the age of the Great Mughuls.



In Maharashtra the religious Renaissance represented by the Bhakti movement from Jnanadeva to Tukaram merged in the national political restoration under Shivaji and his successors in the seventeenth century, and led to the establishment of a mighty empire that might have prevented British conquest but for a series of errors, accidents and misfortunes. The period of Maratha imperialism in the eighteenth century was associated with a splendid literary and cultural revival.

The Renaissance in literature, painting, architecture and handicraft under the Mughul Emperors was the outcome of the Mughul patronage of Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit scholars, the mingling of Persian and Indian art elements and traditions among Persian and Hindu artists in the imperial and provincial Courts. Mughul painting, music, architecture and crafts and Indo-Persian and Hindi literature found their golden ages in the sixteenth and seventeenth century A.D.

The nineteenth century cultural Renaissance began in Bengal with Ram Mohan Roy as its great pioneer. It still continues to fashion the development of Indian culture to this day. All Indian Renaissances were dominated by humanist cultural aims and hence could cement the unity and solidarity of Indian civilization that were more deep-seated than what could be achieved in Europe by nationalism, militarism and racialism.

If Renaissances reflected the character and temper of a particular civilization, unity and not divisiveness, cultural universalism and not separatism embody the spirit of Indian development. This is celebrated in the ancient famous formulae, 'Mankind is our kin', and 'The Universe is a single nest of humanity.' Provincial and chauvinist passions, lusts and fears may be aroused and have their evil day. But these cannot enduringly challenge the imperativeness of direction in Indian history. There is no break in the continuity of Indian history between the ancient, medieval and modern periods. India in all historical epochs always lived according to certain norms and traditions of society and culture—*acaras* (rituals), *sanskaras* (sacraments) and *dharma* (rights and duties). In the privileged epochs and movements of the Renaissances the universalist aims of her civilization were re-stated and re-enforced.

Today a revival of the historic spirit will enable her to enrich world civilization with those humanist values that are especially needed by this war-sick age and that indeed measure the quality of a country's civilization.

It is because universalist myths, values and traditions comprise the warp and woof of Indian civilization through the centuries that the story of Indian art and of its motifs and symbols in which the former are enshrined is closely and inextricably interwoven with the general history. This will be amply evident from the study of the plates and their explanations at the end of the volume. Students of Indian art can have a broad idea of the movement of Indian civilization through a scrutiny of illustrations of various works of sculpture and painting and their interpretations. The art of India shaped the unity of Oriental civilization in a manner that neither Christianity nor medieval Renaissance could achieve for Europe.

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RADHAKAMAL MUKERJEE.



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## PART VI

## SYNCRETIC RELIGION AND ART

## CHAPTER XX

THE PURANIC FOUNDATIONS OF RELIGIOUS  
SYNCRETISM**Social and Economic Conditions of the Post-Gupta Age**

The disintegration of the Gupta Empire like that of the Roman Empire was due to the continuous inroads of the Huns, although the role played by the rise of the Pushyamitras cannot be minimised. The Huns under Toramāna (495 A.D.) established themselves in the Punjab. His successor, Mihiragula, pushed his conquests as far as eastern Mālwa. But the Huns were completely overthrown by Yaśodharman of Mandasor. Thus the Hun dynasty was short-lived. For as many as five centuries from the defeat of the Huns to the invasion of Mahmud of Ghazni India had enjoyed complete immunity from foreign invasion except for the Arab conquest of Sind that was a local episode and that had hardly any political consequences for India. The results were, on the other hand, intellectual and cultural for it was the Arabs who carried Indian philosophy, mathematics, astronomy and medicine to Arabia and to Europe. For full five hundred years India's intellectual and religious ascendancy in Asia continued along with her supremacy in world trade and commerce due to which gold and silver were flowing to her shores from the Roman Empire of the West and the newly exploited Golden Chersonese of the East.

Peace and prosperity under Indian conditions were responsible for profound contributions made to knowledge and religion by a galaxy of monk-scholars in universities and seats of learning distributed over the entire continent, and for phenomenal achievements in religious sculpture and architecture that practically built up the civilizations of whole countries beyond the Indian borders, Eastern Turkestan, Tibet, Malaya and Indonesia. Hiuen-Tsang,

who visited this country from 630 to 645 A.D. and travelled from Taxila to Tāmralipti and from Kanauj to Conjeevaram, was impressed by the peace and prosperity of the land and good morals of the people. "Taxes on the people are light and the services required of them are moderate. Every one keeps his worldly goods in peace, and all till the soil for their subsistence. Those who cultivate the royal estates pay a sixth part of their produce as tribute. The merchants who engage in commerce travel to and fro in pursuit of their calling. Rivers and toll-bars are opened for travellers on payment of a small sum. When the public works require it, labour is exacted but paid for. The payment is in strict proportion to the work done". The caste system governed social life. "The Kshatriyas and Brāhmaṇs are cleanly and wholesome in their dress, and they live in a homely and frugal way. There are rich merchants who deal in gold trinkets and so on. They mostly go barefooted; few wear sandals. They stain their teeth red or black; they bind up their hair and pierce their ears. They are very particular in their personal cleanliness. All wash before eating; they never use food left over from a former meal. Wooden and stone vessels must be destroyed after use; metal ones must be well polished and rubbed." Regarding the character of the common people, the Chinese pilgrim observes: "Although they are naturally light-minded, yet they are upright and honourable. In money matters they are without craft, and in administering justice they are considerate. They dread the retribution of another state of existence, and make light of the things of the present world. They are not deceitful or treacherous in their conduct and are faithful to their oaths and promises and in their rules of government there is remarkable rectitude, with their behaviour there is much gentleness and sweetness. With respect to criminals and rebels, these are few in number and only occasionally troublesome. When the laws are broken or the power of the ruler violated, then the matter is clearly sifted and the offenders punished. There is no infliction of corporal punishment, they are simply left to live and die and are not counted among men."

The standard of living of the people was high as indicated by the Chinese pilgrim's description of the staple diet that comprised wheat cakes, parched grain, sugar, ghee and preparations of milk. Fish, venison and mutton were consumed as occasional dainties.



The Brāhmaṇs used to drink syrup while the Kshatriyas took wine. The early medieval inscriptions (such as the Jodhpur inscriptions of the ninth century A.D.) speak of the Kshatriyas as madhu-pāyinah (drinkers of wine). Beef and the flesh of certain wild animals together with onion and garlic were forbidden.

### Religious Catholicism

The Chinese pilgrim was struck as much by the variety of cults and magnificence of more than a hundred temples in holy Benaras, the eternal city of India, as by the austerity and self-mortification of the Yogīs. He found here the worship of Śiva (Maheśvara) dominant. Beholding the colossal copper image of Deva Maheśvara, 100 feet in height, full of grandeur and majesty, he was overwhelmed. "At sight of it one is overcome by awe, as though one were in the presence of God." What the Chinese pilgrim witnessed was in all probability a Triune Maheśvara image of which we have many counterparts in Central India and the Deccan (including Elephanta), and which has since disappeared and given its place to the present Viśveśvara Liṅgam. Kālidāsa also refers to the famous temple of Viśveśvara at Benaras (Raghuvamśam, XVIII, 24). At Kanauj, Saṅkāśya, Ahichchhatra and Kapilāśrama, the Chinese pilgrim came across the worship of Maheśvara. The Emperor Harshavardhana, who received Hiuen-Tsang at his court in Kanauj and showed a distinct leaning towards Buddhism, was the devotee of Maheśvara according to the official records. In both Central and Western India (for example, at Elephanta) the triple-faced Maheśa was in this period sculptured or carved out of the rocks. Hiuen-Tsang was most profoundly impressed by the religious catholicity and tolerance of the princes and people of India. Deva temples were everywhere established and Buddhist and Jain monasteries stood side by side. There was not the least suspicion or hatred among followers of the different cults and philosophical systems that were quite numerous at the time of the visit of the Chinese pilgrim. The age of the epics had the following religious and philosophical systems, as mentioned in the Mahābhārata: the Vedic, the Sāṅkhya and the Yoga philosophical systems, the Āgamas and the religious sects of the Pañcharātras also called the Sātavatas and Ekāntas and the Pāśupatas. The Epic observes: "Perception is basic with the Yoga, Śāstric certainty with the Sāṅkhya, and both these in my view, O

Sire Yudhishtira, are truths". (Śāntiparvam, V, 7, 11053). The period of systematization of the Mahābhārata also saw the formulation of the various philosophical systems of India, following the pedantic intellectual discussion and sophistry of the era of the Buddha and Mahāvira. This also corresponded approximately to the time of the supercession of Prākṛit by Sanskrit that commenced from the early centuries of this millenium. Sanskrit gradually became the vehicle of culture of the elite of the country, the Brahmans, Jains and Buddhists. In the sixth century A.D. the following six systems rose into prominence as mentioned by the Jain Haribhadra (528 A.D.): Jainism, Buddhism, the Sāṅkhya, the Nyāya and the Vaiśeṣhika systems and the system of Jaimini. A century later Bāṇa, who was contemporary with Hiuen-Tsang at the court of Harshavardhana (606-648), mentions in his Harshacharita: Jains in white robes (Śvetāmbaras) Vaishnavas, both Bhāgavatas and Pañcharātras, Saugatas or Buddhists, Mashkarins, who are identified with Ājīvikas, and followers of the philosophical systems, including the Sāṅkhya, the Lokāyatika, the Vaiśeṣhika, the Vedānta and the Nyāya, students of the Institutes of Law and the Purāṇas; assayers of metals; adepts in grammar and adepts in sacrifices requiring seven ministering priests. The inclusion of the Vedānta is significant. The Vedāntists are mentioned as "skilled in expounding the nothingness of the fleeting world". All diligently follow their own tenets, pondering, urging objection, raising doubts and resolving them, discussing and explaining moot points of doctrine" in the hermitage of the Buddhist monk, Divākaramitra in the Vindhya forest. For South India, the famous epic poem of the Tamil classic period, the Manimekhalai, whose date is uncertain, mentions the following religions, which the Buddhist heroine in the disguise of a monk is asked to study at Kāñchipura: the Veda, Śiva, Vishṇu, the Ājīvikas, the Jains, the Sāṅkhyans, the Vaiśeṣhikas and the Lokāyatikas. In the spacious bosom of Brahmanical culture all creeds, doctrines and deities could thrive in complete freedom and amity. Men could on persuasion or inner impulsion easily change their philosophy and religion, and kings, nobles and merchants supported with gifts and endowments monks and ascetics of all religious orders.

With the decline of the Imperial Guptas, Bhāgavatism ceased to be the predominant form of worship in Northern India. Yet



by this time Bhāgavatism had spread to the Punjab, Rājputānā and Central and Western India. The new rulers of India such as Yaśodharman and his adversary Mihiragula were both Śaivas. Harshavardhana owed his homage to Maheśvara although, for reasons of state, he paid equal reverence to the Sun and the Buddha. The worship of Āditya or Sūrya seems to have been strengthened by the constant immigration of the Hunas and Pārasikas from the Indian borderlands. The Bhavishya Purāṇa mentions that the earliest temple of Sūrya was built in Sindhu on the Chandrabhāga (Chenab) by Sāmba, son of Kṛṣṇa, who brought the Śākadvīpī Brāhmaṇas (the Maga priests) to serve as priests of the god. This indicates the foreign derivation of the Sun-god, the ancient Rgvedic cult having gone to oblivion. Varāhamihira in his Brhatsamhitā also speaks of the Magas (Śākadvīpiya Brāhmaṇas) as priests of the temples of the Sun-god. The early Sūrya images, belonging to the Muttra museum show the god dressed in the attire and boots worn by the Kushāns and Central Asian folks. It is noteworthy that Hiuen-Tsang actually saw the same Sun temple in Multan on the banks of the Chandrabhāga referred to in the Purāṇa. At the quinquennial assembly at Prayāga, which Hiuen-Tsang attended, the first three days were occupied with ceremonial installation of images of the Buddha, Āditya and Śiva. Here Brahmā is supplanted by the Buddha.

### **Neo-Brahmanism in the Epics and Puranas: the Doctrine of Plural Incarnations**

The spacious Gupta and post-Gupta age witnessed a marked development of eclecticism and synthesis in religion as elucidated and moulded by the Epics and the Purāṇas. These were edited and re-written in the Gupta period, a literary effort of colossal magnitude to serve the cause of national education. For several centuries the systematic re-writing of the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas, versions of which existed in Pāṇini's time (sixth century B.C.), was going on. But the task was completed at the time of the Imperial Guptas. Ancient metaphysics, mythology, theology and ethics were all there, but now renovated, expurgated and re-oriented for the objective of inculcating the values and ideals of true Brāhmaṇism menaced by both foreign conquest and gradual impenetration of barbarian customs, institutions and ideals. Purāṇic Hinduism that emerged was essentially eclectic

and synthetic; and so was the teaching of the Bhagavad-gītā, a part of the Mahābhārata, that had since the Gupta age been regarded as one of the most important scriptures of the Hindus. The Gupta Emperors, though they were Paramabhāgavatas, also worshipped the Sun (Āditya) and accepted the yoga practice. Kṛṣṇa in their case merged in the Supreme Lord, Puruṣa, Viṣṇu or Nārāyaṇa. In the field of Purāṇic Hinduism, the worship of the incarnations was characteristic of this age though Patanjali (about 150 B.C.) earlier mentions Kṛṣṇa as being an incarnation of God. Avatārism, though ancient, indeed received special stress in the Gupta times and after, and served as a spacious bridge between ancient Brāhmaṇism and popular cults hailing from lower stages of social evolution. Kālidāsa endorses the principle of Avatārism, as formulated by the Bhagavad-gītā, and in the Raghuvamśa speaks of the Supreme Lord condescending to take birth and act like men as an act of favour to mankind (lokānugraha). The Boar, the Dwarf and the Man-lion Incarnations are mentioned in the Gupta inscriptions and Kālidāsa refers in the Raghuvamśa to the avatāra of Rāma. In the sculptures of the Deccan, the Dwarf and the Man-lion Incarnations are vividly represented, while in the Udayagiri cave the Boar Incarnation image is one of the most splendid specimens of Indian sculpture. The incarnations gradually multiplied in response to man's universal need of worship of a personal deity and the social need of bringing the gods and heroes of different cults within a common fold. In the Mahābhārata, which with its full quota of 100,000 ślokaś was complete in the 6th century A.D., the list of the incarnations varies in the different chapters. The nucleus is represented by the Boar, the Dwarf, the Man-lion and Man (Vāsudeva). Two more come in the next list—Paraśurāma and Rāma. In the final list Haṁsa, Kūrma, Matsya and Kalki are added. It is significant that in the Matsya, Varāha, Bhāgavata and Agni Purāṇas, the Buddha was first added to the list of incarnations. A South Indian inscription of the 7th century A.D. mentions the Buddha as an avatāra. Ṛṣavadeva, founder of Jainism, is mentioned as an incarnation of Bhagavān (Viṣṇu) in the Bhāgavata and Skandha Purāṇas. The Bhāgavata Purāṇa mentions twenty-three avatāras, including even Ṛṣabha, the first Tirthaṅkara of the Jainas. The doctrine of plural incarnations, both primary and secondary, that was later on followed up for the Primordial Śakti



or Devī in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, proves to be of indispensable aid in the fusion of the deities and heroes as may be well illustrated by the fact that Samhitās cite the Buddha, Balarāma, Kapila, Nara, Vyāsa, Dattātreyā and others as avatāras. It may be mentioned that the Vāyu, Agni, Mārkaṇḍeya, Bhāgavata and Skandha Purāṇas attained celebrity in some shape in the 7th century A.D.

### **Tripurusha and the Vedānta**

Purāṇic eclecticism is also illustrated and encouraged by the conception and worship of the Trimūrti, the Tripurusha or the Triune Supreme deity. The orthodox doctrine is given in the Mahābhārata as follows: "There are three states of the Progenitor (prajāpati). In the form of Brahmā he creates, having a human body (Viṣṇu—Kṛṣṇa) he protects and in the form of Rudra he destroys." The Mārkaṇḍeyapurāṇa similarly observes that the unborn and undecaying Brahman assumes the triple form of the lotus-sprung Brahmā, the source of all creation, Viṣṇu its protector and the dreadful Rudra its destroyer. Even when a Purāṇa is conceived in sectarian interest, it is stressed that the essence (guṇa) of one of the Trinity enters into the Supreme Lord's person, according to the nature of His activity or manifestation, and that the assumption of the Triple form of the God-head is due to the inter-play of the three guṇas, the fundamental cause of the origin, maintenance and dissolution of the universe. The synthetic doctrine of the Triune godhead, grounded in the Sāṅkhya metaphysical assumption of the three guṇas, was clarified and finalised in the Bhagavad-gītā, and received great stress in the Gupta and post-Gupta epoch, the literature and art of which embodied it in beautiful hymns and majestic images. The poet Kālidāsa superbly expresses the synthesis of that age in the Kumārasambhava (X, 44). "The one form of the Supreme Being is divided into three. For these the first place or the last was alike; Viṣṇu might be before Hara, or Śiva before Hari; Brahmā before either or either before Brahmā." In the Raghuvamśa, there is a long prayer addressed to Viṣṇu where the poet praises the deity as the One with the triple form (tridhasthitamānah) who produces, holds in existence and ultimately destroys the universe, while in the Kumārasambhava in another passage (II, 4) Kālidāsa actually mentions the composite form of Trimūrti; "Salutation to Thee, Trimūrti; one Spirit



before the creation of the universe, who afterwards divided Yourself according to the division of the three *guṇas*". The majestic images at Ellora and Elephanta, the massive figure at Benaras that Hiuen-Tsang saw, and the grand images comprising Śiva, Devī and Viṣṇu or Skandha in many Pallava and Central Indian temples (e.g. Gwalior) are a few illustrations among many of a class of three-headed sculpture (*ekapāda-mūrti*) very common in that age in the country.

Metaphysics in its quest of unity merges the holy Trinity in the unconditioned, unmanifested Absolute or Ātman-Brahman on the lines of the Sāṅkhya and Vedāntic philosophies. The hymn of the Sāṅkhya system is as follows:—

"Reverence to Thee in the Triple Form (*Trimūrti*) who before creation was one complete Ātman, and afterwards didst undergo division into the three essences or attributes (*guṇas*)".

In a Śaiva inscription at Khajuraho, Central Provinces (1001-2 A.D.), we find almost this Sāṅkhyan and Vedāntic invocation: "Adoration to that All (*Sarva*) who causes all (gods) to be comprehended in (his) *Puruṣa* (person), he whom those acquainted with the Vedānta call Śiva, the desire of the mind, while people with true knowledge call him the One Supreme Brahman, the Indestructible, Ageless, Immortal; others the verily Auspicious Buddha; others again the Spotless *Vāmana* (*Viṣṇu*); the *Jina*". Similarly for Viṣṇu, the doctrinal descriptions in inscriptions on Sāṅkhyan lines are also many. Viṣṇu is mentioned as "known from the Vedānta, who though his nature is knowledge, without end and existence, yet, in order to perform the duties of *Maghavat* (*Indra*) wears an illusory body."

Apart from the metaphysical conception of the *Trimūrti*, the unification of Viṣṇu and Śiva is represented in Purāṇic images of which one half represents Hari and the other half Śiva. The Hari-Hara image is found in repetition at Badami, Ellora and Pattadakal. Or Viṣṇu, Śiva and Brahṁā (*Hari-Hara-Pitāmaha*) are integrated into one figure with four faces. Other composite images are Brahṁā-Viṣṇu, Śūrya-Nārāyaṇa, Mārtaṇḍa-Bhairava, Śiva-Buddha and Dattātreya. Or in the Śiva-lingam are superimposed on different sides the images of Viṣṇu, Śūrya, Gaṇapati and Durgā. Or, again, there is a conjunction of their respective vehicles or symbols, the swan, the garuḍa and the bull. The

worship of the Trimūrti or the Tripurusha, in conjunction with the influence of the Sāṅkhya, Yoga and Vedānta philosophies, led to the exaltation of one of the manifestations of Being (Purusha) into the realm of the Unmanifest and the Unconditioned—the Brahman.

It was mainly the Vedānta teaching that supplied the intellectual foundation of the abstract, all-inclusive conception of the Supreme Reality that is the primal source of the gods and goddesses of the five principal sects of Brahmanism viz., Vaiṣṇava, Śaiva, Saura, Gāṇapatya and Śākta. This is clear from the following invocation of Kālidāsa in the Vikramorvaśi to Śiva: "He whom the sages describe in the Upanishads as the One spirit that remains (without space to occupy) after filling the earth and the heaven, to whom alone the epithet *Īśvara* (Supreme Lord) is applicable; He who is sought within by those who long for salvation and restrain the vital airs, *prāṇa* and others, may that Eternal One, easily attainable through steady devotion (*bhakti*) and *yōga*, grant you the highest beatitude." In the temple of Kailāsa at Ellora it is significant that on the left wing we get Śaiva images and on the right Vaiṣṇava images.

The Sāṅkhya and the Vedānta thus accomplished not merely the integration of the three deities as aspects of the Divine manifestation and stressed the ultimate unity of Being, but organised the entire yogic experience in terms of the accents or movements of the Self. Consciousness in movement is the Supreme Being or God (Purusha) manifest in the visible universe; consciousness stilled is Being as Truth and Intelligence, the Unconditioned One, the Abode of Immortality, beyond comprehension. A great art then rose and spoke in the divine tongue of the identity of Being and Becoming.

### Art and Metaphysics

The grand figure of Maheśa or Maheśvara (miscalled the Trimūrti) at Elephanta (8th century A.D.) illustrates this noble metaphysics. It is a simple but gigantic image—one of the most sublime creations of plastic art in the world. It is a three-headed bust representing the three categories of Being or alternating phases of the soul's activity. The massive central head, with its absolute serenity and inwardness, outspokenly translated into a firm, exaggerated closing of the lips, is the Being at rest or the



silence of self-meditation and absorption (Mahādeva or Tatpurusha i.e. Absolute and Original). The head on the spectator's right, charming and compassionate, is the Being as Becoming, symbolising the activity of creation (Umā or Vāmadeva i.e. Blissful). The head on the left, which is grim, stubborn and somewhat frowned, is the Being as transforming, symbolising the activity of withdrawal or destruction (Bhairava or Aghora i.e. Terrible). The Śaiva Āgama and the Vishṇudharmottara mention Mahādeva, Bhairava and Umā as the triune concrete, visible manifestations (mūrti) of the Supreme Spirit in the universe. The second set of triune deities viz. Tatpurusha, Aghora and Vāmadeva are invisible luminous, super-sensible presences elicited by mantra; these are not mūrtis but symbols (līṅga) appearing on the Śiva-mukha-līṅgam. The dominating motif of the Māheśvara image is the oneness of the Self in its alternate pulsations of activity, withdrawal and repose that are apprehended as rhythms of the cosmic process and of the mind of the living individual. The different countenances of Being (the Supreme Śiva or Paramātman), representing differentiated phases of mind, are magnificently reconciled in the same bust by a design both exceedingly novel in conception and superb in execution, which upholds and comprises the two subsidiary images through the majesty and power of the central image, that is profoundly silent and reposeful in volume and position in the whole structure and completely restores poise. The result is both profound silence and symmetry, symbolising at once the unity of self-consciousness in each of its original moods and the immanence of self in the cosmos. With the illumination of the Self the matted locks of the ascetic Mahādeva and the bejewelled crown of the gracious, playful Umā mingle together. Metaphysically speaking, the Self (Śiva, Paramātman) is the primordial and immanent cause of the universe, and destructiveness (Bhairava) and creativeness (Umā) are inseparable parts of its nature. Never have silence and activity, renewal and withdrawal in the Self's dialectical, onward march been ordered in such perfect plastic harmony and rhythm. Never have the clarity and stillness of the human soul, derived from complete identification with the realm of Becoming, found such majestic expression in stone. Like the ślokas of the Upanishads and the open and illuminated pages of the mystic's mind, the stones of Elephanta impressively and unequivocally utter this profound message: "Activity is true worship when every act is

done for the sake of Śiva or Being; silence again is true worship when it is an absolute repose of meditation."

### The Reconciliation of Metaphysics and Popular Religion

Religious philosophy and popular religion take different paths in all countries. While metaphysics and philosophy were emphasising in this age the unity of the Absolute which is also the Self in all creatures and in all things, as mentioned in the Bhagavad-gītā, popular imagination revelled in a medley of deities, a veritable "army of gods" (*deva-senā*), in the words of Kālidāsa, writing in the age when the Vedic and Purāṇic pantheons have been fused together, resulting in an enormous multiplication of gods and goddesses and of their names, attributes and associations. To such Vedic deities as Indra, Śachī, Varuṇa, Agni, Āditya, Viṣṇu, Dyāvā Pṛithivī, Bhārati and Sarasvatī, the Purāṇas added Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva, Trimūrti, Lakshmī, Pārvatī, Durgā, Kālī, the Seven Mothers, Kubera, Skandha, Lakuliśa, the various incarnations of Viṣṇu and many legendary heroes and saints. Religious architecture and art solved the problem of the hierarchy of the deities by laying down rules and regulations for building the different kinds of temples in different directions, north, south, east and west for the different deities in cities and larger villages with the main temple in the middle dedicated to one of the Trinity, Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva. In the chief temple itself, if Viṣṇu was the deity, Brahmā and Śiva stood in front of him in the attitude of devotion and yet had their own places of worship, on the south and north walls respectively of the shrine. Here then is a reconciliation between the worshipper's personal preference for the deity and the Sāṅkhya and the Vedānta idea of the unity of Being.

Popular worship and devotion gradually abjured all the restraints of metaphysics and replaced the impersonal Absolute of the philosopher by a multiplicity of gods, from the tutelary deity of the household and the local Devī of the village or city to a whole host of divinities into which the traditional Holy Triad proliferated.

The proliferation came first, as we have seen, through the worship of the various incarnations of the Supreme Person (*Purusha*) that was promulgated by the Epics and the Purāṇas and that were magnificently represented in the dynamic Daśa Avatāra sculptures



at Ellora (7th and 8th centuries A. D.). We encounter their final multiplication in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* that lists twenty three *Avatāras* and in the *Ahīrbudhnya Saṁhitā* that brings up the list to as many as thirty nine, defining *Avatāras* as power manifestations (*vibhavas*) of the Supreme Lord. All the *Avatāras* received adoration. The second proliferation was represented by the worship of the successive *Gurus* or teachers. *Śaivism*, for instance, gives the same adoration to *Lakuliśa* as to *Śiva*. *Lakuliśa* was the founder of the *Pāśupata* sect, and flourished in Western India about the 2nd century B.C. *Lakuliśa* or *Nakuliśa-Pāśupata* is represented conjointly with the *Līṅgam*. His disciple was *Kuśika*. In the Mathura pillar inscription of Chandragupta II *Vikramāditya*, it is mentioned that *Uditāchārya* installed the images of *Kapila* and *Upamita*, his teacher and teacher's teacher respectively, in a gallery set apart for this purpose (*Gurvāyatana*.) *Uditāchārya* is mentioned as the tenth *Guru* after *Kuśika*. The inscription is important as pointing to the worship of the *Āchāryas* in *Śaivism*. Similarly the *Achāryas* in *Vaiṣṇavism* also came in for adoration and worship.

*Śaivism* became a popular religion in the Gupta period in the form of worship of the *lingam* with one or more images of *Śiva* or *Lakuliśa* associated with it (*ekamukhī*, *chaturmukhī*). The *Matsya Purāṇa* (dated about the end of the 3rd century) refers to the sect of *Līṅgāyatana-ārādhyas*,—worshippers of the *Śiva-linga*. The common people followed a cult very different from the metaphysical conception of *Śiva*, the Supreme Being of the *Vedānta*. Reference may be made here to the colossal septennate *Līṅgarāja* constructed about 600 A.D. now in Parel, Bombay, symbolising not only the generative force of the cosmos, but also the dominant conception of Hindu metaphysics of this period, the unity of Being and Becoming. The various apparitions are but aspects of the same Transcendent Eternal Essence symbolised by the dominating central figure of *Sadāśiva*, whence all specific attributes are derived and in which all opposites inhere without contradiction. The massive white granite *Śiva-linga*, with its repeated reposeful and dynamic figures blended into an integrated whole, expresses and consolidates in a marvellous manner the balance between the supreme quiescence of Being and the tremendous dance-play of Eternal Becoming. Many old *linga* shrines exist, especially in Western India, such as *Māndhātā*, *Ujjain*, *Nāsik*, *Ellora* and *Nāganātha*. The *Mathurā*



pillar inscription of Chandragupta II (375-414 A.D.) mentions the installation of two images called Kapileśvara and Upamiteśvara (probably liṅgas). Another inscription mentions the Śaiva sect of Maheśvara flourishing in Mathurā in his time. A very early Śiva-liṅga is that of Fyzabad, village Karmadāṇḍā, bearing an inscription dated 436 A.D. which also mentions that the Brāhmaṇas of Ayodhyā "of different gotras and charaṇas, perfect in mantras, sūtras, bhāshyas and pravachanas", participated in the procession of the image (Deva-droṇi). Even in the most inaccessible parts of Northern Bengal, Śiva came to be worshipped in the liṅga form before the 5th century A.D., as we learn from a Damodarpore inscription. As in Western India not merely the crude form of the phallus but also the four-faced image of Mahādeva (mukha-liṅga) was installed during the reign of Dharmapāla in Bengal. The Śaivism preached by Lakuliśa Pāśupata and his four disciples, viz., Kuśika, Garga, Maitrī and Kaurushya, which spread from Western India, was what might be called Pāśupata or Āgamānta Śaivism. There were eighteen Āgamas which, it is believed, originated in the Gupta period. The Śaiva sect of the Pāśupata or Maheśvara that was flourishing in Middle India in the time of the Imperial Guptas thus gradually spread through the land. Early in the 7th century Hiuen-Tsang mentioned the following prominent centres of Pāśupata Śaivism: Mālwā, Ahichchhatra, Jalandhar, Kanauj, Maheśvarapura and Benaras. In the east Śaśanka of Karṇasuvarṇa and Bhaskaravarma of Kāmarūpa, who lived in the first half of the 7th century, were great protagonists of the new cult. An inscription of the time of Nārāyaṇapāla of Bengal mentions the Pāśupatas as worshippers of Śiva, indicating the dominance of the Pāśupata sect as the form of Śaivism in Eastern India at the time.

In the Gupta period various forms of Śakti were also worshipped such as Bhagavatī, Sarasvatī, Bhavānī, Pārvatī, Gaurī and Kātyāyanī. Many of the Gupta coins also show the goddess Durgā as Siṃhavāhana. One of the earliest Śakti images of Bengal is similarly seated on the lion—the Sarvanī of Tippera of the 7th century A.D. The worship of various forms of Devī as power (bibhūti) manifestations of the Supreme Lord, represents the third proliferation of the Absolute. Śāktism very early assimilated into itself local or aboriginal mother divinities such as Chaṇḍī, Durgā and Kālī as in centuries later Savarī, Parṇa-Savarī and Dombi.

In the Mahābhārata Durgā is the maiden goddess (Kumārī), who is the slayer of Mahisha, dwells in the Vindhya mountains and is offered wine, flesh and animal sacrifice. She is the sister of Kṛṣṇa, dark in complexion and wears like him a peacock's feather on her crest. One of her names in the epic is Kāntāra-vāsini (forest-dweller). All this definitely suggests her aboriginal derivation among the forest-dwellers of the Vindhyas. We find in Bāṇa's Kādambarī that Durgā was the deity of the Śavaras and that she was worshipped by the Kirātas as Kālī. In the Mahābhārata, Vanaparva, Umā became a Kirātī, when Śiva assumed the form of a Kirāta to test the strength of Arjuna. Bāṇa also mentions the goddess Chaṇḍikā, who holds the trident, is the slayer of Mahishāsura and to whom offerings of blood are made. In another passage of the Mahābhārata, however, Durgā is the spouse of Śiva-Umā and identified with the wisdom of the Vedas and the Vedānta. An inscription of about 625 A.D. contains an invocation of Durgā as a Supreme goddess. Other names of Durgā include Kālī, Mahākālī, Kapālī and Chaṇḍī. Durgā was invoked before the battle of Kurukshetra by Arjuna for his success, as directed by Kṛṣṇa. Kālidāsa refers to the Seven Mothers (Saptamātrikā), and especially to Kālī described as wearing a garland of skulls (Kapālabharaṇā, Chalakapālakuṇḍalā). Bāṇa in his Chaṇḍīśataka and Mayūra in his Subhāsitāvalī wrote verses of sincere devotion to Bhavānī and Pārvatī. Since the Gupta epoch the worship of Śakti as the world-protecting, beneficent aspect of Being became current, and as she embodies the pulsation of all created forms and existence—creation, duration and destruction—her representations became more numerous than those of any other deity. Yet here also the goal of Brahmanical philosophy, art and worship was the apprehension of the unity of Being and the fluent, endless, bewildering sport of Śakti—Mahāmāyā, the process of life or Becoming.

### The Philosophy and Myth of the Mother-Goddess

It is in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, Devīmāhātmya section, that the philosophy and myth of the Devī or Goddess as the primal self-revelation of the Absolute, the pulsating Energy (Śakti) of creation, duration and destruction, obtained their classic expression. She is the Eternal Feminine known there as Ambikā, Kouśikī, Chaṇḍī, Kālī, Lakshmi, Sarasvatī, Gaurī, Pārvatī, Umā,



Durgā and by a hundred other names. She is all form, all process, every mood of mind and every art and embellishment of living; she is at once the primordial drive of the unconscious, evil, ignorance and sorrow as well as pure intelligence, truth, beauty and goodness. The Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa myth of the genesis of the invincible Ambikā from the essences and attributes of all the individual divinities, including the Trinity and of the simultaneous apparitions of Kouśikī and Kālikā for mighty struggle and victory against the evil forces of life, mind and the universe has been as integrative as the Vedāntic conception of the unity of Being. According to the Viṣṇu myth, the world process is the projection or externalisation of Viṣṇu's cosmic dream, yoga-nidrā, which is the supreme Goddess herself. She lulls the Great Being to inertia and sleep, and then there is cosmic dissolution. She is also Yogamāyā, the dynamic tension behind Viṣṇu's creation, all differentiation of shape and appearance into the universe of life, mind and society. True to the synthesis of Purāṇic Hinduism, the Devī-Māhātmya speaks of Sarasvatī, Durgā, Lakshmī and Gaurī as the same. The Devī myth is a reiteration of the neo-Brahmanical metaphysics of the identity of Being and Becoming, of the primordial, unmanifest, supreme Matrix and the palpitating world process, (Devī-māhātmya, (I, 72-73). It also embodies the human soul's moral dignity and majesty, the struggle and triumph of the good against evil. It is for this reason that the representations of the Purāṇic episode of the Mother Goddess, Durgā and Kālī, slaying the demons beginning from the sculptures at Bhumara, Ellora and Mammalapuram (6th to 7th century A.D.) have been so common and won such universal devotion in India and beyond. The Seven Mothers (Brāhmī, Maheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaishṇavī, Indrāṇī and Chāmuṇḍā (Kālī) are represented in high relief on a Mathura stone of the Kushān period and also in the Ellora cave temple. The ultimate triumph of truth, beauty and goodness against darkness, violence and evil are vigorously and yet tranquilly depicted everywhere. The fall of the Buffalo-demon becomes the expression and consolidation of the Divine compassion, as he resigns himself to the swift, death-dealing stroke of the victorious Mother, poised in her serenity and inscrutable aloofness. The enigmatic calm and detachment in the face and the dignity and spontaneity of gesture and movement (divyakriḍā) of the triumphant Durgā Mahishamardini at Ellora, of the Javanese



image of the 8th century A.D. or of the Śrī Māṣikā Chaṇḍī Mahishamardhinī at Śakta, Dacca, of the 12th century are obviously born of the basic Śakti formula that goodness and evil are both emanations of Mahā-māyā, apparitions in the cosmic dream-universe. The paradox of such a violent scene as the slaying after a bitter conquest of the demon Mahisha, breathing and commanding profound tranquility can only be explained thus. The deepest Self of man (Ātman) is transcendent in its quietitude, described in the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, as the yoga-nidrā; the Self's creative tension is the yoga-māyā, the Māyā-śakti of self-multiplication in the visible universe and the nuances of the soul. The Self's vital energy projects itself in shape after shape of both the divine and the demonic. Good and evil, right and wrong, love and egoism are beneficent and destructive apparitions of the Self's own Śakti, productions of its own Māyā in the cyclic rhythm of its withdrawal and externalisation. Like the Vedānta, the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, Devī-Māhātmya, teaches man to escape the bondage of his own illusion, ignorance—Avidyā, Māyā, and experience through yoga and wisdom the transcendent quietitude of the Absolute, the supra-rational aspect of Śiva-Śakti that rests unconcerned in the world-drama of time and the life-processes. The Goddess Supreme who enchants the whole universe and all men and gods also leads them to true enlightenment. Thus do the Purāṇas, the epics and the Vedānta voice the same truth, and Indian symbolism and art pictorially interpret and depict it.

### **The Spirit of Religious Freedom and Toleration.**

Throughout India the religious climate was characterised by toleration and encouragement of all sects and schools. The Gupta Emperors were staunch followers of Brahmanism but they promoted endowments for all faiths, including Buddhism and Jainism. Thus Buddhist and Jain monasteries were as familiar in the Gupta epoch as the Brahmanical temples, deva-kulas and sabhās. Harsha showed a similar catholicity in his religious outlook. His ancestral religion was connected, according to Bāṇa, with Śaivism and Tāntrika worship. In spite of his leaning towards Mahāyāna Buddhism, he mentioned in the benedictory verses of his dramas such Brahmanical deities as Śiva, Gaurī or Girijā, Lakshmī, Sarasvatī, Kṛṣṇa and Brahmā. The Buddhist Pāla kings of Bengal were also noted for their religious catholicism. Nārāyaṇa-

pāla built and endowed a temple of Śiva. Prabhāvatī, Queen of Devakhaḍga, installed an image of Chāṇḍī. Some of the Bengal kings styled themselves both as Parama-Māheśvaras and Parama-Vaiṣṇavas and offered obeisance to Sadā-Śiva, Nārāyaṇa and Sūrya with equal zeal. Various sects existed side by side but there was no religious exclusiveness, not to speak of religious persecution. In the Buddhist site at Sāranāth is discovered a statuette of Sarasvatī, playing on the lute. In Gandhara, a similar image of Sarasvatī is identified by Grunwedel. The Buddhist and Brahmanical representation of Sarasvatī, the goddess of learning and music, was identical. Not merely gods and goddesses but also teachers and founders of religions and sects such as the Bhāgavatas, Upamitās and Kāpilas as well as sacred texts were installed in shrines (gurvāyatanas) and venerated, as we read in the Gupta inscriptions. Temples and viḥāras studded the country as there were also Brahmanical schools and agrahāras where students were grouped under sākḥās and charaṇas. Among the subjects of study mentioned in the Gupta inscriptions are the four Vedas, six Vedāṅgas, the Purāṇas, Mīmāṃsā, Nyāya and Dharma or Law, Sanskrit or Prākṛit poetry, Vyāsa, the arranger of the Vedas and son of Parāśara, Mahābhārata and Śatsahasrī-Saṁhitā. In Bengal the Buddhist Queen of Madanapāla regarded it as meritorious to hear the recital of the Mahābhārata. The Buddhist Dhanadatta took credit for the knowledge of the Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata and Purāṇas. In both the Buddhist viḥāras and kulas of Brahmanical teaching, a high standard of intellectual and moral discipline was insisted upon along with the spirit of religious freedom and toleration. I-tsing appreciates the high moral tone of monastic life at Tāmralipti where the monks lived "the just life avoiding worldly affairs and free from the faults of destroying life". Monks and nuns kept aloof from one another, and there was summary expulsion if the regulations and procedures were not strictly followed. A monk, called Rāhulamitra, never "spoke with women face to face except when his mother or sister came to him, whom he saw outside his room."

### The Arts of Sacrifice and Vinaya

The epics and the Purāṇas as well as the Vinaya texts not merely contributed towards the maintenance of a high moral standard in deva-kulas, agrahāras, saṅghas and viḥāras, but also



fostered a profound respect for others' creed and faith as well as intimate association between religious sects and philosophical schools. The four Vedas, the Vedāṅgas, the epics, the Purāṇas and the Mīmāṃsā were the background of development of Brahmanical character and learning. The sincerity with which the Vedic duties were undertaken and sacrifices performed, and the lofty intellectual and moral discipline of society are evident in the following passage of Bāṇa's *Harshacharita*, where the author after his return from the journey makes enquiries from his relatives: "Have you been happy all this time? Does the sacrifice proceed without hindrance, gratifying the Brāhmaṇ groups by its faultless performance? Do the fires devour oblations with ritual duly and without flaw performed? Do the boys pursue their studies at the proper time? Is there the same unbroken daily application to the Veda? The old earnestness in the practice of the art of sacrifice? Are there the same classes in grammatical exposition showing respect by days not idly spent in a series of emulous discussions? Is there the old Vedic society, regardless of all other occupations? The same exceeding delight in the Mīmāṃsā, dulling all pleasure in other authoritative books? Are there the same poetic addresses raining down an ambrosia of ever-new phrases?" The above refers to Vaidika discipline and āchāra. For the Vaishṇava, Śaiva and Śākta sects the Purāṇas, Āgamas, Saṃhitās and Tantras, equally enforced strict discipline among all the varṇas. The Bhāgavata Purāṇa (xi, 27, 7) classifies deva-pūjā or worship into three categories: Vaidikī, Tāntrika and mixed (miśra). The first and the third are adopted by the Brāhmaṇs, Kshatriyas and Vaiśyas, while the Śūdras adopt the second. For the entire population food, penance, sacrifices, rituals, gifts, prāyaschittas for impurity and transgression and rules of conduct are meticulously prescribed. The Buddhist cultivation of the right way was similarly inspired by the Abhidharmakosha, the Vinaya-piṭaka, the Buddacharita kāvya, the Jātakamālā and the Suṣṭlekhā. I-tsing mentions the models that moulded Buddhist character and learning in the 7th century A.D.: "In character they were 'anxious to follow in the footsteps of the Sages'; in learning, if it was Logic, or Hetuvidyā they studied, they aspired to be like Jina and Dharmakīrti, and if it was Yoga, they had Asaṅga as their model. In discourse, they followed Nāgārjuna, and in philosophical exposition, Saṃghabhadra." The rules of the Vinaya governed the diet and habits



of the monks, who mastered both religious and secular literature including the arts (*śilpasthāna*) and medicine and sometimes returned to the laity and joined service or followed occupations for livelihood. The monks never handled money, and expulsions from the order for overlooking even the slightest detail in respect of the *vinaya* prohibition as regards dealings with the opposite sex were not infrequent. Their frugal diet comprised rice-water in the morning, rice, butter milk, fruits and sweet melons in the noon, while in the evening there was also a light supper. This was in Magadha. Brahmanical *yajñas* and *āchāras* and Buddhist *Vinaya* regulations as well as the teaching of the *Vedas* and *Tripiṭakas* had for their supreme objective rigorous self-discipline, active contemplation and strenuous work. It is noteworthy that in the Buddhist monasteries there were many students (*Brahmachārins*) who were admitted by the monks and taught by them the *Sūtras* and *Śāstras*, but who returned to the secular life. The age of the *Purāṇas* has bequeathed to India the eclectic attitude that characterises modern religious life of India, where all persons believe in and revere all the gods. Behind and above the multiplicity of gods is the one, unconditioned Brahman, which, as the *Purāṇas* reiterate, is the supernal Essence that embodies itself in the various forms of the gods and manifestations of the universe. Finally, the *Purāṇas* are also regarded along with the *Dharmaśāstras* as works on Dharma, prescribing the moral code—the duties of castes and stages of life, (*varṇāśrama*) and *āchāra*, sacrifices, rights and duties and customs (*saṁskāras*). In India the word for culture is *charyā* or *āchāra* in Brahmanical society, and *vinaya* among the Buddhists, not of course identical for all men, castes, stages and times, but reflecting the eternal, immanent law of the universe—Dharma. Culture opens the door to Dharma, identified in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad* with the universal Self or Being (*ātman*, *brahman* and *amṛtam*), in the *Mahābhārata* with the cosmic law that sustains mankind and the world process (*Dhāraṇāt Dharmam*), and in the Buddhist texts with the knowledge of the secret of life and sorrow and universal compassion and service for reaching the status of Buddhahood. Ethics is awareness of Dharma, the law of the cosmic whole in its application to contingent problems. In this sense *āchāra*, *vinaya*, *vidyā* and *yoga* or skill in endeavours (*karmasu kauśalam*) are adaptable to changing circumstances, (*yuga dharma*), provided that these subserve to the true, eternal, paramount Dharma of the

infinity whence all creatures and arts of living arise. Whatever the religion, caste, stage of life and āchāra of men and communities, there is complete agreement in India in respect of the final end of life, the identification with the Whole and Immortal, Ayam dharmaḥ, amṛitaṁ idaṁ brahma idaṁ sarvaṁ.



## CHAPTER XXI

### THE FIRST GREAT REFORMATION: ŚĀNKARA AND THE TRIUMPH OF HIGH INTELLECTUAL TRADITION

#### **The Unification of Brahmanism in the Gupta period**

Indian culture in the Gupta-Vākāṭaka period was faced with the difficult task of combating the disintegration of Hindu society and culture due to the incursion of the Kushāṇas, Yavanas, Ābhīras and Huns, some of whom carved out independent kingdoms of their own on the Indian soil. The rise and spread of Mahāyāna Buddhism were grounded on lines of philosophical speculation, not rooted in Brahmanical tradition. Gupta civilization achieved a magnificent synthesis through the inculcation of Vaishṇava and Śaiva Bhāgavatism that the foreigners could understand and accept, the assimilation of hordes of military-aristocratic foreign communities as Kshatriyas into the social structure, and the syncretic worship of the Trimūrti. The fundamental unity of Brahmanical culture, covering the entire length and breadth of the sub-continent, also received a superb geographical expression as hordes of Mlechchhas menaced the land in the conception of Bhārata-varsha (the land of Bharata and his descendants) with seven rivers—the Ganges, the Jamunā, the Godāvarī, the Sarasvatī, the Narmadā, the Sindhu and the Kāverī, all equally sacred and invoked at the time of daily ablution. From the Himalayas to the sea, the sacred mountains and lakes were also indicated by the epics and the Purāṇas. The institution of pilgrimage for Śaivism, Śaktism and Vaishṇavism that became prominent since the Gupta period, distributed the sacred shrines of the various deities from the Himalayas to the Cape and from Pravash to Kāmarūpa. Such was the holy land that had to be fought for and defended against foreign aggression. The epic of the Mahābhārata stands for all time in India for her political and cultural unification, ever arousing in the hearts of her princes the desire for the establishment of sovereignty over “the thousand yojanas of land that stretch from



from the Himālayas to the sea as the proper domain of a single universal Emperor (Rājachakravarti)". The unity of Brahmanism also received its profound philosophical expression in the Bhagavad Gītā. Above all, Sanskrit entered its classic period and became the lingua franca for the entire continent.

The menace of the barbarians was over before long with the defeat of Mihiragula and in five hundred years of peace of the post-Gupta-Vākāṭaka age, Indian culture tackled successfully the problem of synthesis and reconciliation of the various cults represented by Vaishṇava Bhāgavatas, Śaiva Bhāgavatas, Śakti worshippers, the Ājīvikas, Buddhists of various schools and Jains, as well as by the various philosophical sects. The sublime comprehensive symbol of the Trimūrti or the Tri-purusha combined Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva or Viṣṇu, Śiva and Śakti—Three in One Supreme God-head. Into the majestic image of the Triune God merged the major deities of India: the Mountain-dweller Rudra of the Vedas, the omnipresent Mahādeva of the Brāhmaṇas, the Lord of Animals of the Dravidian folks of hills and forests, the Bacchanalian god of the Kāpālikas and the Mahā-Yogin of all sages, heroes and gods on one side; in front, the Viṣṇu of the Vedas, the Vāsudeva of the Sātvatas of the Jamunā valley, the king of Dvārakā, the Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa of the Ābhīras and milk-maids, the Garutman of the sun-worshippers and the Purushottama of the Bhagavad Gītā and the Purāṇas; on another side the Sāvitrī and Sarasvatī of the Vedas, the Mahāśvetā, Lakshmī, Durgā and Pārvatī of the Mahābhārata and the Kālī of the primitive peoples. The Trimūrti gathers into a synthesis for worship after due purification and abstraction many strands of cults, beliefs and philosophies, primitive and advanced, of many parts of India. And indeed Hiuen-Tsang in the seventh century found Buddhism in decadence and in Hinduism the worship of Maheśvara or Paśupati overshadowing that of Viṣṇu. Bengal and Western India, especially Mālwa, the Chinese pilgrim found, were the strongholds of the "cinder-sprinkled" Paśupatas who offered their homage to Maheśvara, Īśvaradeva or Īśvara often represented in that age by the Trimūrti image.

### **The Reconciliation of Brahmanism and Buddhism in the Post-Gupta Age**

If the Trimūrti united the Brahmanical faiths, Tāntrikism offered the bridge between the Brahmanical and Buddhist systems.

For Tāntrikism was less concerned with the externals of worship of the deity than with the techniques of regulation of the body and the Chit or Kuṇḍalinī Śakti (the coiled serpent Energy), the libido of the Freudians, that constituted the underlying common discipline and background of many cults, Buddhist and Hindu. The entire symbology of the Tantra in respect of the "piercing" of the six plexuses has supplied the frame of reference of many cults of the middle ages, besides Śakti-worship, such as the Siddha-Nāthas who seemed to have obtained the symbology from the Buddhist Tantras and transmitted it to the Nirguṇa School of Northern India and the Yogīs, Jogīs, Bauls and Sahajīyas of Bengal.

The Vajrayāna, from which medieval Tāntrikism originated, belongs possibly to the 3rd century A.D. It was in the 6th and 7th centuries A.D. that Vajrayāna won popularity in Nālandā and in the 8th and 9th centuries in Vikramaśilā, Odantapurī and Somapura. From these Universities Vajrayāna travelled to Nepal, Tibet, China and South-east Asia. Innumerable Buddhist Tāntrika works came to be written on yoga tantras, mantras, yantras, dhāraṇīs, rituals and hymns. Due to the emergence of a galaxy of mystics, known as the Siddhas, Nāthas or Yogīs who developed their system partially independent of the Vajrayāna, possibly reacting against its eroticism, Hinduism assimilated much of the Vajrayāna symbology and rituals in Eastern India. Some of these obscure practices are preserved in the ten centuries old hymns and dohās, composed by the Buddhist Siddhāchāryas in old Bengali, that were brought to light by H. P. Shāstri on the basis of a manuscript found in Nepal. Thus there evolved not one distinctive Tāntrikism, but a fluid exuberant Tāntrika culture that directed the adherents of different theologies and worshippers of divergent gods and goddesses along new, untried channels. Soon Vikramaśilā became the most important centre in India of Tāntrika culture surpassing Nālandā. Āchārya Jñānapāda, the royal priest of King Darmapāla, whose reign covers the transition between the 8th to the 9th century, developed here his study of Mantra-Vajrāchārya and became the founder of a new cult of which it was the only centre in those days. Among other writers on Tantra were Vairocana (author of Vinaya Saṃgraha and Śukla-vajrayoginīśādhana), Jetari, (senior and junior, the former being a teacher of Dīpaṅkara Śrījñāna Atiśa and the latter the author of eleven Vajrayānist works), Śāntirakshita (author of three Tāntrika works), Jñānaśrī



(author of ten Vajrayāna works), Ratnākara (author of Vajra-bhairava-gaṇa-chakranāma, Sri-sarva-rahasya-nibandha-rahasya-pradīpa-nāma) and Ratnavajra (author of Mahāmāyā-sādhana, Śrī-Heruka-sādhana-nāma and Sri Akshobhya-Vajra-sādhana). The syncretic spirit of the times is shown by the fact that Dipaṅkara Śrī Jñāna (980-1043) was regarded as the master of Hīnayāna, Mahāyāna, Vaiśeṣhika and Tantras. About 200 works mostly on Vajrayāna are ascribed to him. He paid on royal invitation a visit to Tibet where he taught and preached for 13 years. He purged Tibetan Buddhism of its many corruptions and founded the new religion, Lamaism. The spread of Buddhism to Central Asia, Tibet and Nepal was no doubt grounded on the assimilation of prevailing animism and magic in different countries to Buddhist theology. The above account of scholars and their works at Vikramaśilā is derived from Mookerji's monumental treatise on Ancient Indian Education. S. K. De gives also a scholarly account of literature of Tāntrika Buddhism that flourished in Vikramapurī, Odantapurī, Jagaddal, Somapura and other vihāras of Bengal in these centuries. According to the Tibetan Bstan-ḥgyur, many Vajrayānist texts, known as Sādhanaś originated in Baṅgāla (eastern Bengal) and promulgated the worship of a number of Buddhist gods and their Śaktis whose images are to be found very largely in Eastern India. The Vajrayāna gradually developed into several later Yānas. The Sahajayāna that Bhattachārya associates with Lakṣmīmīṅkarā Devī (A.D. 729) abjures all worship except that of the body and all rituals and restrictions. The Kāla Chakrayāna is based on the worship of Kālachakra embodying void and Karuṇā (compassion) that is embraced by his Śakti-Prajñā, and combines the elements of Vajrayāna, Nāthism and Sahajayāna. Finally, there is also the Mantrayāna which is concerned with mantras, yantras and cognate rituals.

Gradually several basic presuppositions of the Tantras emerged and were integrated with one another viz., the universality of Śakti or Energy as underlying all forms of activity and manifestation; the yoga of the body arousing its latent sleeping Energy, (Kuṇḍalinī) and making it a fit instrument of the Divine power (Śakti); the association of letters of the alphabet, mantras and diagrams with deities; the ritual sanctification of the life of the senses for a total harmonious uplift of body-mind-spirit; and the adjustment of modes of worship to the moral and spiritual attributes of the

individual. This was no doubt aided by the high philosophy, the abundant literature and the virile art that Tāntrikism developed in Bengal and Tibet. The rapid expansion of Tāntrikism is indicated by the fact that according to one of the Tantras, Bhārata-varsha is divided, from the Tāntrika point of view, into three parts (Krānta) each being directed by 64 Tantras; the first is Vishṇu-krānta—the land eastward of the Vindhya extending to Java; the second is Rathakrānta, the land north of the Vindhya including China and the third is Aśvakrānta, the rest of the land towards the West.

The Brahmanical revival of the Gupta age was facilitated by the redactions of the epics and the Purāṇas that provided religious instructions for the common people from the Himālayas to the Cape. More Purāṇas were compiled or composed in the post-Gupta age when their influence was intensified and extended; while the Tantras that became prominent from the fourth century onwards and were even more numerous spread ideas relating to rituals, disciplines and modes of worship, especially the worship of Śakti. Alberuni mentions the existence of 18 Purāṇas about 1030 A.D.

### The Need of a Fresh Synthesis for Brahmanism

Purāṇic and Tāntrika Hinduism was fresh, vigorous and varied. Yet the various Purāṇas and Tantras, sometimes exaggerating the claims of sectarian deities among the common people remained half reconciled. The Vedas and their adjuncts, belonging to the older Brahmanism, comprised an ocean of wisdom, too deep and inaccessible for the common people, while Buddhist scholars had poured scorn on the ancient scriptures for generations. Even the Bhagavad Gītā, the epitome of Brahmanical wisdom, is eclectic and uncertain in its emphasis for the common man. Into a world of changing theologies, mythologies and philosophical systems, bewildering in their complexity, Tāntrikism of Buddhist, Siddha and Hindu varieties, introduced heterodox modes of worship that showed extravagances and abominations making confusion worse confounded.

Śaṅkarāchārya's great task (788-828) was to reach a fresh integration and synthesis for Brahmanism. He had also to deal with a new menace to Brahmanical culture from Moslem proselytization backed by the might of arms. Here and there in the Malabar coastal towns, such as Koulam, Muslim traders



had already settled for about a century and were known as Mappilas; and King Cheraman Perumal, the last of the kings of Malabār ruling at Kodungallur became a convert to Islam. Conversion was proceeding and mosques were being built and had zealous support of the leaders of Moslem community who were sometimes employed in South India as ministers, admirals and farmers of revenue. Thus Islam was gaining influence and entrenching itself. Śaṅkara must have realised the peril to Hindu culture from Moslem missionary activity. The conversion of the king must have been a sensational event and eye-opener.

### **The Pre-Sankara Religious Reformation of the Adiyars and Alvars**

The great religious Reformation, of which Śaṅkara was the leader, was no doubt inspired by the intellectual and religious currents of South India. His formulation of a comprehensive Advaita metaphysics and its reconciliation with mystical fervour and devotion were no doubt, influenced by the powerful theistic movements, both Śaiva and Vaishṇava, that had been waxing stronger and stronger in the South from the third century A.D. The most important centre of learning in the South was the Hindu University at Kāñchī, which rose to great prominence under the liberal and progressive regime of the Pallavas and flourished upto the ninth century A.D. Even princes from the neighbouring lands that were inimical to the Rulers of Kāñchī resorted to this seat of learning. The term used for university was "Ghaṭikā." (Ghaṭikā-dvijānām). It was from Kāñchīpura that Dharmapāla, the son of a high official, migrated to Nālandā and ultimately obtained the headship of the university at the beginning of the seventh century A.D. It was in the empires of the Pallavas and the Chālukyas that the Śaiva and the Vaishṇava saints began that religious reform that was later on dove-tailed into Śaṅkara's great reform movement. They chanted in the language of the common man exquisite hymns of devotion, ecstasy and surrender that could go straight to every heart, and initiated a devotional movement that was to spread throughout the Indian continent. Numbered among them were kings, ministers, out-castes and women who all poured out their profound devotion in soul stirring verses. Among the Śaiva saints that preceded Śaṅkara were Tirujñāna Sambandhar who was born in Tanjore in the seventh century and his

contemporary Tirunāvukkarāṣu (Apparsvāmī) who belonged to the Vellāla caste. The latter saint seems to have been responsible for the conversion of the Jain king, Mahendravarman I (600-625) to Śaivism contributing to the defeat of both Jainism and Buddhism in the Pallava Empire where Hiuen-Tsang found both religions strongly entrenched during his visit to the Pallava capital, Kāñchīpura, the greatest centre of Sanskrit learning in the South. In both Tirujñāna, who is regarded as an actual incarnation of Śiva, and whose image is still daily worshipped in most Śaiva temples in the Tamil land, and Tirunāvukkarāṣu, we find a profound self-forgetful note of devotion and in the latter an intense consciousness of sin and of God's redeeming love and grace. Appar rises above the externals of religion, fast, penance, chanting and pilgrimage and utterly leans on Śiva's compassion. Of the ultimate release from the bonds of sin by the grace of God, he is perfectly certain. The immanence of the deity is also a dominant conception of his. "Śiva is ever hard to find but he lives in the thought of the good, immanent in Viṣṇu, in Brahmā, in flame and in wind, yea, in the mighty-sounding sea and in the mountains."

Appar rises to sublime poetry as he speaks of the infinitude of God's love and light and His presence in every human being.

"The grace of God is as pacifying as the soft music of the lute,  
Or the tender moon in the evening sky.

All learning and wisdom are for doing reverence to God.

God should be worshipped out of pure love as the great Benefactor,

Who gave us the instruments of knowledge, speech and action,  
For escape from destructive desires.

No gain of spiritual freedom is there to those who display the robe

And other insignia of Yogins and Sanyāsins, or who mortify the flesh.

That gain is only for those who glorify Him as the Being,

Who vibrates throughout the universe and in every soul."

Another famous Śaiva saint was Sundaramūrti who was born in South Arcot and lived in the 8th or 9th century. He set aside the rigidity of caste regulations and also married non-Brahmin wives. In him we find a complete resolution of the fear of death due to Śiva's mercy.



“O Father, should dread Yama press  
 On me, forbid Him. 'Tis my slave;  
 Do thou in green Pungur confess  
 I've reached Thy foot, and Thou can'st save”.

Perhaps the greatest among the Śaiva saints was Mānnika Vāchakar who probably flourished in the 8th century A.D. near Madura. It is related that he defeated the Buddhist monks in a discussion attended by the King of Ceylon whom he converted into Śaivism. He seemed to have travelled from place to place debating with both Buddhist and Jain teachers. His hymns show an even greater mystical fervour than those of his predecessors and form even today a perennial inspiration for hundreds of thousands in the South.

“I had no virtue, penance, knowledge, self-control.  
 A doll to turn  
 At others' will I danced, whistled, fell. But me  
     He filled in every limb,  
 With love's mad longing, and that I might climb  
     there whence is no return,  
 He shewed His beauty, made me His. Ah, me, when  
     shall I go to Him.”

The same ardent faith and unswerving devotion, the same disregard of rituals and ceremonies and of caste authority were also true of the galaxy of Vaishṇava saints called Ālvārs. Some of these came from the lower castes and one Ālvār, Andal, was a woman. They flourished between the 6th and 10th centuries and thus were contemporaries of the Śaiva mystics. One of them, Tiruppanālvār, was refused admission to the temple at Śrīrangam but the god of the temple would not bear his exclusion and commanded a sage to carry him into the sanctus sanctorum on his shoulders. The saint Andal, a virgin, was ever united with Viṣṇu as per spouse and her hymns are sung even today at marriages. Nammālvār or Sathagopam decries caste and asserts that it is only the knowledge of God which can make a man high or low in the social scale.

### Sankara's Heritage from the South

The devotional movement of the Ādiyars and Ālvārs from the 5th century onward with their pronounced emphasis of sin and

self-abasement, individual responsibility, and, above all, God's immanence and redeeming love for the least and the lowest as well as their direct denunciation of religious formalism and caste was essentially egalitarian in its social outlook. In India, across the ages, mystical movements through a vivid consciousness of immanence of the deity and challenge of all external forms of worship and religion, have been socially equalising and integrative. Śaṅkara's catholic intellectual slant and mystical fervour as well as his uncompromising monism that would not permit any distinction between the high-born and the Cāṇḍāla were his heritage from the South. The common man throughout South India was filled at the time of Śaṅkara with an ardent yearning for the Divine, and he canalised it along the channel of knowledge, Jñāna mārga, as prescribed in the Upanishads, rather than along the channel of Bhakti that was to obtain after a lapse of three centuries a fresh philosophical support through the Viśiṣṭādvaita doctrine of Rāmānuja. Both the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava saints, through their thousands of hymns sung in the provincial language and their respective theological systems, already made the position of Jainism and Buddhism precarious in the South, when Śaṅkara launched his philosophical attack against heterodoxy throughout India. The Ādiyars and Ālvārs, writing in the vernaculars worked for religious reform locally. Śaṅkara choosing Sanskrit as the medium of expression for his numerous works and debates and travelling widely throughout the length and breadth of India was bent on digvijaya. The Pallava kings were originally Buddhists but adopted Śaivism by the end of the 6th century. The Pallava and Chālukya culture was Brahmanical, upholding Purāṇic Hinduism that received some of its noble artistic expressions in the five rathas at Mamallapuram (built in the first half of the 7th century), the various cave temples, the Trimūrti, Varāha, Durgā and five Pāṇḍava and the Kailāśanātha temples at Kāñchipuram, the Virūpākṣa temple at Pattakadal and the Brahmanical caves at Ellora, Daśāvatāra, Rāvana ka khai, Dhūmar Lena and Rāmeśvara. Buddhism that had been declining since the end of the 7th century was, at the time of Śaṅkara's northern tour, on the verge of extinction in South India swept away by the ardent theistic sentiment created by the Ādiyars and Ālvārs of the Tamil land as it had been already stricken with decay in the north. In Malabar itself legend gathered round the famous Kumārila Bhaṭṭa of his miraculous rout and



violent persecution of the Buddhists that were ordered by Prince Sudhanva to be slain, "old men as well as babes from the bridge of Rāma to the snowy mountains" about 700 A.D. Śaṅkara had not before him much of an up-hill fight against Buddhism and its discredited rites.

### **The Synthesis of Sankara, the Shanmatasthapanacharya**

The aim of Śaṅkara's mission was two fold: first, to provide Hinduism with a corpus of philosophical doctrines that could unite all the religious and philosophical sects of India and combat the fissiparous trend, which Jainism and Buddhism fully exploited for their missionary activities; and, second, to relate high philosophy to daily life and formulate a practical course of discipline for both monks and laymen for attainment of the summum bonum. In Śaṅkara's *Sūtra-bhāṣya* (ii, 2, 27) we read that the entire world was being agitated (*ākulikriyate*) by the Buddhists. The renovation of Hinduism superseding the popular Buddhist philosophy and discipline was largely the work of Śaṅkara. His phenomenal success in the Great Reformation would not have been possible but for the combination of subtle analytic reasoning, marvellous dialectic skill and broad philosophical vision with a practical, reformist outlook. His first duel, however, was not with the Buddhists or Jains, but with the exponents of the *Mīmāṃsā* school of philosophy, that was founded by Jaimini, and that, under the influence of Śābara, Prabhākara and Kumārila (6th and 7th centuries) gained great ascendancy in India in 7th and 8th centuries. The *Mīmāṃsā* doctrine is pure and simple ritualism, grounded in the belief that if a man performs the acts enjoined by the *Brāhmaṇas*, such as the Five-fold Sacrifices (*Yajña*), offering of oblations to the sacred fire (*homa*) and charity (*dāna*) and refrains from the forbidden acts, viz. drinking and injury, he obtains emancipation (*moksha*). Jaimini, Śābarasvāmī and Kumārila are, like the Buddha, completely silent about God. Heaven is the goal though whether heaven is unalloyed happiness is not clearly defined. The *Mīmāṃsakas* take a pragmatic view of life and greatly emphasise human obligations that in the Vedic system of rituals relate man to the cosmic scheme of life. Their doctrine is socially defensible, but was a serious challenge not only to Buddhism but also to the older *Bhāgavatism* of the Gupta age and the *Purāṇic* theism of the post-Gupta-period that received a fresh accession of strength from

the Tamil mystical movement. On Śaṅkara's memorable debate in Mālwa with Maṇḍana Miśra, the leading supporter of the Mīmāṃsā at that time, hung the issue whether India would accept a soul-less ritualism, a self-sufficient Dharma or system of obligations and ceremonials without the inner spirit as a national religion. Śaṅkara, of course, won, and India was saved from what in the Gītā is called hypocritical religion (*mithyāchāra*). But such was the bitterness created that he was dubbed by the Mīmāṃsakas as a "concealed Buddhist". In Indian culture the importance of Mīmāṃsā consists today largely in its logical apparatus and canons of criticism and interpretation—its method of intellectual discipline. For centuries in India the courts of justice always included the Mīmāṃsakas. Śaṅkara's system begins as "an enquiry into Brahman" as contrasted with "an enquiry into Dharma", the subject of Pūrva Mīmāṃsā, which he demolished.

The first battle was thus over. Śaṅkara, according to his biographer Ānandagiri, had his contests with fifty different sectaries all of whom he easily overcame. Out of these intellectual combats emerged the transcendental monism known as the Kevaladvaita and the reconciliation and synthesis of the various philosophical sects true to the Vedic wisdom. This won for Śaṅkara the title of *Shaṅmatasthāpanāchārya*.

### The Significance and Genesis of the Kevala Advaita

Such were the grand comprehensive sweep, symmetry and completeness of his system, embracing as it did at once metaphysics, morals, theology and the mystical way that it has had an extraordinary influence on the development of intellectual ideas in India since his teaching. Most of Indian philosophy since Śaṅkara takes his doctrine and interpretations as its starting point. The intellectuals of modern India in fact still live in the age of Śaṅkara, who is unquestionably one of the world's greatest thinkers, and seek to relate his Advaita Vedānta to the conclusions of modern physics and mathematics. Taking his cue from the Sūtras of Bādarāyaṇa (who lived probably in the 1st Century B.C.), the older Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gītā, Śaṅkara utilised fully the new metaphysical notions that Mahāyāna Buddhism added to the current thought of the times, such as the distinction between absolute and relative truth, stressed by Mādhyamika Buddhism which speaks of *Paramārtha-satya* and of *Samvṛti-satya* and the



transcendental idealism of the school of Asaṅga, Vasubandhu and Hiuen-Tsang. According to Nāgārjuna, who teaches the Middle Doctrine, the world is neither Being nor non-Being. Śaṅkara similarly stresses that the world is beyond the categories of Sat and Asat. Mahārāshṭra, Konkan and Mahā-Kośala were important centres of Buddhism at the time of Hiuen-Tsang's visit in the first half of the 7th century; and these were not very distant from the Narmada valley, where Śaṅkara found his teacher, Govinda, and converted his opponent, Māṇḍanamiśra of Māhiṣmati. Thus Śaṅkara is expected to be familiar with both the Mādhyamika śūnyatā and Yogāchāra vijñāna-vāda. Gauḍapāda, Śaṅkara's spiritual grand-father, used the leading concepts and even the similes of the Yogāchāra school in his well-known Māṇḍūkya-Kārikā for his interpretation of the Vedāntic doctrine. In the period immediately preceding the advent of Śaṅkara there was a rapprochement, almost a fusion between Vedānta and Mahāyāna idealism. From the Buddhist side Śāntarakṣita declares that it was only the absence of Kṣaṇikavāda that makes the Vedānta unacceptable. From the Hindu side Gauḍapāda in his Āgama-śāstra presents what is regarded by scholars as the core of Buddhist Vijñānavāda, and in one of his verses actually salutes the Buddha as the great teacher of asparśayoga. But the authority of Śaṅkara's interpretation of the Kārikās separated the strands of thought that were coalescing. Non-duality, idealistic and absolute, is, according to Śaṅkara, the distinctive feature of Hindu speculation, and the deviations from this as represented by the Buddhist, Jain and other philosophical sections, he insisted, were due to lack of insight into Śrūti (revealed knowledge or the Vedas). While positing absolute Knowledge or Consciousness (Brahman) as the Reality, Śaṅkara, contrary to current misconceptions, did not deny the existence of the world. The empirical world, according to Śaṅkara, has to be accepted as a fact until the knowledge of Brahman dawns. It has an apparent and relative reality (pratibhāsika), not absolute reality (pāramārthika) even as man's mental events or his states of waking, dream and deep sleep have no absolute reality. Thus the Padma-Purāṇa hits a wrong target when it declares that the Māyā doctrine is only Buddhism in disguise, and that it was proclaimed in the degenerate Kali age by a Brāhmaṇa, and is false. Māyā, in the Vedānta, rightly understood, is the mysterious principle that makes one a slave of the phenomenal

world and take a rope as a snake. There is but the One, the Real. Yet it is man's inherent nature to superimpose. That Brahman is the world, is also *adhyāsa*. *Māyā* is *adhyāsa* or superimposition—the law that makes the world as it is and reconciles the contradiction between self and not-self, the Brahman and the world. Śaṅkara's concept of *Māyā* is strikingly different from that of the Mahāyāna Buddhists with whom *Māyā* is "a mirage, unsteady as lightning or foam" in which the whole fabric of human experience is involved.

The Vedānta is quite strong in its emphasis on the practical side of philosophy based on the proper realisation of the unity texts (*advaita-sruti*) of the Upanishads in one's life and also on the social man's obligations of the four Āśramas for purification of his mind so that it may become saturated with the desire for self-realisation. The ignorant must accept the code of social obligations and the way to knowledge begins with a sense of detachment and, indeed detachment is the royal road for both the ignorant and the wise seeker. (Śaṅkara's commentary on the Bhagavad-Gītā, XII, 12). Renunciation is the universal way to serenity. Until perfect knowledge is obtained, Śaṅkara insists in the *Upadeśa Sahasrī*, all prescribed duties and works must be scrupulously performed as aids to self-realisation. Thus a strenuous moral discipline and code of duties without egoism are an integral part of the Vedāntic scheme of life.

### **Sankara, the Great Protestant after the Buddha**

Nor was Śaṅkara conservative in his social outlook. Malabar legends testify to the opposition he aroused from the orthodox Brāhmins by certain great social reforms that he initiated and that were signalised by their association with the beginning of the Kollam era (825 A.D.) in this region. He inveighed against the reprehensible rites associated with the Bhairavas, Śāktas, Gānapatya, Kāpālikas and Pāśupatya and especially the abominations and extravagances of certain phases of Tāntrikism and put the worship of Devi on clean monistic foundations. Legend tells us that he abolished the rite of human sacrifice before the Goddess at the well-known temple in Kāñchī (Conjeevaram) in the south. The work of religious purging and purification that the Master took in hand with his indomitable energy, was however, by no means incompatible with the observance of rituals and worship of



deities as are prescribed by the Vedas, and of acts of external devotion not inconsistent with their authority. Śaṅkara mingled his emphasis of Ātman-Brahman knowledge with theistic devotion—the worship of the five recognised deities of the age, as mentioned in the Śrīmad Bhāgavata, viz., Sūrya (the sun), Āmbikā (Śakti), Viṣṇu, Gaṇapati and Śiva. At the conclusion of every religious debate it was enjoined that the five deities, should be worshipped according to one's preferences. Thus did Śaṅkara purify Brahmanical worship, cleanse the Hindu temples, soften the bigotry of sects and expound a broad and tolerant philosophical Hinduism grounded in both Nirguṇa and Saṅguṇa vidyā, both contemplation and worship that could find a place even for his erstwhile opponents from various mutually antagonistic groups. About the varieties of worship Śaṅkara declared that there should be no quarrel among votaries of different gods. Man creates his own mental or material images of the deity, who is beyond time and space, even beyond contemplation and cannot be circumscribed by stone and wood, nor by ideas and concepts. If man rises above materiality in religion and reaches the metaphysical truth of Brahman the nominal differences between images of the Absolute disappear. In his *Āparokṣhānubhūti* or the Realisation of the Absolute, Śaṅkara clearly indicates his preference of the way of knowledge, of identity of Ātman and Brahman to the external yoga techniques of posture, regulation of breath, withdrawal of senses from their objects and fixation of attention. He employed, indeed, his extraordinary talents to remove the outstanding weakness of Purāṇic and Tāntrika Hinduism, the leaning toward the externals of worship, yoga, magic and ritual and expound the correct performance of prescribed Vedic rites.

Thirteen centuries after the Buddha, Śaṅkara was, therefore, the great protestant, and like the former he claimed to go back to the ancient norm, the true Brahmanical teaching of the Vedas in his case. Never did he speak of the Buddha deprecatingly. On the contrary, his estimate of the Buddha can be judged by his reference to him as the king among the yogis, yoginām cakravartī. Śaṅkara's own guru was Govinda Bhāgavatpāda the pupil of Gauḍapādāchārya, and he himself had several able and zealous disciples, such as Maṇḍana Miśra (who after his acceptance of defeat came to be known as Padmapāda, Toṭaka and Hastāmālaka). Another famous disciple was Bhārati, the learned wife of Maṇḍana

Miśra, versatile in all the śāstras, who became a nun and lived at the Sringeri Maṭha when Sūreśvarāchārya took charge of it as the successor of Śaṅkara. His intellectual dig-vijaya extending from Chidambaram to Kashmir and from Benares to Kedarnath was easy; in fact, he came, he saw, he conquered. This was followed by one of the most outstanding reforms in Indian religious history—the organisation of Hindu monachism, after the model of the Buddhist and Jain, under the authority of four monasteries (maṭhas) at Sringeri in the south, Jagannātha (Purī) in the east, Dvārakā in the west and Badari in the Himālayas. The Maṭhas were to be looked after in different parts of India by ten different orders of sanyāsins called the Dasnāmīs, viz. Saraswatīs, Bhāratis, Purīs, Girīs, Tirthas, Āśramas, Vanas, Araṇyas, Parvatas and Sāgaras. The continuity of the monastic organisation was assured by the custom of a succession of Sanyāsin heads, the Śaṅkarāchāryas nominated according to spiritual merit, and by the support of neighbouring rulers and chiefs, guardians of neo-Hinduism. Śaṅkara had the vision of unification of India at one of the critical periods of her history just prior to the Muslim conquest. The political influence and prestige of the south were all in his favour. If he had not died prematurely (according to legend at the early age of 32), a united India that he wanted to build up through participation in a common spiritual culture might have shown a political consciousness as in the Gupta-Vākāṭaka period.

Numerous monk-scholars carrying staffs (daṇḍins) as the insignia of the new order were entrusted with the task of promulgating Śaṅkara's religious reforms throughout the country. For the first time the Hindu ascetics and seekers after truth who forsook the world were provided with an organisation and effective discipline as well as social programme. The ascetics were graded according to the degree of self-realisation into four categories, viz. the Brahmachārins, the Daṇḍins, the Parivrājakas and the Paramahamsas; and there was neither caste nor ritualism nor sacrodotalism among them as in the Buddhist order. The Dasanāmi Sanyāsis, now organised into a regular body, have become since the recognised spiritual leaders of India, a brotherhood of the spiritual elite. Various sub-monasteries were also established. Both the major and minor pontifical seats have become seats of Advaita teaching and played an important role in banishing Buddhism, rallying the Hindu sects together by purging Purāṇic



Hinduism of its superstitions, extravagances and abominations and spreading the gospel of the Vedānta, the core of ancient wisdom and modern speculation, all over India. Śaṅkara even culled from the Upanishads the formulae and mantrams of meditation of Ātman-Brahman that are since followed by the lay-intelligentia and monks throughout the country. He had the vision to open the door of monkhood for all castes, high or low, distributed between the four chief monasteries in the four corners of India, but did not permit women to enter the monastic order. Legend tells how in the bathing-ghat at Benares a Chanḍāla, asked by Śaṅkara's pupils to clear the road for him, expostulated why he made a difference between Advaita preaching and practice. Śaṅkara replied in five ślokas (Manishā-Panchaka) each of which ends thus: "He who has learned to look on phenomena in this (monistic) light is my true Guru, be he a Chanḍāla or a twice-born man. This is my conviction". Śaṅkara again and again stressed that a person who lives in Brāhmaṇ has neither caste nor āśrama.

### The Many-sidedness of Sankara's Genius

Śaṅkara, though an erudite scholar in the Śrutis, a profound metaphysician and an astute logician unsurpassable in his dialectic skill, was also a poet-mystic. He must have been deeply touched by the mystical devotion and philosophy of the Tamil saints that by his time formed a part of the spiritual heritage of every South Indian. Brāhmaṇ is All, Absolute, Infinite Consciousness-Bliss, an exalted mystical illumination. The Vedānta is a self-luminous mystical way. Śaṅkara, while he realised the perfect identity of self and Brāhmaṇ and its undefinable silence, wonder and joy must also have had his ardent yearnings and experiences of realisation of personal deity too as his many devotional hymns to Śiva, Devī and Viṣṇu amply testify. Many of these are sung every day during worship.

Śaṅkara's unique achievement in rehabilitating Brahmanical culture was due to his rare combination of the talents of a metaphysician and mystic, religious dialectician and poet and leader and social reformer. Some of Śaṅkara's hymns such as the Ānanda-lahari, Dakṣiṇāmūrti, Śivāparādha-kṣhamāpaṇa, Hastā-malaka and Bhaja-Govindam are characterised by great charm and tenderness of expression and smooth flowing rhythm in spite of their metaphysical background; while his Moha-mudgara,

whose metre is influenced by apabhraṃśa or folk poetry, is one of the best poems in Sanskrit literature. The Sister Nivedita observes: "Western people can hardly imagine a personality like that of Śaṅkaracharya. In the course of a few years to have nominated the founders of no less than ten great religious orders of which four have fully retained their prestige to the present day; to have acquired such a mass of Sanskrit learning as to create a distinct philosophy and impress himself on the scholarly imagination of India in a pre-eminence that twelve hundred years have not sufficed to shake; to have written poems whose grandeur makes them unmistakable, even to foreign and unlearned ears; and at the same time to have lived with his disciples in all the radiant long and simple pathos of the saints—this is the greatness that we must appreciate but cannot understand. We contemplate with wonder and delight the devotion of Francis of Assisi, the intellect of Abelard, the virile force and freedom of Martin Luther and the political efficiency of Ignatius Loyola; but who could imagine all these united in one person." To the versatility of his genius he added youthful vigour and inexhaustible vitality that enabled him to traverse the whole of India, combining in himself the rôles of Erasmus, Calvin and John Wesley, arguing, expostulating, censoring and infecting every one with the grandeur of his philosophical system, and of his vision of a united, spiritual India.

### **The All-Pervasive Influence of the Sankara-Vedanta**

Such a united India was equally for monks and laymen, philosophers and men of the world and for the Brāhmaṇs, Śūdras and women. After many long centuries since the Buddha, Śaṅkara made out the strongest case for the eligibility of the Śūdras and women for the highest knowledge (cognition of Brāhmaṇ) which according to him, had nothing to do with Varṇa or Āśrama duties. In the post-Gupta period, the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas, sometimes called the fifth Veda, were especially composed for the instruction of the Śūdras and women. But in respect of Vedic wisdom, Śaṅkara by citing many instances, such as Vidura and Dharma-Vyādha from the Mahābhārata and Vāchaknavī from the Upanishads, insisted on the equality of status and privilege of the Śūdras and women. "Knowledge is open to any one who is desirous of it; prayer alone qualifies for knowledge," Śaṅkara declares. His implacable antagonist, Rāmānuja, denounced him



for his view that the Śūdra is not excluded from the knowledge of Ātman-Brahman, and tried to prove that this was erroneous. Śaṅkara's emphasis of the rights of the lowest caste and of women and of the metaphysical principles of varṇa in which it is not the accident of birth but the spiritual status that matters sound strange for modern ears. For the Great Reformation that he initiated in the country, not without opposition and opprobrium from the orthodox groups, was frustrated by the Muslim conquest.

The Śaṅkara Vedānta comprises a great triumph of Indian metaphysical speculation. It generated for many centuries a vast amount of literature dealing with the absolute idealism and mysticism of the Śaṅkara Advaita. It also produced for generations philosophical speculations of the various sectarian theisms that all sought a formal defence and exposition on the basis of the Vedānta Sūtras after the pattern of Śaṅkara's classic treatment. The philosophical developments of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism in the South, the Tāntrika and Chaitanya-Vaiṣṇava schools in the North-east and the medieval mystical schools of Northern India from Gujarat to Bengal, were all fecundated by Śaṅkara's doctrine of the identity of Brahman-Ātman. Many mystics and prophets are there in Indian religious history attached to the worship of Śiva and Durgā, Kṛṣṇa-Gopāla or Rāmachandra, Viṣṇu or Viṭhovā, who are also thorough-going Vedāntists. The new formal logic (Navyanyāya) that was first formulated by Gaṅgeśa in the 12th century with its precise definitions and discussions of logical conceptions, inferences and consequences, and that before long won its place as the dominant subject of study throughout India, became itself an adjunct to Vedānta speculations. Thus the elaborate philosophical discussions of Advaita, Dvaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, Śuddhādvaita and Bhedābheda were all oriented to the Vedāntic scheme of thought. Even the entire Alamkāraśāstra grounded itself on the speculation on Ānandarasa as identical with the Brahmananda of the Upanishads and Vedānta Sūtras. Such was the all-pervasive influence of the Śaṅkara Vedānta doctrine. The Vedānta represents one of India's great metaphysical interpretations of the highest universal consequence, with its complete freedom from dogma and ritual and the social and institutional context, and, representing as it does a transcendental mysticism, does not suffer from the limitations of faiths and beliefs that are derived from particular inspired books, prophets and legends.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE GOLDEN AGE OF BRĀHMANICAL ART

#### The Gifts of Tantrikism

Śaṅkara, the philosopher *par excellence* of the Kevala-Advaita, wrote a famous hymn addressed to the Great Mother, conceived as the Essence of Bliss or Beauty, called the Ānanda or Saundarya Laharī or the Waves of Bliss or Beauty. He bows to the Devī thus: "O Goddess Supreme, in my identity consciousness may all what I speak become praise to Thee, all gestures of mine be preparatory *mudrās* for your worship, all my movements your circumambulation, my eating sacrifice, sleeping prostration to Thee and all enjoyment of mine a form of worship of Thee". In another hymn of his the Goddess states of herself: "Whosoever eats food, eats food by me, and whosoever breathes, yea verily, whosoever listens to whatever is said, does so by Me". Śakti in Śaṅkara's hymns is the Bliss or Consciousness aspect of the Absolute and the All or the Absolute itself. To Śaṅkarāchārya is ascribed the authorship of at least three Tantra works viz. the Prapancha-sāra, the Ānanda-Laharī and the Karpūrādistotra. Tradition makes him the originator of the Samayāchāra Tāntrika worship, which is responsible not only for the elimination of all gross, unwholesome features that crept into the Purāṇic Śakti worship as the result of Vajrayāna and Sahajayāna influence but for its subsequent great popularity. In the Ānanda-Laharī, Śaṅkara superbly combines Samayāchāra or path of Yoga and meditation and "piercing" of the six chakras with the external Kulāchāra or ritual worship through physical disciplines, constructions of Yantra, offerings and sacrifices. In verse 34 of the Ānanda-Laharī Śaṅkara transforms theistic worship by the servant (dāsa) of God into the Upanishadic contemplation of self and gives the Tāntrika version of the mahāvākya—Bhavānī tvam (Thou art the Goddess)—reconciled with the redeeming grace of the Supreme Being. In this manner Śakti worship becomes a part and parcel of the contemplation of the consciousness, beauty



and bliss aspects of Brāhmaṇ. The difference between the Samayāchāra and Kaula methods of worship has been of deep significance in Tāntrikism; the latter have been derived from Vajrayāna Buddhism. Samayāchāra, Śaṅkara's commentator Lakshmīdhara points out, is derived from the five Tantras (Āgama-panchaka) named after the five sages—Vasishṭha, Sanaka, Śuka, Sanandana and Sanatkumāra, called Śrī-Vidyā worship and is in accordance with Vedic teaching. This is intended for the Brāhmaṇ worshipper and can secure independently the four goals of life. Śakti cult is one of the basic forms of worship in all the pontifical seats inaugurated by Śaṅkara.

Legend tells us that Tāntrikism originated in Bengal, was developed in Mithilā, was found to some extent in Mahārāshtra and was destroyed in Gurjara. The Great Reformation of Śaṅkara saved Śakti worship in Northern India from the fate of transformation into the Vajrayāna and Sahajayāna that, indeed, entrenched themselves in Eastern India, especially northern and eastern Bengal, and Mithilā, Northern India, Kashmir, Nepal and Tibet in the 10th century A.D. and migrated beyond the seas to Java and Siam. The Sahaja dharma was well established in Bengal by the 13th century when we find it practised by a superior officer of the royal household in Pattikeraka in Tippera, according to the Maināmati plate. Chandīdāsa, the poet-mystic of Sahajīya Sādhana of Love and Beauty, whose songs influenced Chaitanya belonged probably to the 14th century. The Vaishṇava movement in Bengal of the 16th century under the inspiration of Chaitanya tried to combat this strong erotic under-current of mysticism but itself came to bear the deep impress of the Sahajīya in its stress of parakiya (companionate) love. In the outlying parts of India Vajrayāna, with its yantras, mantras, dharanīs, magical practices and siddhis and Sahajayāna, with its defiance of social rules and adoration of woman, still linger as Hindu Śakti worship, sometimes legitimatising itself as the left-handed Path (Vāmāchāra). Śaṅkara's Middle Path thus may be said to have rescued Tāntrikism from entering its Byzantine phase by its elaborate and sensual symbolism as it has developed in Tibet and Siam with their worship of Yuganaddha deities. The Vajrayāna, the Kālachakrayāna, the Sahajayāna and the Mantrayāna remain happily in India outside the broad current of Tāntrika culture.

A pure, elevated Sādhana of Śakti, assimilated to the Vedānta,

that has been largely the outcome of Śaṅkara's purging process, has brought about a new synthesis of transcendental monism with unstained ritualism and passionate love and yearning of the mystic. The reconciliation of the world and the flesh and the primal, eternal all-pervading Śakti, of immanence and transcendence in the Tāntrika system that sees the world and its manifestations and activities (prapancha) as the eternal play (līlā) of supernal Śiva-Śakti, the pair of metaphysical and sexual opposites. Being and Becoming, both full of meaning and in the last analysis inexhaustible, has no doubt added a rich colourfulness, vigour and freshness to Indian religion, art and culture. Tāntrikism's gifts of practical realism, humanism and emotional interpenetration of the spiritual and material, of the transcendental (mahābhāva) and the gross (paśubhāva) to religion and the broad current of cultural life have not been properly appreciated, in spite of the writings of Woodroffe, Ghosh and Pramathanath Mukhopadhyaya.

But the Tāntrika way of thought and realisation has penetrated deep into the heart of India. In all epochs of human history whenever man's thought bridges the gulf between the concrete and the universal, the finite and the infinite, art and literature receive fresh impulsion and show unique glories. In the development of Buddhist culture, the Mahāyāna by replacing the historicity of Gautama by the metaphysical principle of Buddhahood, immanent in all beings "as numerous as the sands on the banks of the Ganges", introduced the Golden Age in Buddhist art in the Gupta period. In the middle ages in India from the 6th to the 13th century Tāntrikism by transforming Purāṇic Hinduism, and impregnating Śaiva, Vaiṣṇava, Saura, Gāṇapatya or other worship with the metaphysical principle of inter-play of Chit-Śakti in the world-process and human experience ushered in the Golden Age in Hindu art.

### The Medieval Rock-Cut Temples

With the disintegration of the Gupta Empire and the establishment of Hun rule in North-Western India, Central India and Malwa, Indian art and culture shifted south-wards and east-wards. In the medieval cave-temples at Ajanta, Aurangabad and Ellora in the Deccan, under the later Vākāṭakas and Guptas, and the Chālukyas and at Badāmi, Aihole and Pattakadal under the Chālukyas and at Māmallapuram on the Madras coast under the



Pallavas, we have the most remarkable sculptures belonging to the sixth and eighth centuries A.D. Only the Deccan and the kingdoms of the coast were not affected by the social disorganisation brought about by the Hun invasions and conquests; while the flourishing commerce in the ports of Malabar and Coromandel brought to them immense wealth that went into the making of the grand architecture and sculpture at Ajanta and Ellora almost overlooking the South Indian trade route.

The Rāshtrakūṭas, who utilised the building traditions of Māmallapuram and Pattadakal, conquered the whole of the Deccan up to the Narmada with the rich ports of Konkan that gave them vast riches. Their king Dantidurga probably built the Kailāsa temple cut out of an entire hill-side. Its stupendous size, architectural technique and sculptural magnificence make it one of the wonders of the world, surpassing the constructions of Egypt with which only it can bear comparison.

The Pallava temples at Kāñchi and Māmallapuram and their superb sculptures had their influence upon the temple architecture of Java, Cambodia and Annam. The Cholas, Chālukyas and Rāshtrakūṭas carried forward the Pallava traditions superbly and stupendously. Thus while India in the north was exposed to much uncertainty and unsettlement in the prolonged struggle against the barbarians of Emperor Yashodharman and of the Maukharis, Pushyabhūti and Pālas, in South India the Pallavas, Chālukyas, Cholas and Rāshtrakūṭas were scooping temples out of hill-sides like giants and executing the images of Brahmanical gods and goddesses like angels.

Away from the political turmoil of Northern India the rock-cut temples of the Deccan catered to the necessities of Buddhist, Jain as well as Brahmanical cults. Badāmi's cave temples are dedicated by the Chālukyas at the end of the sixth century to Vaishṇavism. Ellora's magnificent cave sculptures that range between the sixth and the eighth century A.D., portray myths and episodes of Śiva and Viṣṇu. Similarly the Pallava and Māmalla sculptures belonging to the middle of the seventh century A.D. are concerned with the Trimūrti, Durgā, Kṛṣṇa and Pāṇḍava episodes. Ajanta, Aurangabad, Ellora and Māmallapuram temples and sculptures represent bridges between Gupta eclecticism, clarity and majesty and the later medieval dynamism and Tāntrika phantasy and devotion.

### The New Artistic Canons of Tantrikism

Gradually the creed of Śaktism or Tāntrika Hinduism captured the contemplation and worship of India, and we have in the later Kailāsa sculptures at Ellora, dating from the second half of the eighth century A.D., the images of Śiva as Kāla Bhairava (Time, the Destroyer) and as ascetic, the seven Mothers (also sculptured at Ajanta), the gaunt Chāmūṇḍā, Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth with Brahmā and Viṣṇu on her sides, Sarasvatī, Mahishāsuri and a host of other goddesses along with Śiva-Umālingana, Ardha-nārī (also found at Badāmi and Elephanta) and erotic couples. All these icons comprise the spirit of the new Tāntrika religion and art, coming in the wake of the Gupta Brahmanical revival and its fusion with the Mahāyāna and the Vajrayāna in the next four or five centuries. The myth and the metaphysics shifted to Śakti as the essence and manifestation of the universe, Śakti in both her charming aspect of Gaurī or Pārvatī and her grim and destructive aspect as Kālī, which are both powerfully represented in the Bhairava and Kālī group on the Daśa-Avatāra cave at Ellora, and frequently met with in contemporary literature.

Out of the warp and woof of cosmic repose and movement, creation and destruction, charm and grimness, Tāntrika thought and culture wove new patterns of art expression and contemplative ritual. Thus was ushered in the Golden Age of Brahmanical art in Medieval India with new scholastic and literary conventions and new explorations of the unceasing rhythm of quick pulsation of living beings in movement and their equipoise in rest and dissolution—the polarity of Śiva and Śakti that underlies reality and process, essence and manifestation in the universe.

Medieval art began in the rock-cut temples of the Deccan in the early sixth and seventh centuries and was dominated by the silence and sternness of the rock material and the rich darkness of the cave. The cosmic impassivity of Maheśa is a part of the unformed rock and the inaccessible shimmering darkness. The Elephanta cave sculptures represent the climax of serenity and dynamic rhythm of the plastic mass born of the womb of the rocks, reached in Indian sculpture. In the images of Maheśvara, Gaṅgādhara-mūrti and Kalyāṇasundara-mūrti at Elephanta we come across an exuberant plastic vitality and rhythm sweeping flawless across broad interrelated planes of unparalleled dimensions that give but little



scope to modelling, flattening and linear treatment characteristic of lesser sculpture. The dim twilight of the cave enhances the mystery and grandeur of the brooding, majestic Elephanta sculptures that indeed bear the stamp of the final perfection of cave art and imagination. Equally does the Western Indian cave sculpture render effectively and enduringly through coherence in dynamic movement the intensity of a mythical event making everlasting the sudden and momentous submission of Mahishāsura in the hands of Durgā (as in Māmallapuram, Badāmi and Ellora), the humiliation of Vali in those of Viṣṇu Trivikrama (in Badāmi), of Tripura in those of Śiva or the rebuff of Rāvaṇa, seeking to shake Kailāsa (both in Ellora). Side by side with eternal rest we have violent movement of cosmic significance embodying the passion of the moment expressed through broad massive gesture and the compositional movement, taking full advantage of the modulations of light and darkness and depth of the caves. The traditions of the rock-cut sculpture of the Deccan were inherited by the Tāntrika age, and in the late medieval period, eighth to thirteenth centuries, the figure sculptures and the floral animalic and abstract devices all felt the dynamic urge of Śakti i.e., towards lavish multiplication, adornment and luxuriousness of appearance, gesture and movement. By the thirteenth century the form and vitality of medieval sculpture were completely renewed, thanks to the sexual dichotomy in Tāntrika metaphysics and the lyrical intensity of Tāntrika faith.

Indian sculpture after a distinctive prelude in South India and the Deccan of two centuries (sixth and seventh centuries), experienced from the eighth to thirteenth centuries a new phase of refinement and clarification of artistic canons similar to that achieved in the five centuries of Gupta Renaissance. Ellora, Elephanta, Khajuraho, Rampal, Jajpur, Bhuvanesar and Konarak bear ample testimony to this. The motifs, symbols and themes in medieval sculpture increase in variety and complexity, but under the dominating myth and ontology of Tāntrika sexual opposites are integrated, refined and systematized into a reflective, expressionist art exhibiting great vigour and imagination. The new canons are embodied in the Sādhanamāla and the Viṣṇu-dharmottara which prescribed the forms, attributes and poses of a hundred gods and goddesses for contemplation, worship and artistic construction. Just as Gupta art assimilated the popular cults

of the Yakshas, spirits, trees, and animals, so did medieval art absorb the various local and tutelary goddesses of popular worship as spouses of the principal dieties. Medieval art, though metaphysical and cosmic in its message, was yet tense, vigorous and sincere. Its energy and sincerity came in some measure from indigenous and living traditions of artistic vigour and dynamic rhythm as in the Deccani and the Pala and Sena schools of eastern India. May be that the racial admixture in Central and Western India represented by the social absorption of the Huns, Gurjaras, Ābhiras and others, and of the Mongoloid and Dravidian stocks in Bengal showed itself in new plastic forms. But their real impulsion and imaginative fervour were derived from the new Tāntrika culture. Its dynamic conception of the ambivalent forces of creation and destruction, life and death in the universe, its a-moral interpretation of the ordered pulsation of good and evil, passion and poise in the human soul, its profound appreciation of the transcendence of human desire and the immanence of the Divine in physical sensual life bridged anew the chasm between enjoyment and renunciation, between activity and worship, between Beauty and Truth.

### A New Sense of Form in Indian Sculpture and Architecture

Not only new motives and subjects were introduced into Indian art, but an age of temple construction commenced, sculpture merging into architecture together with a vivid appreciation of form and rhythm in the mass. The interplay of Śiva and Śakti, of the static and the mobile, is not only embodied in the various composite sculptures of Śiva and Uma but also in the general treatment of sculptures of men, animals and plants in a long series with their sweep of movement as a foil to the horizontal lines across from temple cornice to cornice, or of the spiral dance-movement of the decorations, with the dancing images of Śiva or Uma in the centre of the medallion as a foil to the reposeful verticals of miniature temples in the architectural design. Tāntrika thought and culture gave a new sense of form to Indian sculpture and architecture. With Śiva-Pārvati in the *sanctus sanctorum* and the throngs of Mātṛikās, Apsarās, Surasundarīs, Nāyikās, and Śālabhanjikās, manifestations of beauty and power in the universe, shimmering and scintillating from the walls, pillars and roofs, the temple vibrates and soars—the seat and symbol of the ineffable, cosmic Śakti that pulsates in, and gives form to Nature and Mind.



In spite of the rigorous injunctions of the Śilpaśāstras that laid down the artistic and technical conventions and of the Sādhnamālās that provided the inspirational formulae, medieval sculpture did not degenerate into either a rigid hieratic art or a sensual expression, but retained its mystery, elusiveness and creative inspiration and expressed the soul of India for well-nigh six centuries from Elephanta to Kāmarūp and from Ellora to Konarak and had a lasting influence on the Hindu colonial art and culture of Indonesia, Siam and Cambodia.

Early Buddhist art assimilated the folk cult of the Apsarā of the sacred tree, nude and charming. Gupta art treated her with extreme delicacy of feeling as an ethereal being whose outlines are silhouetted against the sky, lithe, elegant and free from the duties of saṃsāra and laws of karma. But it was medieval sculpture which transformed the refinement, luxuriousness and volupte of the Mathura and Ajanta Apsarā into a universal metaphysical principle, the indefinable all-pervasive sportiveness of Being in the panorama of existence. No wonder that the Apsarās and Surasundarīs in erotic contemplation and gesture leap to the pilgrim from all sides, from the pillars, brackets, walls and roofs of medieval Indian as well as Indo-Chinese temples, representing not mere erotic attitude but the captivating charm and *līla* of the Absolute or Being—the deity in the temple whom they all serve. The many manifestations of Apsarā are one and the same sportive Śakti. Man's own mind, swayed by the desires and passions, is the Apsarā the image of the Absolute or Being, the accent of the soul as Becoming. And the playful, joyful Apsarā enchanting the world and self-introspective in her own enchantment who is brought in Indian medieval art to the climax of her beauty of form and movement is the symbol of its mystery, luminosity and extravagant energy. Indian medieval art is no mere affirmation of the sensuous vitality of man; it belongs to a sphere where the illusion of the senses and the dualism of body and mind, flesh and spirit, are resolved in a great serenity and poise to which medieval Tāntrikism gives its consecration.

### The Warmth of Bhakti and Naturalism

There is a gradual transition in medieval sculpture from Māmallapuram, Badāmi, Ellora and Elephanta to Vikrampur, Bhuvanesvar and Khajuraho with the canons of iconography and

ritual more or less systematized. The progress towards a more delicate, sensitive and yet forceful modelling, a simultaneous many-sided representation of the female body in its myriad charms, moods and postures, a stress of human affection and warmth of the deity, and an exuberant decoration and reiteration that blend with the amplitude, serenity and dignity of the older Gupta sculptures, is a proof of deeper psychological insights. The blend or juxtaposition varies according to the tradition and idioms of particular art-regions. Everywhere a warm human glow shines, and a spontaneous naturalism sprouts up from the fertile Indian soil, albeit restrained by conformity to prescribed rituals and canons of image-making, that raise art construction into an interior and exterior illumination. This is aided by the dhyāna formula or specific contemplative exercise for invoking the image, concentrating on abstract attributes and experiences rather than on physical charms. The warmth of bhakti, sensitiveness, naturalism or linear rhythm embody themselves in various art regions and phases, all inheritors of Gupta tradition, in a greater flexibility of handling of the linear elements as well as flattening, the sharp and eloquent angularity of limbs and postures and the elaboration of the details of jewellery, achieving a new iconography artistically and spiritually, but never sacrificing in the best works serenity to sensuality, delicacy to fleshliness and depth and inwardness to psychological characterisation. Through all this new complex development, nourished by a profound inner vision and upsurge of bhakti, the paradox is underlined—the radiant, even provocative display of the full limbs, smiles and postures of the female body and its perfect innocence, the intensity and impermanence of human passion and its abysmal mystery and elusiveness. The apparent contradictions of Tāntrika contemplation and ritual are given form in medieval sculpture; the Tāntrika bliss, power and insight resolve and overreach them.

### **The Cosmic Male and Female Principles in Religion and Art**

Indian metaphysics, starting from the Sāṅkhya outlook, conceives the universe as made up of the dual forces of Puruṣa and Prakṛti, Being and Becoming. With profound psychological understanding, Being is represented in Tāntrika metaphysics, myth, art and religion as the masculine and Becoming as the feminine force. Thus a sex dichotomy pervades the universe. The Vāma-



keśvara-tantra observes, "In the world all matter that exists is Maheśvara, while the energy by virtue of which matter exists or is active is the supreme Śakti (Sarveśvarī)". This basic metaphysical and sexual symbolism has been of considerable aid for aesthetic expression and development and for reconciliation of the inevitable antagonism between flesh and spirit, characteristic of Indian culture. All things that are attributes and manifestations of Being are from Prakṛti or Śakti, and are Prakṛti or Śakti (Becoming). All that is unconditional and absolute are from Puruṣa and are Puruṣa or Śiva (Being). The human soul in silence, without form and attribute in its accent of withdrawal is Puruṣa (Being); the soul in its movement, in its accent of creation and enjoyment, its manifestation of form and attribute within the frame of time and space is Śakti (Becoming). Puruṣa or Chit-satta is the essence of the cosmos. Prakṛti or Chit-Śakti is his consort. She is the primordial spirit of manifestation, the symbol of illusion (māyā), the desire of creation, appearance or sport (chit and ānaṇḍa vilāsa). Indian metaphysics also speaks of the unity-induality, and Indian art images it in such male and female archetypes as Śiva and Śakti, Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī, Mañjuśrī and Prajñāpāramitā and Amitābha and Tārā or in the hermaphrodite types such as the Ardha-nārīśvara or Hara-Gaurī-mūrti. Indian art exhibited in fact a mysterious vitality and freshness and primitive exuberance, strongly contrasted with the classical spirit of the earlier expressions, as Tāntrikism appreciated and expounded anew the cosmic male and female principles as the alternate pulsations of the same Supernal Essence.

### **The Icons of Being (Puruṣa) and Becoming (Śakti)**

Medieval Indian sculpture whether of the eighth to eleventh centuries in Bihar and Bengal under the Pāla Empire, the tenth and eleventh centuries in Central India, the Central Provinces and Rājputānā or the ninth to the thirteenth centuries in Orissa depicts Buddha, Śiva and Viṣṇu or Being in a universal mood of serene contemplation and profound cosmic impersonality. But Śakti is full of the joy of life and the beauty of youth, and sportively dallies with him, and is at the same time the shadow, the mystery and the terror, the abysmal womb of the Unconscious. Art represents the masculine and the feminine principles in disinterested terms of the absolute emotive life. One type is calm, com-

posed and withdrawn from the world, the other sportive, guileful, uncanny and even dangerous. In the *Mahābhārata* (*Nārāyaṇīya* section of the *Śānti Parva*) it is mentioned that *Nārada* reaching *Badarikāśrama* finds to his surprise *Nārāyaṇa* engaged in deep contemplation. On the Supreme God (Being) being asked whom he worships, *Nārada* is told that He worships his own primordial *Prakṛti* (Becoming), the source of all what exists and what will exist.

The eternal silence (*śānta*), stability and poise (*sthiti*) of Being are depicted by the images of *Buddha*, *Maitreya*, *Mañjuśrī*, *Vishṇu*, *Sūrya* and sometimes Buddhist *Tārā*, that belong to the highest level of spiritual existence, in rigid standing or sitting poses of profound contemplation. The heavy solidity of the lower part of the body and of the firmly placed legs (*samapādasthānaka*) that are not much articulated as well as the unshakeably straight, vertical line from the crown to the feet express powerfully in stone or bronze the simplicity, inflexibility and certitude of *Satya* (Reality) and *Prajñā* (Knowledge), transcending the vicissitudes of the world of Becoming, of mutation and pain and death. The same notion is also represented by the firmness, stability (*sthiti*) and rigidity of the seated pose of meditation in *Baddhapadmāsana*, with the legs firmly interlocked and the soles turned upward. But *Bodhisattva*, *Avalokiteśvara*, *Śiva* and above all *Kṛṣṇa* show curvilinear movement (*bhaṅga*) and rhythm of the body, symbolic of the Divine grace and compassion that are stressed. It is, of course the philosophy and tradition which determine the reciprocal moods of Being and Becoming in these images or states of supra-consciousness in unending rhythm that expresses the inner life movement going on eternally.

Movement, exuberance and sportiveness of infinite *Śakti* or Becoming, the human spirit and universe moving out from the unconditioned and formless to desire and creation are expressed in the many images of the female divinity by their characteristic three-fold inflexion (*tribhaṅga*) and play of fingers of the hands and by their gestures and actions. The latter are far removed from human gestures and movements (*divyakriyā*) and express supra-human and spiritual emotions, attitudes and virtues. Yet the characteristic posture delicately and harmoniously blending serenity and springiness and the variety of ornaments decking the undraped divine figure contribute towards its enchantment and



elusiveness. As Śakti symbolises form, energy or manifestation of the human spirit in all its rich variety, the images of female divinities are necessarily far more diverse than those of Viṣṇu, Śiva or Bodhisattva. The icons of the Mother Deity range from the benignant, brooding motherliness of Pārvatī, the serene dignity of Tārā, Prajñāpāramitā and Vāgīśvarī and the nubile charm of Haritī, Chāṇḍī and Umā to the omnipotence and majesty of Durgā, slaying the demons, and the weird vigour of the dancing and grinning Chāmuṇḍā and Kālī, wearing the garland of skulls.

Religious doctrines in India lay down the injunction forbidding the sight of the nude female figure. But in India this injunction is got over by covering the female form with thin or transparent apparel or by representation only of the upper part of the body as undraped. This has been due to the ancient and medieval Indian habit of clothing for women who did not cover the upper part of the body or used loose garments. Such, however, is the dominating sense of mystery and elusiveness in Indian iconography that the nude mingles freely and unconventionally with figures of religious or symbolical import. Abstraction and symbolisation are supported, as we have seen, by the characteristic posture, gesture, play of the fingers and addition of heads and hands so harmoniously balanced in the whole plastic composition that they do not engender any sense of the abnormal or the grotesque but on the contrary logically and happily translate the underlying motif of the icon.

### The Medieval Images of Two-in-One (Umalingana)

In Eastern and Central India among the medieval Śaiva icons, the most common are those of Kalyāṇa-Suṇḍara (betrothal) and Umālingana (mutual embrace). There are, of course, the famous older forms—the Kalyāṇa-Suṇḍara image at Ellora (seventh and eighth century) and Elephanta (eighth century), the Umā-sahita image (Śiva-Pārvatī couple) found at Aihole (sixth century A.D.) and repeatedly at the Kailāśa in Ellora and the common sculpture of Śiva-Umā līlā or play, with numerous gandharvas and gaṇas participating, all true to the poetic descriptions of Kālidāsa. In the medieval icon the austere, other-worldly mendicant embraces his consort on his lap or sportively touches her chin or bosom by way of caress; his imperturbability is sometimes symbolised by the ūrdhalingam; while Pārvatī turns her coy and charm-

ing face touched with divinity towards him and shows him the universe-reflecting mirror. This divine conjugal embrace symbolises the great metaphysical truth—unity in duality. There is here no sensual spirituality nor erotic mysticism, but a profound awareness of the principle in its full comprehensiveness, grandeur and force that Tāntrika meditation imports into man's daily experience, as well as prayer and worship. The Bhagavad Gītā says: "The great matrix of all forms produced in any works whatsoever is Nature, Prakṛti. I am the Father who casts the seed". Neither Śiva nor Umā has an independent existence. In the Tāntrika conception the Cosmic Spirit is Two in One—the Essence and the Manifestation, the Male and the Female principles are potentially one and the same. The dhyāna of Tripurā Suṇḍarī envisages the goddess as sitting on the lap of Śiva with a mirror in her left hand, reflecting Herself or the universe; while Śiva closely embraces her. Both are seated on the cosmic lotus of creation. It is also mentioned in Śaṅkara's Saundaryalaharī. This is an oft-repeated motif especially in Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Central India and Rajputana, in the period of Tāntrika dominance of culture with its emphasis of Sex, Love and Beauty as the type and symbol of the Divine (the eighth to the thirteenth centuries). In the later images of Śiva-Umā in Bengal, Orissa, Khajuraho, Gwalior, Rajputana and Malwa we come across smoother modelling with angularity of poses, faces and limbs and sinuous flow of garments, chains, and jewellery, revealing less severity and serenity and more warm human passion and tenderness. One of the finest Umālingana images is that of Southern Bengal of the twelfth century now in the Dacca museum. Several such images have been found in Bengal and Orissa marked by a profound contrast between the detachment and tranquility of Śiva and the nubile charm and innocence of Umā firmly clasped on his lap. The mind's realisation of unity in duality is embodied in the compact, consolidated pattern of the sculpture that integrates the rigid verticality of Śiva's posture (and of his mighty trident) as well as the soft plasticity of Umā's flexed pose, loins and heavy breasts. Śiva's heavy crown of matted locks (jaṭāmukuta) is in sharp contrast with his rich chains and jewellery as the heavy trident in his hands is set off against the mirror which Umā holds. The innate plasticity of Pāla art is seen at its best in these composite Umālingana images.





### Art as Celebration of the Immanence of God as Beauty

In the medieval Indian temples are imaged not only goddesses but also angels, minsters and messengers of grace. Such are the *Aṣṭa-Śaktis* (Eight Energies), *Surasundarīs* (Celestial Beauties), *Apsarās* and *Nāyikās* in Bengal, Orissa and Central India. The Eight Energies of the Goddess are referred to in the *Agni Purāṇa*. The *Surasundarī* or *Apsarā* is the danseuse of heaven as the *Nāyikā* is of the earth. Each is free in her loves and wiles, unattached to the home and the family. In these figures art expresses the delights and sports of sex, the incomparable charm of woman that lures men and gods. Such figures abound in the temples of gods and goddesses and embody the Indian ideal of feminine loveliness. About these *Apsarā* figures Routhenstein observes: "Today we look at *Sānchi*, *Badāmi* and *Ellora* or at the loveliest of all the medieval carvings at *Konarak*, *Bhuvaneśvar* and *Khajuraho*, and accept them gratefully with the dancing Greek nereids, the figures from Botticelli's *Primavera* or *Venus* rising from the sea as enchanting manifestations of man's delight in human beauty. The *Apsarā* takes an equally important place in the Buddhist, Brahmanical and Jain Art. So racial a conception could not be changed with the form of religious dogma".

Medieval sculpture by introducing a pulsating nervous elegance into the modelling of *Surasundarīs* or *Apsarās* and *Nāyikās* in hundreds has created some of the world's most enchanting plastic expressions of feminine loveliness. Radiant with a sensuous charm such lovely women of the gods are depicted in seductive attitudes not derived from any human models, as well as in self-transcendence and aloofness from the world in the contemplation of their own beauty (reflected in mirrors in their hands) as the sport and delight of the Absolute. They smile captivantly as they hold the mirror, feel their palpitating bosom or play with the ball that symbolises the world and her own varied spirit of creativeness, joy and sport (*chit-vilāsa*). The voluptuous pose, the Narcissistic display of loveliness and even the holding forth of the reflecting mirror are very much the same in *Khajuraho* as in *Bhuvaneśvara*, indicating the common heritage of the art conception and motif in Northern and Central India, born of the *Tāntrika* emphasis of the immanence of God as Form and Beauty in life, mind and the universe. It is also striking that inwardness is often emphasised

in these beauties by a complete omission of the eye-balls as in Chandela sculpture. These lovely angels are lavishly multiplied on the temples, in the pillars and all round the walls. Such repetition itself indicates joy and exuberance of the feeling of immanence of the deity, converting the whole temple into a religious lyric in stone. For what are the celestial women, interwoven rhythmically in belts and storeys from wall to wall, from corner to corner and from pillar to pillar, except the indefinable, inexhaustible human spirit akin in essence and movement to the Divine? No where in the history of the world has art shown such courage and tolerance to include within its ken both spiritual ecstasies and glories of life as well as sensual joys and experiences. No where is sex treated with such emotional concentration and yet in such abstraction as part, type or symbol of Cosmic Energy (*Māyā-Śakti*) setting it far above the plane of sense enjoyment.

The aesthetic quality spread from sculpture to painting. In some of the little known illuminated manuscripts of medieval Bengal such gods and goddesses of Buddhist *Tāntrikism* as *Loka-nātha*, *Maitreya*, *Amitābha*, *Tārā* and *Prajñāpāramitā* are painted with Botticellian delicacy and sensitiveness of line and colour, combined with profound depth and impersonalism that were the gifts of *Tāntrika* spiritual meditation. Carrying forward the traditions of *Ajanta* and *Ellora*, and enriched by the idiom of tempered lyricism in contemporary *Pāla* and *Sena* sculpture, these paintings deserve a place by the side of the great works of the world. The close association between the higher and ideal things of experience and the life of the senses and emotions may seem somewhat strange to Western mind, but there is no doubt that in the history of European morals there have operated special social factors and forces bringing about a contempt for the body, fear of the senses and opposition of flesh and spirit.



## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE SUPRA-HUMAN TENSION IN MEDIEVAL SCULPTURE

#### **Gupta Fineness and Formalism *versus* Medieval Passion and Mystery**

Medieval art, recording the Puraṇic and Tāntrika awakening of India for well-nigh seven centuries, has not obtained proper appreciation due to its obscure myth and metaphysics hiding its formal excellences. How does the medieval art of India compare with the classical art of the Gupta period? While Gupta art is sharp, poised, meditative and formal, medieval art is tense, subtle, dynamic and elusive, filled with a primitive freshness and vigour that are especially emphasised in the art of Eastern and Central India, where the Tāntrika element is more dominant than in the art of Western India. Some images of the Bodhisattva, Lokanātha, Vajrapāṇi and Śiva of medieval Bengal and Orissa, show a happy blend of abstraction with warmth of feeling, of formalism with luxuriance, and impersonalism with delicacy and charm, rare in Indian plastic treatment. If Gupta classicism has shown its finest achievements of combination of fineness, serenity and poise with massiveness formalism and impersonality in the Mathura and Sārnāth types of the Buddha, the Boar incarnation at Udaigiri and the Nativity of Kṛṣṇa in Pathari, medieval art can show supreme plastic harmony and rhythm in the majestic Śiva and Pārvati images at Ellora and Elephanta, the standing Viṣṇu types at Khajuraho, Sultanpur, Murshidabad and Konarak, the standing Sun god types at Vikrampur, Rajmahal, Chapra and Konarak and the many seated images of Bodhisattva and Tārā, Śiva and Canda of Bengal, Bihar, Kalinga, Central India and Rajputana. The medieval Pāla manuscript paintings of Bodhisattva, Tārā and Prajñāpāramitā similarly do not suffer at all in comparison with the more famous Avalokiteśvara and Padmapāṇi of the Ajanta and Bagh frescoes. But medieval art exhibits mystery passion and dynamism that stand

in marked contrast with the earlier perspicuous and suave but static classic expression. Into these Tāntrika culture has in Eastern and Central India imported certain startling power, simplicity, and immanent sense of life.

### **Arts of Ajanta and Ellora: Classic Balance and Suavity of Human Expression *Versus* Supra-Mundane Power and Dynamism**

Medieval art embodies the renaissance of Purāṇic and Tāntrika Hinduism; while Gupta art reflects the culmination of Buddhist culture. This may be best illustrated by the vivid contrast between the classic Buddhist art of Ajanta and the medieval Brahmanical art of Ellora. The art of Ajanta is anthropomorphic, clear, sharp and serene, like the myth of Mahāyāna Buddhism, of which it is a supreme expression. The art of Ellora is supra-human, agitated, dramatic and elusive like the myth of Purāṇic and Tāntrika Hinduism, of which it is a magnificent embodiment. At Ajanta India worships Man, the Master and his destiny in universal nirvāṇa that is more glorious than the order and harmony of the universe itself. At Ellora she worships God as Śakti, Power or Tension, the mysterious and the supra-human; and yet, what is transcendental and inscrutable manifests itself in the passion and aspiration of man, and underlies the order of cosmic manifestation and human destiny. Buddhist art is humanistic and serene, and is easier to appreciate than Brahmanical art which is cosmic, tense and mysterious. The latter rejects the Buddhist notion of the primacy of Man in the scheme of the cosmos, and expresses cosmic, trans-human moods and values in pictorial and poetic symbolisms. Creation, Preservation and Destruction in their supra-mundane aspects are the main concerns of medieval Brahmanical art that finds joy at once in the infinite tenderness of love and compassion, which perpetually creates life, and in the unrestrained fury of destruction which perpetually rebuilds and transforms it. In medieval sculpture Śiva is the principle of dynamic tension or change, Viṣṇu that of order and permanence; both achieve unity or synthesis in the human soul attuned to the majestic rhythm of the cosmos. Man's myth and poetry have also introduced into this neutral, super-natural frame of reference the triumph of goodness over evil, of unity and stability over chaos and disorder.

The colossal Śiva-Bhairava, engaged in grim fight against the



demons, and accompanied by both his consorts—the gaunt, terrific Kālī as well as the charming Pārvatī—in the temple of Ellora is a marvel in world sculpture. The transcendental fury of destruction of wickedness which is the same thing as the beneficent spread of God's compassion and love is suggested by the sweeping diagonal posture supported by the movements of the various hands and the heavy diagonal thrust of the trident piercing the demon. The entire plastic composition of the group of figures forms a synthesis conveying a sense of supra-personal anger, majesty and dramatic vigour that can only be discerned within the cave temple itself. Similarly the grand images of the Dance of Śiva-Naṭarāja, of Rāvaṇa's shaking Kailāśa and humiliation at the hands of Śiva (in several variants), of the slaying of Hiraṇyakaśipu by Viṣṇu in his lion-form and of Mahishāsurā by the many-armed Durgā embody supra-mundane majesty, pride, indignation and tumult of the soul that are indispensable for bringing about an ordered harmony in the scheme of creation. Thus are metaphysical notions and transcendental moods dramatically expressed in momentous myth and drama. The supra-mundane activity (*divyakriyā*) of archetypal deities in the interplay of generic attitudes and emotions of the human soul embodies in Nietzschean fashion India's acceptance of universal tension and pain, power and insight.

### Resemblance between Ajanta and Ellora—The Immanence of the Divinity

But the grandeur of the transcendental does not preclude in Brahmanical art the glorification of the concrete and the human. For Brahmanical, like Buddhist art, is grounded on the metaphysical conception of the immanence of the Divinity in all manifestation, of the pervasiveness of the One Supernal Essence or Power (*Śakti*) in all activity, cosmic and human. Thus side by side with the dreadful Bhairava, the tumultuous eight-handed Naṭarāja and Śiva slaying the demons, Tripurāsura and Andhaka, at Ellora, Śiva also represents the power of Love as in the majestic image of the deity rescuing his devotee Mārkaṇḍeya from the clutches of Death (Yama) in both Daśā-avatāra and Kailāśa, the four-handed charming figure stepping forth from the lotuses, the Lingodbhava Śiva within the flaming liṅgam, the nuptials of Śiva and Pārvatī, the various Śiva-Pārvatī couples and the scene of their conjugal kiss and bliss on Kailāśa at Ellora, and the bas-reliefs of the

marriage and the Ardhanaṛiśvara, and Gaṅgādhara images at Elephanta. Śiva when called upon to embody the spirit of Love is almost identical in spirit and style with Padmapāṇi or Avalokiteśvara with his royal mukuṭa and necklace, while his consort Pārvatī has the same Botticellian charm and grace as the companion of the Bodhisattva in the Buddhist caves at Ellora and Ajanta.

The common metaphysical background of the unity and all-pervasiveness of life is responsible for the creation of the ideal human beauties and excellences of Bodhisattva-Tārā and Śiva-Pārvatī in Buddhist and Brahmanical art alike. The clarity and poise of Gupta classicism are indelibly impressed on the images, whether of Śiva or of Padmapāṇi Avalokiteśvara and Amitābha, and of Pārvatī, Āmbikā and the Saptamātṛikās or Sarasvatī and Tārā, though iconographical details differ. But this is only when Śiva or Śakti is called to represent not the tumultuous but the serene grandeur of the cosmos.

### Medieval Art Derives its Archetypes from Various Religions

Buddhist art can, however, never contemplate motifs of cosmic tension: the victory of the good over evil in tumultuous majesty, Eternity or Mahākāla and its devourer Kālī, Mahākāla's partner Chāmuṇḍā with Man on his knees, and again, the Divine Kiss born of the exaltedly poetic participation of the deity in the life of the senses. Brahmanical art has a courage and tolerance that Buddhist art does not possess, including within its ken both spiritual ecstasies and glories of life as well as sensual joys and experiences. Ellora, Aihole, Badāmi and Elephanta are successful equally in the serene and tender expression of the immanence of God or the divinity of Man as well as in the palpitating, turbulent representation of the exuberant cosmic Energy that perpetually frightens and destroys as it loves and renews man. These are equally at home in creating angels and divinities as well as monsters and goblins, in recording man's glorious triumphs and beatitudes as well as his frightful degradations and apparitions.

Ajanta and Ellora express the different accents of man's meditative life, contrasted poles of spiritual experience in a manner unparalleled in the world's art forms. Yet a distance of only seventy miles separates them, and at Ellora the construction of twelve Buddhist caves actually preceded that of the sixteen Brahmanical



ones. Ellora, no doubt, celebrates the eclipse of Buddhist by Brahmanical culture, the triumph of the trans-human and cosmic that embody themselves in the vicissitudes of human life.

The fresh impulsion and victory of Purāṇic and Tāntrika culture over Buddhism are expressed in the iconographical representations of supra-mundane insights and passions, a dominant characteristic of medieval sculpture. Familiar examples are the various forms of Kāla-Bhairava, Virabhadra and Chāmuṇḍā, vanquishing the Titans; the gaunt skeleton Śiva and Rāvaṇa's struggle to bring down Kailāśa, all at Ellora; the moving panorama of the Descent of the Ganges and Durgā—Mahisha-mardini at Māmallapuram; the Mahisha-mardini at Aihole and Ellora; the Narasimha or Viṣṇu encompassing the universe with his stride at Ellora, Badami and Aihole; the numerous images of Bhairava, Chaṇḍī and Marīchi and the Tāntrika cosmic dance-images, such as those of Kālī and Chāmuṇḍā, of Gaṇeśa and above all of Śiva-Naṭarāja. Multitudes of sculptures, tense dynamic and spectacular under the spell of Tāntrikism have expressed supra-human or abysmal Energy now dormant, now awakened for the creation, maintenance, destruction and release of the human soul.

All religions, Buddhism, Jainism, Purāṇic Hinduism and Tāntrikism—and not merely Buddhism—have provided the inspiration for medieval art; and it is significant that the reconciliation of Buddhism and Brahmanism in the bosom of the Mahāyāna and the Tantrayāna makes Buddhist and Hindu works of art alike in spirit and pattern. This has contributed to raise medieval art, in spite of its hieratical character, above the narrow boundaries of creed—the emphasis of formal values, derived as these are from the cave temples at Ajanta, Badāmi and Ellora, with no rigid line drawn between the architectural and the decorative.

Medieval Indian sculpture may be considered classical in so far it shows sharpness and clarity of aim and purpose, whether concrete and sensuous or abstract and metaphysical and is subjected to the literary and artistic formulae of the dhyānas that govern the iconoplastic representation. It is Gothic in its expression of dhyāna or spiritual ardour, whether human or supra-human in the variegation of the traditional poses, gestures and movements and the rich and elegant treatment of the arms and hands, hips and breasts, jewellery and weapons. At the same time it is transcen-

dentally abstract, tense and mysterious through the use of the mellow half-light as well as the chiarascuro in the cave-recesses and of the material of the mother-rock, whence the energies of the sculptures seem to burst forth with elemental energy. Above all, its forms and motives are derived from the social culture and the myths, religions and philosophies of the whole of India during a period covering seven centuries from the 6th to the 13th. This entire epoch saw a synthesis and interpenetration of various religions and schools of philosophy and of scholasticism and mysticism throughout the country. Lokanātha and Śiva, Tārā and Bāgīśvari or Pārvaṭī, and even the Buddha and Viṣṇu are not easily distinguishable without reference to the mythology and practice of meditation (Sādhana-mālā). The poise of the Buddha and the Bodhisattva strengthens the plastic serenity and harmony of Śiva and Viṣṇu, and vice versa. Yet the specific idiom and accent of Buddhist, Purāṇic or Tāntrika literature, myth and dhyāna underlying each sculpture are clearly discernible. Thus a medieval Bodhisattva, Śiva, Viṣṇu, Tārā or Pāravati image, saturated with the same passionate, romantic and humane spirit and exalted by the same myth, metaphysics and literature, is recognisable whether it may be at Ellora or Kālīṅga, at Vikrampur or Kanauj.

The medieval Chandela art in Central India, the Central Provinces and the United Provinces is predominantly Brahmanical. But in Mahoba, not far from Khajuraho, the capital city of the Chandela dynasty, Buddhist sculptures of about the eleventh century A.D. have been found: images of the Buddha, Avalokiteśvara, Tārā and Lokanātha—composite Śaiva-Buddhist figures, especially Lokeśvara or Lokanātha, associated with the contemporary dominance throughout Northern India of Nātha tradition that merged Buddhism in Śaivism (*vide* Chapter XIX). The graceful, well-decked and smiling Mahoba Padmapāṇi very closely approximates to the Pāla Bodhisattva images in its combination of the warm current of lyrical or romantic idealism with formalism and abstraction. Similarly the superb Tāntrika image of Marichī, goddess of dawn or fertility with three heads and six arms, found in Kurkihar, U.P., has a distinct affinity to the similar Pāla goddesses in its dynamic rhythm and swirl of the many hands and weapons, echoed by the movements of the hovering worshippers above and below.



### Distinctive Features of Pala Art

There is, however, a profound difference between the Gupta and Pāla metal images of the Buddha, between Sarnath Lokeśvara or Śiva and Pāla and Kalinga Lokanātha or Śiva, or between the Gupta Viṣṇu lying on the snake at Deogarh and the Pāla Anantaśayana figure at Jajpur in Bankura. The medieval art of the east is more passionate and delicate and combines mysterious power with greater charm and elegance, characteristic of the evolution of the Gupta tradition, under the impetus of the Protestant religious and social currents of the Pāla age. Pāla sculpture is characterised by great boldness of plastic composition embodying also soft and tender fleshliness that blends with a stern discipline of outline and form; while the treatment of the drapery, the jewellery, pārsva devatās, gandharvas and stelae underlines the psychological message (Illustrations: Avalokiteśvara with Tārā in the mountain cave at Kurkihar, (Gayā), Śyāmā Tārā and Vāgiśvarī at Dacca, Nairatmā and Mārīchī at Nalanda, all of the tenth century; Mārīchī at Bihar and Vagiśvarī at Chhātingram (Bogra) and Hṛṣikesh at Murshidabad of the eleventh century). During the Sena period, the spiritual abstraction and human sensitiveness of the Pāla tradition were continued and we have some of the most elegant metaphysical icons that Indian art has produced. (Illustrations: Umālingana at Dacca, Khadiravanī Tārā at Bihar, Lokeśvara at Bhagalpur, Chāṇḍī at Dalbazar, Dacca). There is, on the other hand, a marked resemblance between the medieval sculptures of Bengal, Kalinga and Central India with contemporary images of Ellora and Elephanta. The two arts, dynamic and tense, have moved far away from classical art, efflorescent in poise, fineness and abstraction. In pattern and spirit the figures of Tārā found at Nalanda, of Indrāṇī at Jajpur, Orissa, and of Durgā-Mahishamardini at Vaital Deul, Puri, are close to some figures of goddesses in the famous caves of Ellora and Elephanta. Yet there is some distinctiveness of the medieval East, born of the infusion of Tāntrika culture that has invested it with a strange combination of charm with power, of human affection with mystery and an immanent, all-pervasive dynamism, akin to the serpent-coiled Kuṇḍalinī-Śakti that is tender and motherly, yet abysmal, indefinable, all-encompassing. It is not easy to explain the difference. But one can refer to the medieval images of Bodhisattva, Lokanātha,

Śiva, Manjuśrī, Tārā and Bhagavatī, painted and sculptured in Bengal and Kalinga with a human mellowness and tenderness and mysterious power hardly met with in other parts of India.

The Bengal design of the Bodhisattva or Śiva is characterised by extreme simplicity and dignity on the one hand and a fine sense of spatial values on the other, while the linear rhythms of drapery and ornaments that mould themselves to the underlying forms of the body give it a combination of the sweetness and delicacy of Botticelli with the joy and purity of Fra Angelico. Particularly emphasised is the profundity of the Buddhist Tārā or Purāṇic Chāṇḍī with her sideward way of the hips and gentle compassionate face with a Mona Lisa expression of the lips far less removed from the vicissitudes of the world than the South Indian Pārvatī with her unfathomable profundity. Gaurī and Pārvatī among the Brahmanical deities in Bengal and Orissa show a sweet motherliness and tenderness in their expression that are not incompatible with their transcendental mystery. The images of Tārā, Prajñāpāramitā, Gaurī and Pārvatī are transcendental in spirit like the Great Mother asleep within the body, but have inexpressible grace and power that belong to Her when She is awakened in her full nubile glory.

Culture is Surasundarī; and art is the perfect reflection of her body and spirit, of her embellishment and sport, in the mirror that she holds. There was a renaissance in Eastern India in the Pāla period with the advent of Tāntrikism, whose vitality, mystery and humanism have permeated the art not only of the Pāla Empire extending from Kanauj to Kāmarūpa and from Kalinga to the Vindhyas but through the genius of painters and sculptors, such as Dhīmāna and Vitapāla, and of scholar-missionaries, such as Kumāraghoshā, Dharmapāla and Dipāmkara Atisa, moulded the art of Nepal and Tibet and of Burma, Sumatra, Java and Cambodia across the seas.

### The Suprahuman Animal Images

Medieval art in India, under the influence of Tāntrikism, liked best to express man's transformation or Becoming rather than essence or Being, and created varied and wonderful images of Śakti or Becoming, complement and contrast to the Śiva or Viṣṇu type of Pure Being. Becoming in medieval art embraces not merely human but also animalic manifestations. In the classic



phase of Indian art, the deer, ape, elephant and other animals were treated in Sānchi, Bhārhut, Ajantā and Bagh with a most kindly and tender spirit, born of the Buddhist myth that the animal is but one stage of life in the long chain of man's karma, where the transitions from animal to man and from man to deva are continuous and ever-recurrent both ways. Both naturalistic and ideal treatment, marked by extreme delicacy, refinement and sensitiveness of animal motifs, was characteristic of Gupta Art. Medieval art especially of the Tāntrika phase, appreciates, more than the animal art of any other period or country in the world, the supra-animalic and supra-human potentiality of the beast. Thus the animal is the appropriate vehicle or implement of the divine mission of Viṣṇu-Narasimha and Durgā-Mahishāmardini. The animal's supernatural power, its discipline and restraint break out into superhuman vigorous action as the Lion-vehicle (Vāhana) of Durgā aids the goddess against the Mahishāsura, or as the Lion-divinity, Narasimha, tears the wicked Hiraṇyakaśipu in a moment to pieces. Animal attributes here are a part and parcel of the divinity, which Durgā and Viṣṇu represent and of their plan of action embodying the transformation of man's inner life and experience. Here is therefore no animality but animality-cum-divinity, which is the essential meaning of the Purāṇic conception of the Animal-vehicle (Vāhana) of gods and goddesses. Such myth and metaphysics underlie the psychological treatment of animals in medieval, especially Chandela sculpture where Bulls, Lions, Garuḍas and Śārdūlas or Vyālas (tigers) are invested with an inscrutable mystery and vitality and assigned an order of existence superior to human.

Throughout India and even in far-off Prambanan and Angkor, Nandin, Śiva's bull-vehicle, is sculptured in the round, sometimes into a colossal image characterised like the Egyptian sphinx by a portentous solemnity and detachment. The spirit of the Bull is a phase of Śiva's ascetic discipline and withdrawal from the world, and thus claims and obtains the adoration of thousands of worshippers before they enter the temple of God. Medieval Indian art, impregnated with the conception of the all-pervasive mysterious Energy or Śakti, immanent in gods, angels, nāgas, men and animals, has taken up on itself the paradoxical task of creating transitions and identifications of good and evil, of divinity, humanity, animality and devilry that make an extraordinary appeal to man. Man

likes best to see his own transformation or Becoming, and art is its best account, his most effective bridge between the real and the ideal, between the sensible and the super-sensible. Since the deity is not a human individual but the embodiment of a supernatural or metaphysical abstraction, there is often a striking departure from the human form or symmetry as in the human-animalic image, such as the Narasimha or in the multiplicity of heads, hands and feet so as to suit the cosmic vision. Indian sculpture oversteps anthropomorphism, and seeks nothing more and nothing less than the expression of the Beyond, reached by cosmic meditation with none of the limitations set by measurable human goals and ideals. Thus what is asymmetrical from the standpoint of naturalism and realism becomes in sculpture the vehicle of the cosmic and the transcendental. It must, however, be remembered that in certain schools and epochs art retained its human and anthropomorphic character, as instanced by Gupta art in India, Tang and Sung art in China and Nara art in Japan.

### **The Cosmic Dance Image Representing Poise in Movement**

One of the noblest creations of medieval Indian art is, however, the cosmic dance image of the male divinity, Śiva, Gaṇeśa or Kṛṣṇa, a perfect visual representation of Becoming in the eternal alternation of silence and activity in the universe and in the inner life of the soul. An early Naṭarāja image is that in the Lankeśvara section of the Kailāśa temple at Ellora dated between 650 and 750 A.D., a graceful magnificent piece of sculpture. The circular movement of the hands, with their tools, locks and garments is taken over by the flying angels above. A Naṭārāja image was found at Ujjain belonging to the 8th or 9th century A.D. The slenderness of the torso, the movement of the hands and weapons and the supple poise and playfulness of the dance movement in which the gaṇa and the bull participate show here an affinity with a South Indian bronze rather than with stone. In medieval Bengal in the Pāla period appeared a variant majestic dance image, called Nartēśvara, in which the rhythm of Being and Becoming includes both heaven and the nether world, comprising gods and angels, nāgas, kinnaras and gaṇas who all witness Śiva's cosmic dance or themselves dance in unison. Instead of the dwarf under the foot (as in the Chola type) we have Śiva's vehicle, the



bull, dancing in ecstasy with its face upturned in awe and adoration. Evidently the Naṭarāja type emerged earlier in Northern and Eastern India than in the South where it appeared in stone sculpture at Tanjore and Gangaikondapuram only in the 11th century A. D. Cognate archetypes of Śiva's cosmic dance, associated with Tāntrikism in Eastern India, are those of Tārā, Mārīchī, Kālī and Chāmuṇḍā. The South Indian bronze Naṭarāja types are some of the world's best plastic expressions, characterised by the combination of smooth majestic rhythmic sweep with sharp tension of planes and contours that magnificently embodies eternal equipoise in eternal movement. Coomaraswamy, referring to texts, points out that the Naṭarāja figure specifically designates the symbolism of the unity and simultaneity of the Five Cosmic Activities (Pañchakriyā), viz., Production, Maintenance, Destruction, Embodiment and Release. The motif, in modern terms, inculcates the perpetual pulsation in the life of the mind and of the universe, rest and activity, manifestation and withdrawal. Here, again, medieval Indian art embodies, as in the cases of Trimūrti (Three-in-One), Kalyāṇasundara, Umālingana, Hara-Gaurī or Ardha-nārīśvara, (Two-in-One) or the individual figures of Bodhisattva, Śiva, Prajñāpāramitā, Tārā, Pārvatī, Kālī or Surasundarī, a basic conception in Hindu metaphysics, a key to the Hindu theory of nature, life and mind.

The South Indian theistic-philosophical movement has given not only the Naṭarāja type but also images of profound devotion and spiritual ecstasy. Epigraphic evidence shows that metal images of Śaiva saints were set up in temples by Rājarājadeva Chola in 1014, and Vaishṇava images somewhat later. Late medieval Southern school also produced some of its finest bronze work in the images of Pārvatī and other forms of Śiva's consort. A contrast is discernible between the human affection and compassion of the Mother Goddess in Bengal and Kālī in stone, and the impersonality and transcendentalism of the South Indian goddesses in bronze. The accents of humanism and transcendentalism have varied in different periods and art regions in India, depending largely on the intensity of religious experience on the one hand, and the degree of the artistic sensibility of the people on the other.

The carving of erotic images (mithuna couples) in the medieval temples has been a subject of much controversy and misunderstanding. It was due to the impact of Vajra and Sahaja

symbolism on medieval Brahmanical art and ritual that we find in medieval temples such as Khajuraho, Konaraka and Bhuvaneshvar the treatment of the ritual of love as a vehicle of expression of contemporary metaphysical notions. There is no carnality in love nor squeamishness about sex in medieval sculpture. In Hindu Agāmic thought, "the Liṅga and the Yoni symbolise the creation of the universe, their union represents activity." It is in this philosophical background that the meanings and attitudes of sex as well as its arts and embellishments are dealt with in the sculptured maithunas in medieval India. We read in the *Vijñāna-Bhairava* (about 12th century). "The delight that arises from sex should be contemplated apart from any sex object or situation. Such a fixation on the emotion, says the commentary to the text, leads to the pervasion of the mind by pure delight. This state of mind is said to inhibit all other modes of awareness. Thus the content of mind is a pure emotion of joy, and nothing else. The sex situation is merely an occasion for the expression of this pure joy, (*ānāṁdam*)". Medieval sculpture in its major concern with pure joy has felt no nicety or fastidiousness in depicting the allurements, thrills and embraces of love, representing as these do the manifestations of the primordial all-pervasive *ānāṁdam* underlying creation and its beauty of form and movement. In Indian thought, love-making is a ritual, sex leads up to the liberation from sex; in fact there are as many postures of erotic enjoyment as there are those of yogic contemplation. Many of these are carved at Khajuraho where the sculptor effectively introduces a note of detachment through the omission of eye-balls of the loving couples, and the gesture of their sculptured neighbours hiding their eyes so that they might not look at what is meant only to be contemplated upon. Sex contemplated abstractly and symbolically becomes an episode of the descent of the divine to the earth, and of the ascent of the earthy to the divine in Tāntrika ritual and art.

### **Murti, the Charming Consort of Dharma**

In a pregnant passage of the *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa* we read: "Mūrti, (image of art and religion), the wife of Dharma (the principle underlying order in the cosmos and the human social structure) is form, luminous and charming. Without her the Absolute or the Supreme Spirit (*Paramātman*) whose abode is the whole universe, would be without support". Such is the role of



true art conceived as the body or image of the Supreme Spirit ceaselessly and enchantingly playing with the intellect, emotions and aspirations of man and the material forces of nature, and directing these to pure joy (*ānaṇḍa*), the essence of the Absolute. This is symbolised in medieval Indian art by the figure of the Female Deity, the Transcendental Power (*Śakti*) or the Celestial Beauty, absorbed in her own charm and luminosity, as she plays ball, touches her breasts, embellishes or sees herself in the mirror in her own hand in complete unconcern for the gods next to her or for her worshippers. Art itself is the Enchantress, but in her way of self-surpassing knowledge is the source of true joy, serenity and illumination.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE SYNTHESIS OF TĀNTRIKA CULTURE

#### **Indebtedness of Tantrikism to the Veda, Sankhya and Vedānta**

The worship of the sexual and the female principle is as ancient as the Indus valley civilization. In the Ṛgveda there are many female divinities, such as the trio of Ilā, Bhārati and Sarasvatī, which are other names of Agni (or Vāk, knowledge) in the respective spheres of the earth, space and heaven, and who form the essence and matrix (yonī) of all the gods. In the Upanishads and Brahmanical literature we have Umā and Haimavatī as the embodiment of the knowledge of Brahman (Brahma Vidyā), while the metaphysical conception of Śakti or the female energy of the divinity as underlying the manifoldness of consciousness, creation and destruction gains ground. The sexual dichotomy in the 129th sukta of the Ṛgveda (10th mandala, fourth and fifth maṅtram) which invokes the self-supporting principle beneath (svadhā) and energy aloft is the genesis of the later ramifications of the Puruṣa and Prakṛti, Brahman and Māyā, knower and the field of knowledge, and of Śiva and Śakti in Brahmanical thought.

In the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad, we find the metaphysical doctrine that in the beginning of creation the Ātman was alone. But the Ātman became desirous and sought enjoyment. It then divided itself into the male and the female. From this union proceeded creation. The Purāṇas saw not merely a proliferation of gods but also of goddesses on the basis of the ancient cosmogenic differentiation of the Absolute into the sexes—Puruṣa and Prakṛti, Brahman and Māyā-Śakti. The metaphysical background of religious reconciliation and synthesis of both the Purāṇas and Tāntras was the absolute, unconditioned Brahman or Supreme Being which manifests itself in the triple forms of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva due to the interplay of the three metaphysical principles (guṇas): sattva, rajas and tamas, and of the corresponding primal



goddesses, Sarasvatī, Lakshmi and Pārvati. In the Gupta age of synthesis the Bhagavad-Gītā obtained its formal shape—the most remarkable synoptic scripture of all faiths and religious practices of India. The religious synthesis came through the penetration of the fundamental metaphysical principles of the Sāṅkhya and Vedānta philosophy (Kapilas and Aupanishadikas, as these were called by Bāṇa) into the doctrines of the different religious sects. It was in the Gupta period that the sexual dichotomy of Purusha and Prakṛti of the Sāṅkhya philosophical system and of Brahman and Māyā of the Vedānta was made the basis of Tāntrikism, Śiva and Śakti having the same role or function as Purusha and Prakṛti. Prakṛti or Māyā is in ancient Brahmanical thought Existence and Becoming as well as the dynamism of the Supreme Being, Brahman or Purusha. Thus all the gods of the world surrender to the Primordial Feminine—Śakti and Devī. In the invocation of the poet Kālidāsa at the beginning of the Raghuvamśaṁ, we find the inseparableness of the Creators of the universe, of Śiva and Pārvati, of the Unity in duality, the fundamental notion of Tāntrika culture. In the Bhagavad-Gītā we have also the conception of the Supreme Being as the Seed-Bearer and Prakṛti as the matrix of the universe. The Niśvās Tattva, which was considered an authoritative text in the 8th century and even prior to it, shows the debt of Tāntrikism to the Vedānta and Sāṅkhya system: In the Mūla-sūtra the Devī says that she has learnt the doctrines of the Vedānta and the twenty-five Sāṅkhyas, and now desires to learn the Śiva-tattva. The Purāṇas prepared the ground for the evolution of the Lakshmi-Nārāyaṇa and Śiva-Śakti cults which the Tāntras fully utilized with the added orientation of absolute monism from the new Vedānta philosophy. The Gupta inscription, dated 458 A.D. of Mahārāja Bhimavarman and found at Kosam, shows the inscription of his name on a pedestal, having figures of both Śiva and Pārvati standing. A Vaishṇava sculpture at Udaigiri of 401 A.D. shows both the four-armed Viṣṇu and the twelve-armed Lakshmi together. Many Gupta coins depict both Viṣṇu's Vāhana, Garuḍa, or his wheel (chakra) and his consort Lakshmi.

### **Tantrikism as a Synthetising Theory and Practice**

The emphasis of the female principle, grounded in the theory of Purusha and Prakṛti, Brahman and Māyā was greatly amplified and systematised by Tāntrikism. Tāntrika culture interpreted the

contemplative consciousness or Brāhmanical chit and Buddhist viññanam and the bliss or Brahmanical ānaṇḍa and Buddhist mahasukha aspect of the Reality as Śakti. By doing so it became a bridge between the Brahmanical meditation of sat and the Buddhist meditation of the void (śūnya or vajra). Its emphasis being largely emotional and mystical in the worship of a personal deity, Tāntrika psycho-physical discipline, especially the concentration on the nāḍis and chakras, came to be a fresh synthesising and unifying factor. Yoga practice had been the common denominator of all Indian faiths and creeds, and Tāntrikism is a system of co-ordination of various kinds of yoga exercises and procedures that represented the cumulative tradition of the age in the sphere of contemplation. All Hindu as well as Buddhist religious sects gradually came under the ambit of Tāntrika metaphysical assumptions of the inseparableness of the masculine and feminine principles in the cosmos, and the awakening of the female principle in the human body through contemplation and ritual and its system of psycho-physical control and regulation of the body and state of consciousness through a variety of symbolic formulae (mañtrams), diagrams (yantrams), sacred circles (chakras) symbolical movements and postures (mudrās) and exercises of contemplation with, or in the very midst of sense-enjoyment. The Gupta age witnessed indeed a great vogue of worship of numerous energies or śaktis of the great gods conceived as feminine divinities.

In the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad which first expounds in theistic strain among the Upanishads the importance of the worship of Śiva, identified with the Supreme Reality, and enjoins intense devotion, Śakti is also mentioned "as manifold, as inherent, acting as energy and knowledge". In the Kaivalya, we find a mention of Umā as the protectress of the Supreme Lord. Meanwhile, Śaktism found its expression in the arts. Gaja-Lakshmi and Śrī-mā are sculptured at Bharhut about the first and second century B.C. The goddess Śrī, standing on the lotus and holding the same flower, is found in the Panchāla coin of Bhadrachhosa of the 2nd century B.C., and in the Gandhara coin of Agasus of the 1st century B.C. Havishka coins of the 2nd century A.D. show Oesa (Śiva) and Nanā (Umā) holding the cornucopae. Another coin specifically mentions Ommo or Umā whose figure is represented. As early as the reign of Kumāragupta I (313-455) we find a sculpture of the Seven Mothers (mātris) in Vidisā (modern



Besnagar), preserved now in the Gwalior museum, and the inscription refers to the performance of Tāntrika rites that stir up great commotion on the earth along with the joyous shouts of the Dākinīs. Thus it was in the early centuries A.D. that Śaktism became a separate faith and gradually penetrated into Śaivism, Vaishṇavism and Buddhism. Bhagavati, Mahisha-mardini, Pārvati, Lakshmi, Kātyāyanī, Vaishṇavi and Sarasvatī are among the forms of worship of Śakti found in Gupta coins and inscriptions.

### **The Worship of Lakshmi or Sri-devi in Ancient Brahmanism and Buddhism**

In the Mahābhārata, Śakti is Sarasvatī or Sāvitrī, the wife of Brahmā and daughter of the Sun. She is the impersonation of the Vedic Rta, the cosmic law or order of the universe and of the moral norm in the conscience of man. Sarasvatī and Bhārati are the first and most ancient forms of Śakti in Brahmanism. In Kālidāsa, Sarasvatī and Bhārati became identical—she is the consort of Brahmā, the goddess of speech and wisdom. In the Gupta period she is depicted in sculpture with Umā, and holds scripture and aksha-sūtra in her hands. The epic also speaks in reverence of Lakshmi or Śrī, the consort of Viṣṇu, Kṛṣṇa or Nārāyaṇa. Lakshmi is also Mahādevī or the bountiful Earth. Lakshmi was worshipped by both Hindus and Buddhists even before the Christian era. The goddess of Wealth or Abundance is Padma-Śrī in the epics, the Gaja-Lakshmi at Sanchi and Padma-Srī at Mathura. The Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa has a whole section devoted to Devī and her glories (Devī Māhātmya). The goddess has various manifestations, such as Koushikī, Durgā, Lakshmi, Sarasvatī and Kālī and like Kṛṣṇa in the Bhagavad-Gītā, and the Bodhisattva in the Saddharma Puṇḍarika, gives to suffering and distracted humanity, oppressed by the titans (dānavas), the heartening promise of her repeated incarnations in the future. The major gods, Brahmā Viṣṇu, Śiva and Skandha here have power only by the power of the Devī; each god has his female counterpart, Brāhmaṇī, Vaishṇavī, Śivānī and Koumārī. This was reiterated later by the Kubjikā Tantra, which is dated from the 7th century at latest: "Not Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Rudra create, maintain or destroy; but Brahmāṇī, Vaishṇavī, Rudrānī. Their husbands are but as dead bodies."

The image of Lakshmi is represented on the Bhārhut Tope and also in certain silver coins of the Mahakshatrapa, Rajuvala of

Mathura. But the cults of Lakshmī, Pārvatī or Durgā and Śrī, came into great vogue under the Imperial Guptas. In Kalidāsa we have frequent references to the worship of Lakshmī and Pārvatī, along with the Seven Mothers (Mātarah). Lakshmī is represented in Kālidāsa's Kāvya as well as in Gupta sculpture as massaging the feet of Viṣṇu reclining under the hood of the Serpent. Sister Nivedita suggests that the enthronement of Lakshmī, Bhūdevī or Bhūmidevī or the Earth, who is called Vaishṇavī, is paralleled by the prominent position held by the queens in the Gupta inscriptions and on the Gupta coins. This was associated, according to her, with a strong movement for the assertion of the rights of woman in the Gupta period. In the Kathāsaritsāgara, Ratnaprabhā protests against the strict seclusion of women as "mere social custom or folly brought about by male jealousy"; "women of good family", she adds, "are guarded by their own virtue as their only monitor, while even God himself can scarcely guard the evil women". Raychaudhuri discerns "the influence of the Sāṅkhya doctrine of Puruṣa and Prakṛti on the Neo-Vaiṣṇavism in the Lakshmī-Nārāyaṇa cult". The numismatic evidence, according to him, seems to point to the fact that the worship of Pallas and other Greek goddesses had something to do with the wide diffusion of the cult of Śrī. On Rajuvala's coin mentioned above Lakshmī sometimes takes the place of Pallas on the obverse.

### The Worship of Uma, Parvati or Chandi

The third form of Śakti is Umā Haimavatī or Pārvatī, the daughter of the Himālayas, who it was that could tell Indra what Brahman was according to the Kenopanishad. The Mahābhārata describes her as four-faced like the male member of the Triad. She is the great goddess (Mahādevī or Maheśvarī) identical with Sarasvatī and Sāvitrī, the mother of the Vedas and the source of all knowledge or revelation. In the Gupta period, Kālidāsa in his benedictory verse in the Raghuvamśa bows to Pārvatī and her spouse, Parameśvara (Śiva), describing them as inseparable like word and its meaning. This is the essence of Tāntrika worship. Even as early as the Gupta period the traditional Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism were transformed into Lakshmī-Nārāyaṇa and Śiva-Śakti cults. From Bāṇa we gather that not only were Śaivism (worship of Nīla-lohita i.e., Rudra-Śiva) and Tāntrika worship associated with the imperial household, and, in the imperial city of



Kanauj, Chandi and Mahākāla were worshipped, but there were also the unorthodox devotees of Durgā and the sect of Kāpālikas with their chaplets of bones round their heads and necks, inhabiting holes and crevices of the rocks. Tāntrikism had, then, by the beginning of the 7th century its Right and Left Hands. Bāṇa's own Chandi-śataka, Harsha's worship of Śiva (also called Śambhu and Hara) and Girijā (also called Gaurī) and the citizens' worship of Mahākāla and Chandi are illustrations of the first mode of worship. The Kāpālika's worship, mentioned by Bāṇa and Hiuen-Tsang, is an illustration of the second. A century later Bhavabhūti's Mālatī-Mādhava gives a vivid description of the worship and magical practices of the Kāpālikas of that time. In a few panels and plaques in the U. P. and Bengal as well as in the South, assigned to the Gupta period, we encounter the motif of a devotee cutting off his own head—self-immolation before the goddess Durgā or Kālī. Both the protective aspect of the goddess as Pārvatī, Bhavānī or Gaurī and her terrible aspect as Durgā and Kālī were widely recognised as early as the Gupta age. In Rājaśekhara's Karpūra-maṇjarī of the 10th century, we have a description of the Feast of the Swing on which a girl mounts in honour of the goddess Gaurī, the charming, beneficent aspect of Devī.

### The Worship of Tara in Buddhism

Buddhism of the Mahāyāna school, coming in close contact with Vaishṇavism and Śaivism, soon associated Śakti with Avalokiteśvara-Tārā, Ārya-Tārā or Prajñāpāramitā. Hiuen-Tsang found at a monastery twenty miles west of Nālandā, which was the "rendezvous of eminent scholars who flocked to it from all religions;" an image of Bodhisattva Tārā (masculine) by the left of the image of Avalokiteśvara. This must have been a feminine deity. The origin of Tārā is obscure. She is certainly a Buddhist divinity (the consort of Amoghasiddhi) later on assimilated into the Hindu Śakti cult of Eastern India through the teaching of Ārya Nāgārjuna from Mahā-China-deśa (in all probability Chinese Tibet). Tārā or Prajñāpāramitā occupies the same place in Mahāyāna Buddhism that Sarasvatī or Pārvatī occupies in Hinduism. Her worship became popular among the Buddhists in India from the 7th century A.D., her images being found all over India including the classic land of Magadha as well as in Sārnāth (where the images of various Tārās including Ekajātā or Nilā Tārā,

Khadiravanī or yellow Tārā and Vajra Tārā became numerous from the 10th century A.D.) and in South-east Asia. The earliest Tārā image in Sārnāth is that of Bhṛkūti Tārā, with a Gupta aureole, that is assigned to the 7th century A.D. In Bengal the earliest Tārā image belongs to 844 A.D. at Nālandā during the reign of Devapāla. Sitā Tārā, Vajra Tārā, Sarasvatī, and Mārīchi became gradually common representations along with the various forms of the Bodhisattvas in the 9th and 10th centuries in Eastern India. In the cave temples of Western India such as Nasik, Ajanta, Aurangabad and Ellora, Tārā is found in association with similar figures, Lochanā and Māmaki, consorts of Dhyāni Buddhas.

But the introduction of the worship of Tārā or Prajñāpāramitā was something far different from the Tāntrika culture in later Buddhism and Hinduism, based on the root idea of spiritual discipline of Yoga and samādhi through the transmutation and consecration of Śakti as woman or sex. The Buddha is mentioned in the Majjhima Nikāya as rebuking certain schools of the Brāhmaṇa Parivrājakas for their sexo-yogic practices. But later Buddhism in Eastern India under the influence of the Buddhist Siddhas developed the sexo-yogic cult of Prajñā and Upāya on the lines of Tāntrika Śiva-Śakti worship.

The Tāntrika discipline is a relatively recent development in the history of Indian religions, which seems to have originated in Bengal within the fold of Mahāyāna Buddhism that subsequently spread it throughout India and Nepal, Tibet, China and South-east Asia. In the Katthā-Vatthu we read that religious sanction was accorded by certain Buddhist teachers or sects to an ideal conjugal life in the sense that the husband and the wife are united with one and the same lofty motive (*Ekadhippayo methuno dhammo patisevitabbo*). Such maithuna was, no doubt, prohibited for the order of monks. But due to the influence of Tāntrikism Mahāyāna gradually adopted the cult of the Female Principle in contemplation and ritual. We find an image of Tārā in the district of Bogra, belonging to the reign of Devapāla, who flourished about the beginning of the 9th century. Several images of Tārā, Nairātmā and Bāgeśvarī, belonging to the 9th and 10th centuries, have been found in Nālandā and Southern Bihar. In the 11th century, images of Tārā were installed in Somapura in North Bengal "to dispel entirely the eight great dreads of the people". Figures of



Vajrayāna images, the dancing Heruka with his garland of skulls and Hevajra in yab-yum attitude with his consort Tārā, dated the 11th century, have been found in Pahārpur. Many representatives of Hevajra in yab-yum attitude have also been found in Siam and Angkor. Getty mentions that the Sūtra of the Hevajra Tantra figured historically in the conversion of the Mongolian Emperor Khubilai in the 13th century A.D. The monastery of Jagaddala, founded by Rāmapāla, the last of the Pāla kings, had images of Avalokiteśvara and Mahā-Tārā. In a Bengal manuscript dated 1015 A.D. the Tārā image is most elegantly delineated. To this period belong also the images of Buddhist Tārā of Samatata and Tārā of Dhondai. The images of the Pāla period often show a Hevajra embraced by his female consort Tārā, indicating the influence of Tāntrika doctrine.

### **Buddhist Tantrikism as Reaction against Mahayana dogma and ritual**

Bihar, Northern and Eastern Bengal, including a part of Assam, comprise a compact culture-area where most of the Vajrayāna images—Tārā in her different forms, Marichi, Parṇa-Savarī, Chundā, Hevajra, Heruka and Vagīśvarī—are found in India. On the Vajrayāna art and worship of Nepal and Tibet the influence of this cultural area is clearly discernible. Tāntrika literature includes the Sādhanaś, comprising the descriptions of deities, mantras and mudrās for the purposes of meditation and worship. These served also as the basis of the construction of images by sculptors and painters. The monasteries of Nālandā, Vikramaśilā (Patharghata in Bhagalpur), Odantapuri (town of Bihar) and Somapuri (Paharpur) were the principal foci of the Vajrayāna cult from the 7th century to the Muslim conquest, while many Siddhas or Vajrayāna yogic adepts, well-known in the Tibetan tradition, came from this part of India. The last phase of development of Buddhism from the 7th century A.D. to the advent of Islam was fashioned almost wholly in the Buddhist monasteries of Bengal, especially under the Pāla kings, save the monasteries of Nālandā and Sārnāth in Magadha. A string of Buddhist monasteries and temples was scattered throughout the length and breadth of Bengal: the monasteries of Bha-ra-ha in Tāmralipti (described by I-tsing), Po-shi-po in Pundravardhana (near Mahāsthāna), Lo-to-mo-chi in Karṇasuvarṇa (Ranga-mati

Kansona in Murshidabad), the monasteries of Samatata, Vikramaśilā, Odañtapuri, Somapuri, Jagaddala (in Rāmavati on the confluence of the Ganges and Karatoya), Vikramapurī (Vikramapur, Dacca), Traikutaka (West Bengal), Devikota (North Bengal), Phullahari, Sannagara, Pandita (Chittagong) and Pattikera (Tipperah). A large number of Buddhist Sanskrit texts were translated into Tibetan at Vikramaśilā. Abhayakāragupta, author of *Kālachakrāvātāra*, and of more than twenty Vajrayāna texts and *Divākarachandra*, author of a *Heruka-Sādhana*, belonged to Vikramaśilā. The Odañtapuri monastery became famous for its library. Atiśā Dīpaṅkara lived for sometime in the vihāra of Somapuri. Āchārya Bodhibhadra was one of the celebrated scholars of this vihāra. Kumārachandra, also called Avadhūta, was a celebrity of Vikramapurī, where he wrote a Tāntrika commentary, *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*, translated into Tibetan by Puṇyadhvaja. In the Traikutaka vihāra, Haribhadra wrote a famous commentary on the *Aṣṭa-Saharsrikā-Prajñā-Pāramitā*. Atulya-Vajra was a celebrity in the monastery of Devikota. Tailapāda, a famous Tāntrika scholar and his disciple Nadapāda, author of a commentary on the *Vajra-pāda-sāra Saṁgraha* belonged to the monastery of Paṇḍita. In the last celebrated monastery of Bengal, that of Jagaddala, established by the last great Pāla King Rāmapāla, flourished Bibhūtiachandra, Dānaśīla, Mokshakaragupta and Śubhakaragupta. Jagaddala was an important place where many important Tibetan translations of Sanskrit works were prepared. The presiding deities at this monastery were Avalokiteśvara and Mahā-Tārā. Oddiyana, probably Vajrayoginī in Dacca district, was also another important seat of Buddhist learning. There were also many other smaller monasteries whose names have been forgotten or which cannot now be identified by scholars like P. C. Bagchi and N. N. Dasgupta. Monks and scholars from Tibet, Nepal and Indonesia came to these vihāras for study and translation of the various Buddhist Tāntrika and other texts and commentaries. Mahāyāna was largely metaphysical till the middle of the 7th century when Hiuen-Tsang visited Bihar and Bengal. But gradually the mystic and esoteric aspects overshadowed the metaphysical. This was the transformation from the Mahāyāna to the Vajrayāna and Sahajayāna led by the great professors of the universities and the Siddhas and poets of the various Vajrayāna and Sahajayāna lyrics of Bengal. A multiplicity of gods and



goddesses left its impress upon the abundance of new types of images in Bengal, mostly belonging to the period 9th-11th centuries and the vernacular mystic poetry (*charyāpadas*) characterised by an elaborate, and now obscure symbolism. *Prajñā* (wisdom), *Vajra* (void), *Mahāsukha* (bliss), all became identical manifestations of the *Bodhichitta* or the *Śakti* of *Tāntrikism*. The union of *Prajñā* (wisdom) and *Upāya* (works or compassion) formed the background of contemplation in the later phases of Buddhism, such as the *Mantrayāna*, *Vajrayāna*, *Sahajayāna* and *Kālachakrayāna*, all reacting against the academic predilection and ritualism of the *Mahāyāna*.

### Foreign Influences in Tantrikism

In the famous *Mahāyāna* patriarch *Āsanga's Sūtrālaṅkāra* (4th and 5th century A.D.), written in that melting-pot of races and cultures in the north-west, viz., Gandhara, we already find the penetration of *Tāntrika* notion and practice into Buddhist worship. One of its verses mentions that "in the *parāvṛtti* of sexual union supreme greatness is obtained viz., in the enjoyment of Buddha-happiness and in looking without impure thoughts at a wife." Sylvain Levi suggests that the *parāvṛtti* of sexual act alludes to the mystic couples of Buddhas and *Bodhisattvas* which have so much importance in *Tāntrikism*. P. C. Bagchi points out, however, that since *parāvṛtti* is mentioned in connection with the last stages in the spiritual march of the *Bodhisattva*, it can possibly have no sexual import because here the mind rises above all agitation and illusion and reaches profound stability (*śvāśvatam*) and bliss (*bouddhasaukhya vihāra*). Coomaraswamy also explains *parāvṛtti* as transformation or reversal. The analogy of the supreme bliss of contemplation with the enjoyment of sexual behaviour (*maithuna*) is however as old as *Yājñavalkya* and was taken over some time or other by the *Mahāyāna* patriarchs. B. M. Barua considers that the development of the later Buddhist *Vajriya* sect or *Vajrayāna*, admitting the importance of the *Dhāraṇīs*, and cherishing the secret doctrine in the *Vajriya* or *Uttarāpatha*, was due, partly at least, to the influence of Mazdeism or Magism which, as known to Prodicus the Gnostic and the Neo-Platonists, possessed secret books or hidden science and to Xenophon as a confidential teaching.

### Vasistha *vis a vis* Arya Nāgarjuna as the Founder of Tantrikism

The Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa which is relatively new, however, ascribes antiquity to the Tāṇtra ritual by mentioning that its founder was Agastya, who learnt the details of worship of Śrīvidyā, the goddess of Wisdom, from Hayagrīva, a manifestation of Viṣṇu obviously of foreign extraction. Lopamudrā, his wife, became well-known through her worship of Śrīvidyā, the mantra through which she gave her wisdom being still known by her name. Similarly Vāsiṣṭha, often recognised as the father of Tāṇtrikism, is said to have obtained his supreme knowledge not before her worship of the goddess Tārā. Foreign influences are indicated by the observation in the Tārā Tāṇtra, which is adopted by both Hinduism and Buddhism, that the cult of China-Tārā came from the country of Mahā-China where Vāsiṣṭha was initiated in the secret doctrines of China-āchāra. The Kubjikā Tāṇtra, one of the earliest Tāṇtra texts, composed not later than the 7th century A.D. (as evidenced by the discovery of a manuscript written in Gupta script) also mentions the foreign origin of the secret cult, "Go to India to establish yourself in the whole country and make manifold creations in the sacred places of primary and secondary importance." It is also noteworthy that one of the earliest Tāṇtrika texts, the Sammoha Tāṇtra (placed by P. C. Bagchi in the 6th-7th century A.D.), which was taken to Kambuja in the east in the beginning of the 9th century A.D., mentions China, Mongolia (Mahā-China), Tibet (Bhota). Balkh (Bāhlika) and the Himālayan tract (Kīrāta) along with various regions and zones where Tāṇtrikism was in vogue. It also refers to 100 primary and 7 subsidiary Tāṇtras of China, while the Jayadratha Jāmala (8th century A.D.), while mentioning the various Tāṇtrika schools refers to the practices of the Lāmās (lāmāvarga), Śākinis and Yoginis (śaktis of the Tibetan Tāṇtrika deities such as Lha-mo or Devī.)

The Devī Purāṇa dated about the end of the 7th or beginning of the 8th century mentions that the Devī was worshipped in her different forms, after the Left-hand Śāktas (vāmāchāra) in different places in Rāḍha, Varendra, Kāmarūpa, Kāmākhyā, Bhoṭṭadeśa etc. The Vishnuite Kūrmapurāṇa repeatedly mentions the Left-hand division (vāma) among the Śāktas. All the four major sacred



centres of the Tāntrika cult, mentioned in both Hindu and Buddhist Tantras, are situated in or very near Indian borderland, viz., Kāmarūpa, Puṇḍarīka, Oddiyana and Jālandhara. According to legend the goddess in Kāmākhyā (Gauhati), one of the most sacred Tāntrika pīṭhas on the north-eastern route to Upper Burma and China, is worshipped according to China-āchāra. Jālandhara is ancient Kangra (with its sacred pīṭha Jvālāmukhī). Puṇḍarīka is not yet identified. Oddiyana or Odyana may be the Swat valley on the route to Tibet through the Shipki pass, but is identified by B. T. Bhaṭṭāchārya, with Vajrayoginī in Dacca district, where the Vajrayāna goddess, Vajrayoginī, the same as the Hindu goddess Chinnamastā, was worshipped. In the outlying zones of India such as Kāmarūpa, Gauḍa, Utkala, Kerala and Kashmir and among the aboriginal folks such as Kirātas, Pulindas, Barbaras, Ābhīras and Kuṇṭhalas, and the foreigners such as the Yavanas, Hunas and Pāraśikas (all mentioned as principal adherents), Tāntrikism was popular. Both Buddhist and Hindu Tāntrikism developed by freely absorbing the magical formulae and esoteric practices of foreign and non-Aryan groups outside the heart of Brahmanical culture—the Madhya-deśa.

The worship of Mahā-China-tārā, Ugra-tārā, Arya-tārā or Ekajātā was introduced into Buddhism from Tibet by Ārya Nāgārjuna (6th-7th century A.D.), one of the Siddhāchāryas like Luipāda, Kahnu-pāda and Saraha, who was also the author of Sādhanaś, Pañchakrama and other Tāntrika works. Now these very deities appear in the Hindu Tantrasara as different aspects of Tārā—Ekajātā, Nīla-Sarasvatī and Ugra-Tārā. The dhyānas of the Hindu deities correspond closely with those of the Buddhist goddesses, Ekajātā and Mahā-Chinakrama-Tārā, as given in Bhaṭṭāchārya's Sādhana-mālā. There is a reference to this new goddess, Mahā-nīla-Sarasvatī in the Gaya inscription of the Pāla king Nāyapāla (1038-1055). In order to make the acceptance of these foreign deities easier for Hindu Tāntrikism, Vāsiṣṭha's name was substituted for that of Siddha Nāgārjuna. According to the Rudrayāmala and Brahmāyāmala, Vāsiṣṭha went to Mahā-China where he sought the help of Mahādeva-Buddha-rūpa. From him he learnt the Pañchatattva ritual. Tārā, Ārya-Tārā or Vajra-Tārā obviously first emerged as a Mahāyāna Buddhist deity but was later adopted as a Hindu deity. Vāsiṣṭha's worship of Tārā mentioned also in the Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa marked this important assimilation

—the incorporation of Vajrayāna deities as Mahā-vidyās of Hindu Tāntrika worship.

### The Basic Tantrika Conception : Unity in Duality

The Tāntrika way of worship is grounded in several meta-physical conceptions. Fundamental in Tāntrikism is the notion of identity of the human body (aṇḍa), the microcosm, with the universe or the macrocosm (brahmāṇḍa), with its corollary of attainment of knowledge of the universe by knowledge of the body through psychological disciplines, (Haṭhayoga, āsana and mudrā). Cognate to it is the notion of the Supreme Reality (Brahman) as representing Unity in Duality or integralness of the psycho-biological and the spiritual life, symbolised by the inseparable, composite Śiva-Śakti. Śiva is the static and Śakti the dynamic aspect of Reality (Brahman or Ātman). Śiva is the pure Supreme Self, Śakti the body and mind—the disengagement of the Pure, Unified Consciousness—and Śiva-Śakti the universe and man's discrete, differentiated experience of the universe (jīvātman). The dual principles of Śiva-Śakti not only pervade the universe but are also present in the human body—in the mūladhārā as the swayambhu liṅga, encircled by Kuṇḍalini-Śakti which is the dormant vital energy (prāṇa) that on its arousal unites with Śiva in the Sahasrārā. This is parallel to the Vajrayāna conception of the vital energy, the goddess Prajñā or Nairātma, roused through the yogic practice and compassion (Karūṇā) to unite with the Vajra-sattva or void, which is also pure bliss (mahāsukha).

The basic Hindu conception of Unity in Duality (Śiva-Śakti) has its corollary of the "Left" or reverse plan of worship (vāmāchāra), viz., consecration of the world and the flesh and the metamorphosis of sex desire and satisfaction (pañchatattva), so that all impulse, all function, all activity, all enjoyment become Śiva-Śakti, and nothing remains gross or sensual in the total reconciliation of the flesh (paśu, jīva) and the spirit (deva, Śiva). Since the deity appears in the form of the universe, worship can only be easy, spontaneous and fruitful through the use of the five elements of the universe (pañchatattva—wine, meat, fish, grain and woman).

### Identification of Bhukti and Mukti

In Hindu Tāntrikism, the universe (brahmāṇḍa) itself is used as the medium of worship (upāchāra). The Pañchatattva ritual is



real (*pratyaksha*), substitutional (*anukalpa*) and ideal or symbolic (*divya*) according to the stage of the worshipper, and worship is also three-fold: *vīra* (heroic), *paśu* (human) and *divya* (divine). Through this ritual the worshipper realises that all the elements and forces of the universe are within him and also Śiva-Śakti; and the conjunction of Śiva and Śakti is the Supreme Bliss of identification of self and the universe (*Yoga is Maithuna*). Worship is nothing more and nothing less than the arousal of the unconscious (Jung's *Anima*: "What need have I of any outer woman? I have an inner woman within myself"), its externalisation and imagining in the form of the Eternal Feminine, Śakti, symbolised by the "piercing" (*bheda*) of the six planes or spheres of consciousness (*shata-chakra* or *padma*), i.e., *bhū*, *bhuva*, *sva*, *jana*, *maha*, *tapa* and *satya* in a planned meditation on successive "stations" of the psycho-motor flow (*kuṇḍalānī*), ascending to the unstained consciousness at the topmost "station" where the self and the universe are resolved in the pure identity-consciousness and perfect bliss (*Sā-aham*).

Śakti has her polarity. In one aspect Śakti is at rest, "coiled"—the matrix and substratum of the universe. In another aspect Śakti is kinetic. As Śakti "uncoils" itself, the whole universe with all its primal causes and appearances moves. Such is the distinction between the Pure Consciousness (*chitrūpiṇī*) aspect of the deity and the dynamic and differentiated (*guṇamayī*) aspect. When Śakti "sleeps", man is awake to the phenomenal world. When Śakti is awakened to unite with the Pure Consciousness (Śiva), man passes beyond phenomena to the identity-consciousness (*samādhi*), both his body and mind being re-united with Śiva. Both enjoyment (*bhukti*) and liberation (*mukti*) belong to the Śakti-worshipper and not merely liberation, as in the Way of Knowledge. It is the grace of the spiritual teacher or Guru, an aspect of Mother Kuṇḍalīnī-Śakti herself, who guides the adept from stage to stage according to his capacity and temperament (*bhāva*).

Hindu Tāntrikism represents another synthesis and harmony of the familiar divergent paths of approach to the Deity that India clarified in the Gupta and post-Gupta age, leading up to that unalloyed joy which her thought has always associated with effortless silence or identification with Infinite Reality and Intelligence—the merging of Śiva-Śakti. Śiva is the self or the

Ātman in profound rest or silence. Śakti is the self in movement or action in full play of all-too-human desires and satisfactions into which is introjected the full identity-consciousness. Hymns, formulae (mantra), diagrams (yantra), rituals—all consistently and symbolically, according to the stage of spiritual advance of the aspirant (Paśu, Vira, Divya), lead up through the ritual emphasis, in the first phase, of separateness and enjoyment, and then in the second phase, of identity and withdrawal to the final dissolution (laya yoga) of all polarities and oppositions in the Unitary Consciousness—Bliss: “I am She, I am Chit; I am He, I am Ātman”. Śankaracharya in one of his hymns (Devi-bhujāṅga-prayāta-stotra) says: “O Mother out of sport Thou hast divided the one Absolute Intelligence into two—the finite Self (jīva) and the Supreme Self (Śiva). Having transformed God or Śiva into the finite creature or jīva, then dost Thou convert that same jīva back to Śiva”. In the Bodhasāra governed by the Vedānta thought, Śakti is at once the undifferentiated, ultimate Being, the Being as the deity of theism that commands reverence of the subjective self and the Source of differentiation of the subjective consciousness and experience of the phenomenal world. (Becoming) The Mahānirvāṇa Tantra (Tantra of the Great Liberation) identifies the Universal Self with the Devī, (sometimes “He”, sometimes “She” and sometimes “It”), Brahman or Ātman—the embodiment of Truth, perfect Intelligence and Bliss. Here we discern clearly the impress of the Vedānta on the Śaktivāda or the Tantra. Śakti is Parama Brahman, Supreme of Supreme (Parātparā), beyond all forms and guṇas; her supreme form none knows. She is also the conditioned Brahman, whose sport is universe-play, the matrix, nourisher and destroyer of countless worlds. She exists in all qualities and manifestations, in the forms of all vidyās, all women and all things indicated by words in the feminine gender. The Tāntrarāja expresses this metaphysical notion tersely and beautifully: “One’s own Ātman is the charming goddess of one’s adoration. The universe is but her form”. Śiva says: “Thou (Śakti) art all energy, it is by thy energy that We (the Trinity) are powerful (Śaktāḥ) in the acts of creation, preservation and destruction”. Such is the synthesis that the Purāṇas and the Tāntras effected in respect of the worship of Śiva-Śakti. It is not by metaphysical denial or withdrawal but by ascent beyond the Unreal (Māyā) that the Real (Śiva-Śakti) is apprehended: in the Real or the



Unreal, the Conscious or the Unconscious, Śiva and Śakti are never dissociated. Tāntrikism is, in one word, an integration of the cosmology of the Sāṅkhya, the monism of the Advaita Vedānta, the psycho-physical discipline of the Yoga and the mystical devotionism of the Way of Bhakti. It brings to a focus and systematically co-ordinates the points of agreement between different schools of thought (darśanas) and ways of approach to the Reality. Hindu worship outside Śaktism proper has incorporated many elements from the practical side of Tāntrika rituals and even the Vedic rites have been transformed. Thus the performance of nyāsas and mudrās, the use of Tāntrika mantras, which even precedes the recitation of Vedic Gāyatrī, the drawing of lotuses, yantras and maṇḍalas and the worship of virgin girls are adopted more or less by the generality of Hindu sects. Many of the Purāṇas, Śaiva Āgamas and Pañcharātra saṁhitās commend Tāntrika methods of initiation, consecration of images and other external procedures of worship. Thus do both the metaphysics of bi-unity of the masculine and feminine principles and the psycho-physical discipline and symbolism of Tāntrikism permeate the Hindu way of contemplation and living. Finally, Tāntrikism gives full rights of worship and of supreme bliss and enlightenment not only to the dvijas but also to the women, Śūdras and even foreigners. The Bhaviṣya Purāṇa permits even the Mlechhas to worship Devī or the Liṅga made of clay and sand. Tāntrikism is an egalitarian creed: it bears in its bosom the universality of the Vedānta and abolishes in its rituals the barriers between the high and the low, the Indian and the foreign-born. Above all, it transforms, by its sense of immanence of the deity and its symbolic discipline and procedure, man's work and enjoyment of life into his worship, and the dormant jīva or finite self into the dynamic, transcendent Self or Śiva. As one of the later magnificent syntheses in the march of Indian thought, it achieves a grand metamorphosis of the ancient myth and metaphysics of the identity of I and Thou into man's encounter with the Divine One in person in the human transactions of the world, transfigured beyond humanity.

## CHAPTER XXV

### THE HEIRS OF BUDDHISM: THE VAJRA, NĀTHA AND SAHAJA MOVEMENTS

#### **The Rise and Development of the Vajrayana**

The history of religions in India shows two distinct characteristics. First, a new religious development is grounded in metaphysical reorientation, metaphysics in India being not merely knowledge but also, and above all, a way to salvation, moksha or nirvāṇa. Second, there is constant shift from metaphysics as soon as it crystallizes into dogma to ineffable, mystical experience, from worship and ritual to yoga, the gate through which the Indian man enters the cosmic whole. The simple creed of Hīnayāna Buddhism largely confined itself to certain external aspects of religion without soaring into those heights of religious experience inaccessible to the average man. The Mahāyāna, influenced both by the traditional mysticism of Hinduism and Taoism, constituted truly a larger vehicle (yāna) in the history of religions fitted for success in foreign countries. The identification of the Bodhisattva with Lokeśvara, Lokanātha or Śiva in India and with Kuan-yin or rather the feminine counterpart of Avalokiteśvara in China and the rise of Śakti worship within the bosom of the Mahāyāna represented a shift from traditional dogma to symbols of mystical inspiration. The Mahāyāna not only replaced the historical by the metaphysical Buddha, but also built its theology and modes of mystical contemplation on the conception of Śaktis of the various categories of the Buddha and the Bodhisattva. This, again, paved the way towards the development of Vajrayāna. The next phase saw the fusion of Vajrayāna and Nāthism. The new cults mark the complete triumph of Tāntrikism that was called Hindu or Buddhist according to convenience. For both Buddhist Mahāyāna or Vajrayāna and Hindu Tāntrika deities faded away in the plane of consciousness of absolute void (nairātma, śūnya) and bliss (mahāsukha). The next phase of evolution was the association



of the subtle and elaborate psycho-physical discipline of Haṭhayoga with a complete denial of worship, ritualism and asceticism grounded on the externalisation of the unconscious as the Eternal, Transcendent Woman, the expression of supreme bliss, void and transcendence in the Sahajayāna. As the Sahaja cult, emphasising ease, spirituality and freedom, spread far and wide in Northern India, obliterating the differences between the last phases of Buddhism and Śaiva, Śākta and Vaiṣṇava worship, Buddhism made its exit or lost its independent existence in India. The elusiveness, flexibility and syncretic trend of Tāntrikism were responsible for the dramatic metamorphosis of Buddhist metaphysics and cults and their complete absorption by the Vajrayāna, Nātha and Sahaja yogas.

The Vajrayāna, Nātha-Siddha and Sahaja movements were direct heirs of Buddhism in the very land of its origin. Some scholars are of opinion that the earliest systematic Tāntrika texts are the Buddhist Mūla-Kalpa and the Guhya-samāja Tāntra, dated by Benoytosh Bhattachārya at the second and third centuries A.D. It was in these texts that, according to Bhattachārya, Śakti worship, with associated notions for the attainment of the highest wisdom (prajñā, vidyā or śūnyatā), was first systematized in India. These doctrines are substantially the same as those found in the Sādhana (practice) of Prajñā-pāramitā composed by Asaṅga in the 4th century A.D. The Saddharma Puṇḍarīka has a whole chapter on Dhāraṇīs, invocations to a female deity or power; "demi-goddesses" are mentioned as protectors of the Sūtra and its readers. Chinese translations of the Dhāraṇīs were begun at the beginning of the 3rd century A.D. We have already referred to the controversy about a passage in the Sūtrālaṅkāra which runs thus: "In the parāvṛtti of sexual union supreme greatness is obtained viz., in the enjoyment of Buddha-happiness and in looking without impure thoughts at a wife". Winternitz considers this as the germ of the Tāntrika esoteric sexual practice in the Mahāyāna. But such doctrines and practices must have for centuries been orally transmitted in the time-honoured Tāntrika form of worship. For from Guṇādhya we learn that the God Mahākāla was worshipped at Ujjaini with Tāntrika rites. This was about the 1st century B.C. when a clear demarcation had also been established between proper and improper practices. No doubt since the rise of Mahāyāna Buddhism, the Mahāyāna texts included for centuries Tāntrika

materials, dealing with yoga exercises and the cultivation of elevated mysticism, while the *Tāntras* discussed the rites of the *Vajrayāna* as well as the philosophical doctrines of the *Mahāyāna*. In fact, there was much infusion of cults and practices of the *Tāntras* of the Buddhists and those of the *Śāktas*. It is no wonder therefore that *Tāranātha* observes that *Tāntrikism* was handed down by secret means from the time of *Asaṅga* until the time of *Dharmakīrti*. According to the *Guhya-samāja Tantra* (2nd and 3rd century A.D.), the Buddha transformed himself into five *Dhyāni Buddhas* (Buddhas in meditation), each with a *Śakti*, *Prajñā* or *Vidyā*. Thus there are *Akshobhya* with *Lochanā*, *Vairocana* with *Tārā*, *Ratnaketu* with *Māmakī*, *Amitābha* with *Pāṇḍarā* and *Amoghavajra* with *Āryatārā*. This Buddhist *Tantra* prescribes the method of meditation of each of the conjoint *Dhyāni Buddha-Śaktis* with specific mantras, *mudrās*, *maṇḍalas* and so on for reaching the void or *śūnya* in which the phenomenal world, all things of enjoyment, and enjoyment completely disappear. This *śūnya* is called the *Vajra* because it is impenetrable and indivisible like the thunderbolt. Hence the new dispensation came to be called the *Vajrayāna*. *Śūnya* (void) and *Karuṇā* (compassion) comprise the *Bodhichitta* or elevated consciousness. Their comingling or unity in duality (*advaya*) is symbolised by the mutual embrace in the *yuganaddha* or *yab-yum* posture of the *Vajrayāna* deities, *Heruka* and *Prajñā*.

### **Rapprochement with Hinduism—Fusion of the Concepts of Void, Bliss and Compassion**

Now the void of *Vajrayāna*, differing as it did from that of the *Mādhyamika* and *Yogācāra* schools in the inclusion of the three elements of void, consciousness and bliss (*śūnya*, *viññāna* and *mahāsuka*), made the rapprochement with Hinduism easy, the ground being already prepared by the religious eclecticism and synthesis of the Gupta age. The *Mahābhārata* comprises a hymn to *Durgā*. *Geden* is of opinion that the *Tāntras* probably assumed their present form in the 6th century A.D. *P. C. Bagchi* mentions 18 *Tāntras*, considered canonical in the 8th century and before it, that are listed in one of the oldest *Tāntrika* texts, *Niśvāsātattva-Saṁhitā* (8th century A.D.) found in Nepal. In the 7th century *Hiuen-Tsang* saw the worship of *Durgā* in several monasteries in India. One of the numerous varieties of *Tārā* is called *Durgot-*



tariṇī in the Buddhist Sādhana-mālā. She is the precursor of the modern Durgā of Eastern India—the embodiment of the transcendental Reality (Mahāsattva) and compassion (Mahā-karuṇā) of the Vajrayāna. The Mahāsukha or the transcendental bliss of the Vajrayāna supersedes Nirvāṇa of the Mahāyāna, and is reached by the union of Prajñā or universal void (śūnyatā, female principle) with Upāya, means or benevolent works prompted by universal compassion (mahākaruṇa, male principle), and is itself the union. Thus Prajñā and Upāya become the established female and male principles in the Vajrayāna and Sahajayāna. Unlike the Puruṣa-Prakṛti dichotomy in the Sāṅkhya system, the passive phase of the mind (Bodhi-chitta), as represented by wisdom or Prajñā and void or Śūnyatā is feminine, while the dynamic phase—Upāya, means or Karuṇā, compassion—is masculine in Buddhist Tantricism. The reasons for this reversal are perhaps semantic. Just as Prajñā or wisdom and Upāya or activity are inseparable, so also are inseparable Śūnyatā and Karuṇā. The Śrī-guhyā-samāja-tantra observes: “Śūnyatā-karuṇā-bhinnaṁ bodhi-chittaṁ iti smṛtaṁ”. In the Bodhi consciousness the state of void and universal compassion merge in each other. In the Dākinīvajrapaṇjarā we read: “When an attitude is cultivated in which Śūnyata and Karuṇā are not separate, then you have the teaching of the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha”. The inseparableness is symbolised by the sexual opposites Śūnyata-Prajñā as the female principle and Karuṇā-Upāya as the male principle. The sexual dichotomy is expressed thus by Tailapāda or Tilopā who belonged to the famous Paṇḍita monastery in Chittagong in his Achintya-mahāmudrā (Translated by H. V. Guenther)—“Out of the multitude of worldly abstraction the (ineffable) body and the (ineffable) knowledge of the Victorious One have risen. Unoriginated by nature is the unfathomableness of the Mother; unobstructedly shining is the infiniteness of the Father”. The aim of the new spiritual discipline is to lift oneself to the immediacy of transcendental experience which is beyond the relativities of ego-consciousness and the limits of ego-related notions and concepts. Thus the experience is unique and integral and called differently, Mahāsukha or bliss, Prajñā or wisdom, Śūnyatā or serenity. Tilopā describes this experience as a non-dual state of Sahaja. Thus he says in one of his Dohās (P. C. Bagchi's edition): “When in the Sahaja state the chitta and the vacuity enter into an union of bliss, all the objects of sense

vanish away. When the chitta vanishes in the Sahaja the achitta also vanishes; the state of non-dual unity (samarasa) is free from both existence and non-existence. This transcendental truth (paramārtha) is free from all differentiation, there cannot be any differentiation in what is realised only within. This is the perfect and the whole" (Translated by S. B. Dasgupta). The way towards this realisation is not asceticism and renunciation but activity (Upāya) and compassion (Karuṇā). Upāya or Karuṇā is constantly experienced within the self and leads to universality. Sthiramati derives Karuṇā thus: "'Ka' is another term for bliss, but since this bliss is checked (ruṇaddhi) one speaks of Karuṇā. He who is genuinely compassionate (kāruṇika) suffers with the suffering of other beings". It is through actual sharing of the misery and suffering of fellow-man that man can destroy the fetters of both barren intellectual abstraction and self-defeating ego-centric enjoyment. The stress here is to combine, as in traditional Indian thought, wisdom with love, bliss with compassion. Thus observes the famous teacher Saraha: "Without meditation (i.e. without locking oneself up in the ivory tower of consciousness) and without going forth into the homeless state (i.e. without fleeing from the grim realities of life), he stays at home in company with the women. If one is not liberated while thoroughly enjoying the sensuous world, what then is wisdom?—thus are the words of Saraha." This is something very different from erotic mysticism or worship of woman. The entire Tāntrika symbolism in the Vajrayāna and Sahajayāna is intended towards the emancipation from the bondage of the senses and intellectual categories and realisation of the supreme wisdom and bliss through the infiniteness of charity and compassion (Kṛpā-karuṇā).

### The Goddesses of North Indian Tantrikism

Very soon the Tāntrika mode of worship was adopted by the different religious sects of Hinduism. Thus we have Tāntrikism for at least five Hindu religious sects—Śaiva Tāntrikism, Śakta Tāntrikism, Vaiṣṇava Tāntrikism, Śaura Tāntrikism and Gāṇapatya Tāntrikism, all affected equally by the Vedaṅta, as it was shaped by Śankarāchārya with his emphasis of the Absolute as eternal Truth-Consciousness-Bliss, and by the Tāntrika psycho-physical disciplines, symbolic formulae and diagrams. The whole Tāntrika procedure of mantra, yantra, maṇḍala, chakra, nyāsa,



mudrā, initiation, bhūta śuddhi and the consecration of images was gradually introduced into the various Brāhmanical cults, including the Pañcharātra Vaishṇavism and the Āgamic Śaivism. The Purāṇas, no doubt, sought to preserve the purity of the Śrauta and Smārta rites against the invasion of Tāntrika notions and practices, and universally condemned the literature of the Kapālas, Bhairavas, Yamalas and Vāmas as impious and misleading, contradictory to Dharma, and as tāmasa, pure and simple. Even the Devibhāgavata, belonging to the Smārta-Śāktas, declared that Śiva composed the scriptures of the Vāmas, Kāpālikas, Kaulas and Bhairavas with the only intention of delusion, but added: "For the deliverance of the best Brāhmaṇas, who were burnt by the curses of Dakṣa, Bhṛgu and Dadhīca, and were caused to deviate from the path of the Vedas, the Āgamas of the Śaivas, Vaishṇavas, Sauras, Śāktas and Gāṇapatyas were written as scriptures by Śankara. In some places of these works there are some portions which do go against the Vedas. By accepting these portions, the Vaidikas do not incur sin". It is apparent that Hinduism came to be divided in the post-Gupta period into three broad divisions: first, orthodox Brahmanism that leaned exclusively upon the Śrauta and Smārta rules and practices, derived from the Vedas; second, Purāṇic Hinduism that was theistic and sectarian, such as represented by the Pancharātras, Pāsupatas, Lāṅgalas, Sauras and Gāṇapatyas, who were regarded as inferior and śruti-smṛti-viruddha; and, third, Hindu Tāntrikism that was achieving popularity "even among the Brāhmaṇas and Kṣatriyas", according to the Kūrma Purāṇa, and that threw open the door of Kauladharmā even for the lowest Chaṇḍālas and Yavanas and accepted women as spiritual preceptors under certain conditions. Tāntrika dharmā, as contrasted with Purāṇic Dharma, found its most congenial home in Eastern India, especially in the Buddhist monasteries. There was nothing secret or esoteric about this Tāntrikism (Tantrayāna), for we find that the Buddhist universities of Nālandā and Vikramaśīlā, true to their catholic spirit, recognised the new cults and rituals and made arrangements for the teaching of the Tantras. The craftsmen and artists were soon busy in making images of various Tāntrika deities that were installed in the various seats of learning of the country. Nālandā in particular was the common meeting place of diverse creeds, sects and heresies with their "possible and impossible doctrines".

(I-tsing). In the university of Nālandā Hiuen-Tsang refers to the worship of the female Mahāyāna divinities, such as Tārā and Hārītī. But the images of other Mahāyāna female deities such as Prajñāpāramitā, Vasudhārā and Vagīśvari have also been found. Early elegant images of the goddess Tārā, both seated and standing, Mārīchī, Vasudhārā and Sarasvatī are to be found at Śārnāth. A remarkable figure here is also that of the four-headed Tārā decked with elaborately carved jewellery. Vajrayāna which became popular in the 7th and 8th centuries in Bengal, brought in the following new female deities at Nālandā: Aparājītā, Vajrasārādā, Vartāllī, Vadālī, Vāsālī and Varahamukhī. Heruka is there but not with his consort as in the images of Bengal and Tibet. The Tāntrika male deities at the university of Nālandā include Vajrapāṇi, Mañjuvara or Mañjuśrī, Yamāntaka, Trailokya-vijaya, Heruka, Jambhala and Mārīchī. Most of these images were sculptured in the Pāla period—some of the most exquisite specimens of Indian plastic art indicating the new vigour and vitality that Tāntrikism introduced into Indian culture. During the long reigns of Dharmapāla (770-810) and Devapāla (810-860) there was a Buddhist renaissance of art and culture in Eastern India accompanied by the establishment of great monasteries and workshops for image-making. The entire eastern world took to the worship of the Buddha and Lokanātha or Lokeśvara. Tibetan sources indicate that by the second half of the 10th century, when the Chandras were ruling in Eastern Bengal, Buddhist Tāntrikism began to thrive in Vāṅgala. The period from the close of the 10th to the 12th century saw the second Pāla artistic renaissance in Bengal, inspired by the Buddhist Tāntrikism that covered the entire Varendra and neighbourhood, extending from Gaya and Purnea to Bogra and Pabna with exquisite images of Tāntrika deities—Mañjuśrī, Khasarpana, Trailokyavijaya or Sthirachakra and Tārā, Mārīchī, Prajñāpāramitā, Mahāpratisārā or Parṇasavārī, replacing the Buddhas, Lokanāthas or Lokeśvaras and Bodhisattvas of the first Pāla renaissance. The Buddhist Tāntrika composite images characteristic of Tibet (where these are called Yab-yum), also could be found even in Bodh-Gaya, Paharpur and Murshidabad. The beginning of the Pāla Empire, when the Pāla kings called themselves Parama-saugatas as distinct from the Parama-bhāgavatas, the title of the Imperial Guptas, saw the wide vogue of the images of Buddha and Lokanātha in the 8th and 9th centuries.



The eleventh and twelfth centuries saw the conquest of the Mahāyāna by the Vajrayāna and Tantrayāna with the vogue of myriad forms of Lokanātha and Tārā and other Śaktis. The great Buddhist monasteries of Bengal, Odantapuri, Somapura and Vikramasīlā with their connections with Nepal and Tibet reflected in their teaching and Tāntrika texts and rituals the change over to the esoteric cult. The Ashtasahasrikā Prajñāpāramita of the 11th century mentions among others the following deities worshipped in different parts of Bengal: Bhagavati Tārā, in Chandradvīpa, Champita Lokanātha and Buddhadhī Tārā in Samatata, Chuṇḍa in Pattikeraka and Lokanātha in Harikela. Mahāyāna Buddhism developed, especially in Tibet, elaborate pantheons of Buddhas, Avalokiteśvaras, Amitābhas, Rudras, Bhairavas, Mahākālas and Yamas, beneficent or grim, with their attendant Śaktis, lesser divinities and saints forming constellations. Such constellations are called maṇḍalas that show a systematic design, being appropriate vehicles for some cosmic notion which the deities symbolise. The Tibetan patas (paintings), with their major deities placed in the centre of the maṇḍala and accompanied by their many satellites, śaktis, saints or disciples and the four guardians of the quarters, have often shown delicate and sensitive drawing and superb rhythm of colours, and served as objects of contemplation and worship in temples and homes. Mahāyāna iconography reached its Byzantine phase in Tibet out of the admixture of Tāntrika and Lamaist doctrines of Reality, Void, Power, Eternity or Death, and only an insight into later Buddhist and Tāntrika metaphysics and esoterism can furnish the clue to its proper understanding. The Tibetan patas often show the saint Nāgārjuna on the top with the seven nāgas round his nimbus.

### The Siddha-Natha Movement

Tāranāth mentions that the Tantras and Tāntrika being esoteric and secret were as old as the time of the Mahāyāna Buddhist patriarch Nāgārjuna. These were handed down from spiritual preceptors to disciples for nearly three centuries before these were popularised through the mystical teachings, dohās and exhibitions of super-natural powers of the Siddhas, Nāthas and Yogis. The eighty-four Siddhas flourished in Bengal, Bihar and eastern United Provinces, the stronghold of the Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna, between the 10th and 12th centuries A.D. and may be

regarded as half-Buddhist and half-Hindu and whole Yogis. Seventy-six of them beginning with Minanāth (Matsyendra or Lui-pā) and Gorakṣanāth are enumerated in the work, *Varṇaratnākara*, by the poet Jyotirīśvara of Mithila (1300-1321). South Indian traditions indicate that the Siddha-Nāthas handed down the yogic practices to the apostles of Āgamic Śaivism and Śāktism of the Tamil land. These as well as the North Indian tales of Govinda Chandra show the incorporation of the Siddha-Nātha discipline in the Śuddha-mārga orders of the whole of India. There are many Sanskrit works on yoga attributed to Gorakṣa, of which the most well-known are the *Gorakṣa-Saṁhitā* and the *Gorakṣa-Gītā*. Nātha legends of Gopīchand and Gorakṣa-Nāth are to be found in Marāṭhī, Punjābī and Oriya literature, evidence of the strength and popularity of the Nātha movement in the various parts of India.

### **The Common Ground of the Vajrayana, Mantrayana and Nathism**

Very little is known about this interesting phase of Sahaja yoga development among the Siddhas and Nāthas that in the subsequent centuries provided a foundation of both Northern Rāmānanda-Kabīr and Bengal Sahajīya and Vaishṇava religious practice. The major characteristic of the Sahajayāna that arose from the bosom of Buddhism in Eastern India is that it shifts its emphasis from Vajrayāna worship of deities and ceremonialism to easy, "spontaneous", yogic contemplation and interprets Vajra, mudrā, maṅtra, maṇḍala and other externals of religion from the viewpoint of inner yogic experience. In the previous phase of development of Buddhism the Mahāyāna merged in the Vajrayāna and Mantrayāna, the Mahāyāna Sūtras including a treatment of Tāntrika yoga practices and maṅtras. There is hardly any difference between Vajrayāna and Kālachakrayāna, (Wheel of Time) except that yogic control of breath (prāṇa vāyu) with a view to obtain release from the sense of duration or emancipation from the Wheel of Time (Kālachakra) is stressed. The postulate of the Kālachakrayāna is that time and its divisions flow through the body in the form of the prāṇa and apāna, that are subjected to the yogic regulation. The Kālachakra is the title of a Tibetan work and also the name of the Vajrayāna Bodhisattva in the yab-yum attitude, holding his Śakti, and symbolical of the turning of the



Wheel of the World-process. Thus Vajrayāna became the popular cult resting on the preference of mysticism and esoterism to the metaphysical theories of the Mahāyāna Śrāvastivāda, Yogāchāra, Sammatīya and other schools and focussing together various Tāntrika yoga methods. In the latter phase, the Vajrayāna and Nāthism had no clear line of demarcation between them. Nāthism moved away from the external means and modes of Vajrayāna and Mañtrayāna, and Natha-gurus and Vajrayānist teachers had common beliefs, procedures and even names. The teachers of the Vajrayāna, the Sahajayāna and Tāntrika Śaivism came to be closely related, and some Siddhāchāryas, like Matsyendra-nāth and Goraksa, figure in more cults than one.

### **The Syncretic Teaching of Siddha Luipada or Matsyendra-nāth**

Centuries passed until we suddenly get a dusky light thrown upon the whole syncretic movement by certain Bengali songs (charyās and dohās) of the 10th to 12th centuries discovered from Nepal by H.P. Śāstri. From these we learn that the Ādi-Siddha Lui-pā or Lui-pāda (Tibetan Na-lto-pa or Matsyañtrada), the founder of the Vajrayāna Yoginī-Kaula and Nāthism and the joint author with Atiśa Dīpaṃkara of a Buddhist Tāntrika text, Avishamāyā-Vibhaṅga is probably the same person as Matsyendra-nāth or Minanāth, the fisherman of Uddiyana. Another important work of his is Kaula-jñāna-Nirṇaya, which is exceedingly significant as throwing light upon the last phases of Buddhism in India. First, the five kulas, representing the five Dhyāni-Buddhas of the Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna become now the basis of both the Buddhist Sahajayāna and Brahmanical Tāntrika, Kaula-āchāra. In the latter Kula is defined as Śakti or Yoginī, Śiva being Akula. In the former Sahaja becomes identical with Vajra. The Vajrayāna now gives place to the Vajra-yoga. The Sahaja-siddhi now displaces older ritualism. Lui-pā says: "Of what consequences are all the processes of meditation? In spite of them you have to die in weal and woe. Take leave of all the elaborate practices of yogic bandha (control) and false hope for the deceptive, supernatural gifts, and accept the side of Śūnyatā to be your own". Mañtras, tañtras, images, dhāraṇis and conventional meditative exercises fade into insignificance with the profound emphasis of non-duality and void symbolised by the Sahaja-sundarī; the

Eternal Feminine of Buddhist Tāntrikism. Man in Buddhist Tāntrikism seeks self-illumination and control of the emotional life through the discovery of his female alter ego, his own consort or Śakti within himself. She is the counterpart of man's unconscious, the anima of Jung's psychology, inscrutable in her wisdom, beauty and terribleness. She is the essence of Void (Nairātma), Bliss (Mahāsukha) and Illumination (Mahāvidyā). At the initial stage she is carnal appetite as symbolised in Indian society by the untouchable and degraded woman, called the Chaṇḍālī, Dombī, Rajakī or Natī. But she leads the adept as he discovers his true soul image to pure Void and Bliss. Such is the transformation of the Kāmamudrā or the toy of sensual enjoyment to the Mahāmudrā or the vehicle of supreme illumination in Buddhist Tāntrikism. The intermediate state of consciousness is represented by the Jñānamudrā, the abstraction and idealisation of the Feminine. It is noteworthy that in Tibet and Nepal the Śakti of the Ādi-Buddha of the Mahāyāna is called Jñānesvarī or Digamvarā (i.e., nude). The Mahāvidyā is often called the Vajravārahī or the goddess Void with one face that of the sow. The archetypal anima, Dombī or Chaṇḍālī, full of amorous passion conceived at one stage as sensual enjoyment and in the final analysis as the inaccessible, transcendental Void is a vehicle and symbol of the attainment of pure consciousness. The features of the sow in Vajravārahī's face definitely indicate the carnal dispositions that enter completely into the image and are lived and outlived in and through it, the image ultimately standing for Nairātma or the void in which both the conscious and the unconscious are completely stilled. Second, the Haṭha-yoga comes into great prominence, Matsyendranāth being regarded as the first teacher of Haṭha-yoga after Śiva or Ādināth and even identified with Śiva himself. But the Tantra-sāra makes him the worshipper of Śiva's consort Tārā. He belonged to the second half of the 10th century and is as important as Śaṅkara and Rāmāṇanda in the history of Indian religions as the originator of a new Tāntrika culture, associated with the Yoginī-Kaula, Haṭha-yoga and Sahaja-yoga that spread in divergent forms from Kāmarūpa to the Punjab and from Tibet to Maharashtra. The syncretic tendency of all cults and the leadership of Matsyendranāth are evident from the fact that different traditions make him the founder of the Kaula school, of Haṭha-yoga and of Sahaja-siddhi and equates him with Avalokiteśvara of



Buddhism and Śiva of Hinduism. Abhinava Gupta of Kashmir paid homage to him in the 10th century in his *Tāntrāloka*, while he is still worshipped today in Western Bengal and Mymensingh. Another great Siddha, the author of *Hevajra Pañjikā-Yogarātna-mālā*, was Kṛṣṇa-pāda or Kanhu-pāda who composed this in 1199 A.D. About seventy Buddhist *Tāntrika* works and many vernacular *dohās* are ascribed to him.

### The Sahaja Religious Lyrics

The development and spread of the Buddhist Sahajīya movement and of the Siddha or Siddhāmṛta sect giving rise to the composition of the *charyās*—the earliest specimens of Bengali literature, covered a period from the second half of the 10th to the end of the 12th century. The dialect of these *charyās* is obscure and symbolical, characterised as twilight, obscure (*saṁdhyā*) or intentional (*saṁdh*) language. But some of these rise to fine lyrics, besides having a deep spiritual import. "One cannot explain the Sahaja path, since it is beyond body, speech and mind; while all āgama, scripture and recitation of words come within the sphere of the mind. The Guru offers advice in vain, since what is beyond words cannot be spoken. What he says is as inarticulate as the speech of the dumb, and what his disciple learns is as incomplete as the hearing of the deaf." Again, "the mind is like the tree, with the five senses as the branches and with hope as its many leaves and fruits. Kāṇhu-pāda says that the tree cannot grow again, if it be felled by the word of Guru as Vajra (void)." "The tree grows watered by good and evil. The wise fell it according to the direction of the Guru. Those who do not know this accept *saṁsāra* and its illusion. Cut down the elusive tree by means of the dazzling axe of the sky (void) so that it may not grow any roots and branches again". "Man creates in his own mind *saṁsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. He seeks the Incomprehensible and knows not how life, death and *saṁsāra* originate. Life and death are the same. Those who fear life and death seek enjoyment and the elixir of life. Even the yogis who freely move about in the whole universe cannot say that they are immortal. It is inscrutable, says the composer Saraha, whether life originates from action or action from life".

### Dombi or Chandali, Symbol of Void and Bliss in the Vajra and Sahaja Yoga

In those lyrics that are more esoteric we find man rising above all deities (the five Tathāgatas and associated goddesses like Lochanā and others) to complete Void (śūnyatā or nairātma). Then Dombī dances on the lotus, Chaṇḍālī is ablaze in the lotus. "Outside the city, O Dombī (woman of the untouchable Dom caste), is thy cottage; thou goest just touching the Brāhmins and Buddhist monks (without revealing yourself). For thee, I have done away with the drama of life. Thou art the Dombī and I am the Kapalī, for thee I have worn a garland of bones. The Dombī destroys the lake, and eats up the lotus stalk. I shall kill thee, Dombī, and take thy life (attain void, non-duality or mahā-sukha)", runs a verse of Kāṇhu-pāda. In the Mūlatantra, quoted by Nāropa in his Sekkoddesatika, we read "The sister's daughter, one's own daughter, one's own sister as well as one's own mother, one's wife's mother and the wife of one's maternal uncle, the wife of the father's brother and the father's sister, one's mother's sister and one's own wife of beautiful shape, (corresponding to Tārā and so on up to Dharmadhātu (vishvari) (in succession), these ten Vidyās coming from one's own gotra, the student has to give to the Guru at the time of initiation, if he wants moksha. If he does not give these Vidyas to the Guru, because he wants to preserve his family (i.e., because he is unable to appreciate that these female members of his clan are symbolical representations of what is within himself and out of ignorance concretizes the symbols on the level of the physical sex-relation), the initiation must not be performed with other female members of the householder. In the Maṇḍala the Guru may give (initiation) to Bhikshus and Sramaneras with females of the Śūdra class who have been consecrated. Starting from the north-west the succession is Śūdrī, Kshatrinī, Brāhmaṇī, Vaisyā, Dombī, Kaivartī, Natakī (actress), Rajakī (washerwoman), Charmakārī and Chaṇḍālī in the Dharmadhātu. These are called Mahāvidyas and yield enjoyment and liberation". Bhikshus and Sramaneras must make a Chaṇḍālī as their wife (in the process of initiation)—bhikṣusramaṇerānām chaṇḍālī svabhāryā kartavyā, according to the Sekkoddesatika. (Translated by H. V. Guenther). Sahaja in Tibetan means 'born together' or in dwelling and is identified with the union of the metaphysical



sexual opposities (yuganaddha), of the self and Mahāvidya, conceived in the different levels of sex relation and experience—the kāma-mudrā, purely physical, the jñāna-mudrā, physical and ideal, the mahā-mudrā purely transcendental. In Chandidās, the earliest Bengali Sahajīya poet of the 14th century, the reference to Rajakīnī and Doma woman is Vajrayānic in its origin and symbolic import—an evidence of the assimilation of the Buddhist Sahajayāna into the cult of Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa that took probably three or four centuries to develop its distinctive character.

Dombī, Chaṇḍālī, Rajakī, Śavarī, Nati, Sahaja Sundarī or Yoginī are not damsels of flesh and blood but the bliss and insight of Haṭha-yoga practice, the lotuses or chakras being "stations" in the upward march of the Bodhichitta (in the sense of sukra) or of the inner energy or Kula-kunḍalīnī Śakti through the lotus stalk of the nervous system from the region of the navel or genitals to the head. Such are Sahaja-yoga and Sahaja-nature in which, in the words of Bhusuka-pāda, "all the senses are destroyed and the mind within revels in intoxication (ulāsa) in solitude". The Supreme Reality or Void (Vajrasattva), the Sahaja-nature, the Supreme bliss (mahāsukha) and the Eternal Feminine (Mahāvidya) are here identical. The Vajrayāna Buddhist canonical work Hevajra Tantra (older than 693 A.D.) mentions Dombī, Nati, Rajakī, Brāhmanī and Chaṇḍālī as five mudras or finger-gestures, belonging to the five families (kulas) representing the five dhyāni-Buddhas—five aspects of Prajñā. This is Buddhist Tāntrikism whence is derived both the modern Hindu Tāntrika Kaulāchāra and Sahajīya. The dominating idea here in the divergence of human natures whence spring the diversity of Guru, spiritual practice and śakti for each individual. Nepalese texts indicate that Matsyendranāth was the founder of the Yoginī-kula among the various Brahmanical Kaula schools. These schools conformed to Hindu orthodoxy by accepting the varṇāśrama and at the same time introduced into Brahmanical culture Buddhist esoteric practices. The intermixture of kulas in worship is as futile and risky as the intermixture of varṇas in social life.

### The Currency of Natha Legends throughout India

Matsyendranāth, or Siddha Lui-pāda was the founder of Nāthism. The most famous of the Nātha-Siddhas, Matsyendra, Gorakhnāth and Gāhīnī, all seem to have lived in the 12th century

A.D. and had great influence in North India and Mahārāshtra. A South Indian Vira-Maheśvara classic mentions that Gorakṣa who, though not the founder of Nāthism, was the most distinguished among the Nātha gurus, lived in about the middle of the 12th century in Śrisadan, south of the Tungabhadra. Gorakṣa modified in some measure the erotic-spiritual practices of the Vajrayāna Buddhists and is considered in Nepal and Tibet as some kind of a seceder or renegade. This was because his cult showed a transition from Buddhism to Śaivism. He is often identified with Śiva himself though he is also listed among the Buddhist Siddhāchāryas. His teachings are embodied in the Sanskrit works, Gorakṣa-saṁhitā and Gorakṣa-siddhānta, and also in some estoric Buddhist texts in Tibetan. His disciples according to legends, include Queen Maynāmati, a great Śaiva Yoginī and Siddhā, still adored in Nepal, Tibet and Eastern India. She founded the sect of Kānpaṭ yogins which still thrives in Northern India, the Punjab and Rajputana. Another disciple of Gorakṣnāth was Jālandhari-pāda or Haḍi-pā. Gorakṣnāth's yogic and mystical attainments made him a legend in yogic lore for centuries. Mohan Singh points out that legends link his life and activities in various parts of India from Afghanistan in the West to Bengal and Assam in the East and from Nepal to Gujerat and Mahārāshtra and even Ceylon. Similarly his disciple Jālandhari is mentioned as a man of miracles in various traditions, Bengali, Hindi, Marathi and Tibetan. He is said to have travelled from Jālandhar to Bengal and from Nepal to Avantī. At Ujjain he became the teacher of King Bhartṛhari who became a full yogin and whose songs are still popular in Western India like those of Gopichand. In Bengal Queen Maynāmati recognised him while he was in the disguise of a scavenger and made her son King Gopichand his disciple. The Gopichand legends, according to S. B. Das Gupta, are found in Bengali, Marathi, Hindi, Oriya and Punjabi. In Jñāneśvarī of Jñānadeva (about 1290) which is a well-known Marathi commentary on the Gītā, we find several Nātha legends incorporated. The chain of masters and pupils given in this work shows that Jñānadeva was the disciple of his elder brother, Nivṛttinātha (born 1273), who was the disciple of Goyāninātha who in his turn had his initiation from Gorakṣnāth. S. K. Chatterjee considers this as indicating the second half of the 12th century as the time for Gorakṣnāth. Most of the Indo-Aryan languages mention the Nātha legends,



while the Kānpṭhaṭ yogins are found throughout Northern India, in the Punjab, Gujerat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra and in Nepal. Through the psycho-physiological discipline and metamorphosis of the body (Kāyasādhana), through Haṭhayoga and through the symbolism of the attainment of Śivahood in the body and the flesh, the Nātha cult throughout India aimed at liberation while in Saṃsāra. The Siddha's immortality after Kāya-siddhi is intended for the service of humanity. Many of the yogic practices of the Nātha Siddhas have now become a part and parcel of various yogic schools, Hindu and Sufi Muslim, including those of Nanak, Kabīr, Dādū and the Nirguṇa poet-mystics. Historically, Nāthism assimilated in its Kāya-sādhana the physiological and psychological yoga discipline of Buddhist Tāntrikism in its Vajrayāna and Sahaja-yāna phases and in its doctrine of Void or Śūnya the void of the Buddhist Sahajiyās that influenced the later Vaishṇava Sahajiyā cult. Its emphasis of the attainment of eternal Śivahood through the conquest of mortality as the spiritual *summum bonum* was the counterpart of the Mahāyāna conception of eternal Bodhisattvahood; while its promise that all beings (jīvas) are potential Śivas reflected the Buddhist doctrine of Universal Buddhahood and Universal Nirvāṇa. Nāthism, therefore, in its ideology and yoga system diffused among the masses of India the latest Buddhist Tāntrika ideology and practice that now remain hidden in various yogic sects, orthodox and heterodox, according to traditions and circumstances.

Geographically, the filiations of Nāthism are India-wide and even extend beyond the country to Tibet and Ceylon. Matsyendra-nāth is Mīna-nāth in Bengali legend and Machāṃdar in Hindi and Punjabi and is regarded as the Ādi-siddha or founder Buddhist Siddhācharya in Tibet. In Nepal he is identified with Avalokiteśvara. Abhinavagupta refers to Macchanda-vibhu in the ancient Tāntrika text, Tantrāloka. Different legends also refer to Matsyendra's birth in Chandradvīpa in Eastern Bengal and his stay in Ceylon and Nepal. Similarly Gorakhnāth is Anaṅga-vajra or Ramaṇa-vajra of Buddhist Tāntrikism and the Goraksha or Gauraksha (cowherd) in Tibet and his work is incorporated in the Bstan-hgyur. He is one of the poets of the Bengali charyā-padas. The Vāyu-tattvabhāvanopadeśa as well as the Vajrayāna work Śuddhi-vajrapradīpa may also be attributed to him. Different parts of India have claimed that he was either born or lived and

taught there. A medley of legends not only seeks to prove his divinity but places him above Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Devī. Such is India's homage to a Siddha yogī. The Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa gives a docetic account of Gorakhnāth. According to traditions Kabīr, Nānak and Pipa obtained religious instructions from him. Dādū and his disciple Rajjab mention with due reverence Gorakhnāth and the doctrine of Siddhas. This great Siddha still receives adoration equally from the Buddhists of Nepal and Tibet as from the Brahmans of Northern India, while the sect of Kanphaṭ yogis, who claim him as its founder, still flourishes in Northern India, Rajputana and the Punjab. Mohan Singh, the biographer of Gorakh, observes as the result of his study of the Nātha literature: "Gorakh is said to have been the teacher of Purāṇ, son of Sālvāhan of Sialkot; of Bhartṛhari, step brother of Vikramāditya of Ujjain; of Raja Gopichand of Ujjain, Rangpur, Dharaṇāgiri or Kānchanpur; of Queen Lunan Chamari and Queen Sundran of Assam (or Orissa); of Ranjha of Jhang; of Gugga Pir of Rājputānā; of Baba Ratan of Peshawar; of Dharmanāth, who migrated to Western India; of King Ajaipal and Venapal; of Kapil Muni and Bālanāth; of the holy prophet Muhammad; of Madar; of Luharipa; of Ismail, a Siddha; of Ratan Sain,—the hero of Padmāvatī by Jāyasi".

### Nathism and the Bhakti Movement

All this is a significant testimony of the assimilation of the Siddha-Nātha tradition to the Bhakti movement of the medieval period, of which the great exponents were Kabīr, Nānak, Chaitanya, Dādū and the Marāṭha saints. It is also significant that the Nātha literature shows that both Gorakh and Jālandharipā and Hāḍi-pā belonged to very low castes, the latter being a sweeper. Bengali, Hindi, Marathi and Tibetan traditions mention Gopichandra or Govindachandra and Kānu-pā as disciples of Jālandharī-pā. It is not clear whether this Kānu-pā is the same as the Buddhist Siddhāchārya Kāṇḍu-pa or Kṛṣṇa-pāda. S. Das Gupta considers that there were more than one person of the same name. Gopichandra's or Govindachandra's mother is Mayanāmatī who was also a celebrated yogi or Tāntrika Dākinī, i.e., demi-goddess. There are Bengali, Hindi and Tibetan traditions about her supernatural powers. In Bengal, S. Das Gupta points out, she is sometimes identified with Chandī and Kālī and worshipped in some



parts of North Bengal with animal sacrifice by priests belonging to Rajbaṁsī caste. Thus yoga, especially Kāya-sādhana, and the easy and spontaneous esoteric practice (sahaja or sahajīya), thrown open to the lowest caste and to women, have given Matsyendra, Gorakhnāth and Mayanāmatī a status higher than even that of the gods.

### The Rise and Development of the Sahajīya in Bengal

In the Nātha kāvyas of Bengali literature (c. 18th century), viz. *Mina-chetana* and *Gorakṣa-vijaya*, Matsyendra (or Lui-pāda) is called *Minanātha*, and there is a reference to another Siddha, *Jālandharī-pāda* or *Hāḍī-pā*, son of a *Ḍom* (lowest caste in Bengal). In the legends of *Hāḍī-pā* and king *Gobindachandra*, historians have identified the latter with the ruler mentioned in the *Rājendra Chola Tirumalai* inscription belonging to the dynasty founded by *Dharichandra* in *Mymensingh*, Bengal. The legend of *Gopichandra* seems to have been once current throughout India including the *Tamil* land.

The Siddha-Nātha tradition, with Lui-pāda, Kāṇhu-pāda, Matsyendra, Gorakhnāth and Gāhinī as prominent leaders, influenced the religious history of the whole of North India and *Mahārāshtra* from the 10th to 13th centuries and was handed down to *Rāmānanda*, *Kabīr*, *Jñānadeva* and the Bengal *Sahajīyas* and *Vaiṣṇavas*. Nāthism developed new theories and practices in respect of *Haṭha-yoga*, *Kāya-sādhana* and the achievement of super-natural powers and immortality and stressed in particular the parallelism between the human body, the microcosm, and the universe, the macrocosm, that it seemed to have carried over to Hinduism throughout India from the Buddhist *Sahajayāna* and *Kālachakrayāna*, as the literature of the Nātha-Siddhas, such as the *Gorakṣa-Saṁhitā*, *Śiva-Saṁhitā*, *Gheraṇḍa-Saṁhitā* and the vernacular *dohās*, indicate.

The Nātha-Siddha school deviated from the orthodox *Mahāyāna* tradition by adopting as their vehicle of expression the *apabhraṁsa* and the vernacular. Of the eighty-four Siddhas the most prolific, ancient writers were Kāṇhu, Saraha, Bhusuka and *Ḍombī*. As in the *Vajrayāna*, their emphasis was the association of *Śakti* or *Prajñā* with worship, each person having his characteristic form of *Śakti*, according to his temperament or aptitude, to aid him in his spiritual advance. This is considered an easy, pleasant way of achieving perfection and the supreme

bliss without austerity, penance or even renunciation of desires (sahaja). Śakti is sometimes called Ḍombī, a woman of the Ḍoma caste, with whom marriage is celebrated. Life (bhāva) and nirvāṇa, mind and the states of consciousness (manapavana) serve as musical instruments during the celebration. The transcendental world (anuttara) is the dowry of such marriage. The adept now spends his time in the company of Ḍombī, surrounded by the Yoginīs and can never leave her for a moment, intoxicated as he is by the Sahaja bliss. The above is a paraphrase of a song of Kāṇhu-pāda. In Sahajīya cult Ḍombī, Chaṇḍālī or Sahaja-Sundarī takes the place of Nairātma or Prajñā of the Vajrayāna. In the Hevajra Tantra, we find the mention of goddess Ḍombī along with Pukkasī and Śavarī seated on the lotus of perfect bliss (Mahā-sukha-kamala). The reference to the untouchable woman-goddess (Mahāvidya) who lives outside the habitation, viz. Ḍombī, Kaivartī, Naṭakī, Rajakī, Charmakārī and Chaṇḍālī, the outcaste woman whose touch is pollution for the Brahmanical society, is symbolic of the experience of void or Nairātmā that transcends sense-perception and is not accessible to the Brāhmaṇs and the "shaven-headed" monks. There is also similar exaltation of the position of the spiritual teacher or guru.

The Siddhas also evolved an elaborate psychological discipline of arousal of Śakti through different levels of experience focussed and stereotyped in certain "stations" within the body called "lotuses" or "wheels" in the upward movement of psychic energy (also called the bodhichitta or śukra) following the three major channels (nāḍīs) in the spinal column. The highest state of samādhi or unison with the universe, with the Buddha and with the void or sky (śūṇya or gagana vajra) can be reached only through utter ease and spontaneity that mark the complete freedom from duality, knowledge of nairātmā and perfect bliss (mahāsukha). This is the Sahaja samādhi of the Bhagavad-gītā and the Sahaja Siddhi or quintessence of happiness and void of the Hevajra Tantra in which Prajñā (female) and Upāya (male) are in unison. "The whole world is of the nature of Sahaja, for Sahaja is the quintessence (svarūpa) of all; this quintessence is Nirvāṇa to those who possess the perfectly pure chitta. In the Sahaja there is the cognition of neither Prajñā nor Upāya". Such transcendental knowledge is also called in Hindu and Buddhist Tāntrika texts Samarasa, i.e., an apprehension of perfect identity and nonduality.



This is mentioned as Samatā or Sāmya Yoga in the Bhagavad-gītā. Thus the system came to be designated as the Sahajayāna or the Easy Vehicle that is embodied not only in Buddhist and Hindu Tāntrikism but also in early Vaishṇava and Sahajīya literature of Bengal and is still very much alive in the lives and spiritual disciplines of the Bāuls, Nāthas, Kānpṇaṣṭ (Śaiva) and Sahajīyas of Bengal. Here is Indrabhūti's definition of the role of Upāya or Karuṇā as the right means of realisation of reality or bliss. "Upāya is said by the Enlightened ones to start with Karuṇā. The latter means the resolve to place all the creatures in this princely knowledge and to endow them with all the implements of bliss". Thus charity or compassion points the way to the Śūnyatā or Prajñā of the Sahaja, the whole integral ineffable experience of Reality, sensed with immediacy, is couched in the intimate language of sex union.

One of the great Tāntṛa teachers of the age was Indrabhūti (about 687-717 A.D.) author of Jñāna-siddhi and several other Tāntrika texts, who was connected with the rise of Sahajayāna. Indrabhūti was the king of Uddiyāna. The Tibetan tradition mentions that the first Siddhāchārya Lui-pā, the originator of Vajra-yoga, was a fisherman of Uddiyāna. He is mentioned in the Tibetan source as a Bengalee and composed several lyrics in Bengali. Thus Uddiyāna may be located in Bengal and is actually identified with Vajrayoginī, a village in Dacca District by B. T. Bhattachārya on the basis of its association with the worship and temple of Vajrayoginī or Chhinnamastā. Indrabhūti had a son, Padmasambhava, who was the founder of Lāmaism in Tibet. He had also a most distinguished sister Lakshmīnīkā, who in her Advayasiddhi formulated a highly novel creed of denial of asceticism, ritualism and worship and stressed meditation on the human body in which all the gods are to be found. Thus originated the Sahajīya cult in Bengal which is still a living force. Perhaps another woman, the prominent Tāntṛa authoress, Sahajayoginī Chintā, was also connected with the rise of the Sahajīya cult in Bengal.

### **Absorption of the Symbolism and Procedure of the Vajrayana by the Sahajīya**

The Siddhas, Nāthas, Bāuls, Sahajīyas and Avadhūtas of Bengal from the 10th century onwards brought about the final

consummation of marriage between Buddhism and Hinduism. By this time both the historical and metaphysical conception of the Buddha had completely faded away. The deities of the Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna Buddhism came to be regarded as belonging to a lower plane of spiritual consciousness with the emphasis of void (*śūnyatā*) and bliss (*mahāsukha*) grounded in subtle and elaborate yogic practices that were gradually articulated in the system of Haṭha-yoga. Mysticism and esoterism completely overshadowed both the ceremonialism of the Vajrayāna and the regulations of Buddhist monasticism, which came to be greatly restricted and confined only to a few monasteries in Bihar and Bengal. Due to monachism and the acceptance of the general postulates of Brahmanism, Buddhism markedly declined in influence with the absence of any strikingly original philosophical genius among its adherents and the diminution of the number of Buddhist monasteries in the country. Not only did Buddhism completely lose its leadership and morale, but the development of the more comprehensive, syncretic Tāntrika mysticism swept away the lingering remains of Buddhism as a separate Vajrayāna cult. The Buddhist void became now the goddess Nairātmā, Prajñā or Avadhūtikā, uniting herself with the Bodhi-chitta or the Vajra-sattva. The stress completely shifted towards Haṭha-yogic bliss, Kāya-sādhana and the arousal of the Female Principle within the body (Jung's *Animā*) that was called differently in different schools of worship—Prajñā, Nairātmā or Nairāmaṇī in the Buddhist Sahajayāna, Dombī, Chāṇḍālī or Śavari in Nāthism and Kula-kuṇḍalīni-śakti in Hindu Tāntrikism. The females mentioned are not in the flesh, but *Añimas* or Eternal Feminines, *jñāna-mudras*. The Sahaja-siddhi and Nāthism, putting emphasis on yoga practice and re-interpreting from the viewpoint of mystical insight and power the symbolism of the Vajrayāna, became popular cults throughout Northern India spreading from their places of origin—Bengal and Assam. In Northern India Kabīr, Dādū, Nānak, Ravidās and other mystics spoke of the Sahaja in the same sense as the Buddhist Sahajīyas. For Kabīr, Sahaja is the state of void or sky (*gagana*) and is called *Śuni-sahaja* and associated with profound bliss (*sukha*, *mahāsukha*). Similarly with Dādū: "Bereft of duality is Sahaja, there joy and sorrow become one; that Sahaja neither dies nor lives,—it is the state of complete Nirvāṇa . . . . . Hold your mind in the Sahaja vacuity amidst all duality, and by attaining



the final state of arrest drink nectar, and there is no fear of *kāla* (time or death)." *Suṇḍardās* extols the *Sahaja* path thus: "That perfectly pure *Sahaja* is in everything, and with that *Sahaja* all religious mystics mingle together. Śankara began his *Sādhana* in this *Sahaja* (and in the *Sahaja* way)—Śukadeva, Śanaka and others also followed this *Sahaja* way. Devotees, like *Sojā*, *Pipā*, *Senā* and *Dhanā*, all have drunk of this *Sahaja*-bliss in the natural way. *Raidās* was also a *Sādhaka* of *Sahaja* and *Guru Dādū* also realised infinite bliss in this *Sahaja* path". The medieval mystics and Santa-poets of Northern India, like the *Bāuls*, *Sahajīyas* and *Avadhūtas* of Bengal, inherited the tradition of Buddhist *Sahaja Samādhi*, though now and then the theistic strain was too strong, when the incomprehensible nature of *Sahaja* was identified with the Lord (*Svāmī*), *Rāma* or *Krishna*.

The *Sahaja* way became, therefore, a common legacy of the mystical schools and sects of Northern India. Man has to achieve ease and spontaneity in spiritual as well as earthly life. He has to enjoy the objects of the senses with perfect purity and freedom, without effort and repression, realising these as *Sahaja* in nature. In the ocean of existence, *Sahaja* is like the mast on the drifting ship to which the mind must return after wandering hither and thither. "The crow", says *Dādū*, "sat on the mast and took its journey in the ocean; hovered round and round and got tired and then sat still on the mast of the ship". This is reminiscent of *Saraha's* verse: "He who does not take delight in the purity of the sensuous world but is only concerned with the Void, is like a pilot-crow which must return to the boat, however high up into the sky it may fly". For theistic cults the common background of *Tāntrika* yoga, symbolism and ritual equally transformed ordinary sense-enjoyment to a higher and profounder spiritual satisfaction.

The adoption of *Tāntrika* worship, discipline and symbology of Śaktis, mantrams, maṇḍalas, mudrās and dharaṇīs, no doubt, obliterated the differences between *Vajrayāna* Buddhism and Hindu forms of Śaiva and Śākta worship. In spite of the fact that the most prominent *Nāthas*, *Matsyendranāth*, *Gorakhnāth* and *Jālandharī*, are included in the class of Buddhist *Siddhāchāryas*, *Nāthism* is traditionally ascribed to *Ādināth*, *Bholānāth*, the Buddha or Śiva as the founder. Thus the *Nāthas* were greatly instrumental in propagating esoteric Śaivism, assimilating many

elements of Haṭha-yoga and worship from Buddhism and Tāntricism as well as the doctrines of the Ājīvikas and the Avadhūtas.

The eclipse of Buddhism from India or its survival in such popular, degenerate forms, such as the cult of Dharma-Thākur in Bengal, was facilitated by the assimilation, through the instrumentality of Buddhist Siddhāchāryas and Nātha-yogis, of Buddhist Vajrayāna and Sahajayāna practices and methods into orthodox or heterodox Hinduism. The Buddhist nāḍis (nerve-channels,) viz. lalanā, rasanā and avadhūti became idā, piṅgalā and suṣumnā or the Gangā (idā) and the Jamunā (piṅgalā) of the Hindu yogis. The sun (idā) and the moon (piṅgalā), the lotus of a thousand petals in the Sahasrāra (cerebrum), the six chakras, the vindu (point) and the nāda (sound), mystical formulae, diagrams, gestures and postures and all the rest, together with the Śaktis, became the common possession of the Hindu Haṭha-yogis, whether non-sectarian Bāuls or Vaishṇava Sahajīyas or sectarian Śaivas and Śāktas of Bengal.

### Fusion of Popular Buddhism and Saivism

Saivism thereby especially obtained a great lead from every side. The earlier kings of the Pāla dynasty of Bengal were Mahāyāna Buddhists. But the worship of Śiva began to gain a footing in the Buddhist sanctuaries in the regime of the Sena Kings who encouraged Purāṇic Hinduism. Temples were built to Śiva, where his image wore the aspect of the Buddha Lokeśvara or Lokanāth. This is pointed out by Benoy Kumar Sarkar who shows how Buddhism shed its distinctive characteristics and came to be known as the worship of Dharma, while Dharma's Gājan (festival) and Śiva's Gājan became identical. The fusion of Buddhism and Hinduism was represented by a folk-movement led by Rāmāi Pandit, who belonged to the Dom caste and is placed between the 11th and 13th century. In his Āgama Purāṇa he preached the worship of Dharma, the spotless, (nirañjana, śūnya nirañjana) in the rural areas and introduced Dharma's Gājans or popular festivals still observed in Western and Northern Bengal. Rāmāi's songs are still sung in rural areas: "Who is there in these three worlds that can know Thee, who art the Buddha, the Protector of the meek and the poor? Travelling over the whole world, no one has ever found, O Formless Lord, thy beginning or thy end, thy hands or feet. Thou hast neither form nor figure, and thou art



above all attributes." The traditional home of the Dharma cult is the village, Hākanda, on the now-extinct river, Champā in Rāḍhā. The Dharma worship integrates together several trends of popular belief and worship in vogue in Eastern India, viz., Buddhism of Sahajiya school, the cults of the Sun, Hanumān and Ullūka (Owl) and Śaiva-Nāthism leavened with a Mahāyānic synoptic conception of the Supreme Primordial deity (Jagannātha Sandesh) who out of his compassion (*karuṇā*) incarnates himself for the emancipation of the three worlds (Trailokya-uddhāra). The folk-origin of the Dharma cult is abundantly indicated by the five gate-keepers (*koṭālas*) in the five directions of the Dharma temple—Hanūmān, Sun, Garuḍa and Owl. Four later Paṇḍitas or exponents are mentioned along with the founder Ramāi, viz., Setāi, Nilāi, Kāṃsāi and Goṃsāi, who all contributed to shape this cult and its mythology. There is hardly any instance in India of a complete folk cult, theology and ritual (*vāramasi*) fashioned by her lowest castes with the indoctrination of the metaphysical notions and beliefs of both Brāhmanism and Buddhism, which stood its ground for so many centuries. Dharma Thākur to the folk-mind of Bengal is sometimes the Sun-God (Āditya), sometimes Kṛṣṇa, sometimes Rāma, sometimes Śivā, and always the Void (Śūnya) the Supreme God (Devādideva), the Saviour from bondage and suffering. The Dharma cult had its scripture, the Śūnya-Purāṇa or Hākanda-Purāṇa and its ritualistic text, Dharma-pūjā-vidhāna, as well as its propaganda Pāñchālīs and Kāvya, the great bulk of which was composed in the 17th and the 18th centuries. It thrived in Bengal, especially in the south-west for at least seven centuries. The greatest Dharma poet, Ghanarama Chakravarti, flourished at the court of Kīrtichandra of Burdwan in the early 18th century, and the last Sahadeva Chakravarti wrote the "Anil Purāṇa" in the mid-eighteenth century. Buddha's, Dharma's or Dharma Thākur's images are found installed in Bengal villages without hands or feet—the form is that of an oval stone, resembling a tortoise perhaps connected with the symbol of the stūpa, with embedded dots standing for the Triple Jewels.

This Omniform is found in Birbhūm, Bankura and Malda. The Buddha or Dharma used to be worshipped in Bengal in the form of the shell of the tortoise. On the tortoise shell inscriptions have been found mentioning the worship of Jina (Buddha) or Vāsudeva (Kūrma-Vishṇu-Buddha Avatāra). The Buddha or

Dharma is placed under a tree or low earthen mound at the outskirts of the village, where he is worshipped by a priest belonging to the lower castes. In Mayūrbhanj, Orissa, Dharma is sometimes male (Buddha), sometimes female embodying the Triple jewels. The Vaiśākhi pūrṇimā day, which is the anniversary of the Enlightenment and Parinirvāṇa of the Buddha, is a day of great pilgrimage and festival (Gājan) of Dharma Thākur among these followers of a decadent, lingering Buddhism who sacrifice before him pigs, pigeons, ducks and goats, never offered to Śiva—reminders of the now-forgotten, primitive ritual.

### **The Dharma-maṅgala, the National Epic of Bengal**

Amidst general opposition or persecution during or after the Sena rule in Bengal, derelict Buddhism has taken a disguised form or has been assimilated to the popular Śiva-worship, Dharma being worshipped as Siva without the general body of the people knowing about it. The literature of this now-forgotten Buddhism, the Dharma-Maṅgala or the Āgama Purāṇa which definitely mentions that Dharma Thākur does not uphold the Vedas and also receives great veneration in Ceylon, obviously referring to the Buddha, still lives in hymns and ballads that are today sung by the villagers and repeated from mouth to mouth in the folk-festivals binding together the high-born and the low-born. It is noteworthy that in this folk-literature the courage and adventure of men and women of the lowest caste, such as Kālu Ḍom and Lakhāi Ḍomni have received great laudation. The floating legends and ballads, that later on developed and were consolidated into the Dharma-maṅgala kāvya, may be considered as the national epic of Bengal, having its origin in the spacious times of the Pāla Empire. Man in the Dharma-maṅgala gets better of the deity by his dignity and moral strength even in suffering; woman also bravely fights battles on horse-back, clad in armour. Rāḍhā is the land of heroes and heroines. The entire epic sings of the glory of man and woman, and divinity pales into insignificance. The epic belongs to the people embodying their faiths, superstitions and ideals and the stern realities of their common life. Thus did Buddhism, which was the predominant religion of Bengal in the Pāla period, enshrine itself in the national epic which extols the worship of Dharma or Dhamma of the Buddhist Trinity as well as inculcates the supreme lesson of Buddhism—the worship of Man the



Real, superior to both destiny and divinity. The oppression exercised by Brāhmanism on the lower orders was such that the Pathan conquest of Bengal was represented in Rāmāi Pundit's Āgama Purāṇa as the intervention of Dharma-Thakur as the Yavana God, Khoda, carrying guns and attended by all the Hindu gods wearing trousers and ruthlessly destroying the temples!

### Buddhism in Disguise

The masses of Bengal know the Buddha as the Ādya or the Primeval, as the Dharma-Thākura or the non-descript healer of barrenness and other diseases, as Nirañjana or the Undifferentiated One, even as Śiva, who assimilates all the elements of Buddha's greatness, and in folk-songs becomes their philosopher, friend and guide in respect of agriculture, health and general well-being. The passage of centuries has erased any differences in the forms of the Buddha and Śiva, and if in Bodh Gayā Viṣṇu has been installed in Aśoka's temple that Hiuen Tsang found almost abandoned in 634 A.D. and the Hindu monks have replaced the Śramaṇas, in many Hindu temples of Bengal and Orissa the image of Lokanāth, Maitreya or Avalokiteśvara are today worshipped as Śiva. The metaphysical similarity between the Dhyāni Buddha of the Vajrayāna and Śiva, and between Tārā or Prajñāpāramitā and Chaṇḍī, Bhagavati or Devī ruled out iconographic differences. But the most significant fusion is the adoption of the Buddhist Vajra or Nīla Tārā, Vāgīśvari, Mārīchi and Nīla-sarasvatī, albeit in somewhat different forms, into the Hindu pantheon as the Supreme Mother Chaṇḍī, Kālī, Tārā or Mahāvīdyā. Chaṇḍī-dāsa's Vāṣuḍhī Devī is perhaps Vāgīśvari; Shashtī or Sitalā is Hārītī; and Manasā is Taritā. In Krishnānanda's Tantrasāra (15th-16th century), the most comprehensive Tantra digest of Bengal, many gods and goddesses, obviously Buddhist, appear who are no longer worshipped.

It was in a social climate of religious fusion and synthesis that a Buddhist temple or monastery was converted into the celebrated temple of Jagannātha at Pūri, with Jagannātha, Subhadrā and Balarāma replacing the three Buddhist deities or Jewels and their annual car procession corresponding to the Buddhist processions in honour of the sacred images. Fa-Hien (399-414 A.D.) actually saw in Khotān and Pātaliputra the Buddha image placed in the middle of a four-wheeled car with two Bodhisattvas attending on

him and carried in procession. Hiuen Tsang found that Oḍra was the stronghold of Buddhism, with more than 100 monasteries and thousands of Mahāyānist monks, while in Kaliṅga and Koṅgoda Buddhism was languishing. The rival faiths sometimes struggled with, but often merged in one another. In this temple it was the Triratna symbols, at one time popular throughout India, that were used for worship by the Buddhist Śavaras. The same symbols are found inscribed on a stone discovered at Bhuvanesvara, as Mahtab points out in his *History of Orissa*. Later on the triple Buddhist symbols were replaced by Viṣṇu (Buddha), Subhadrā (Dharma) and Balabhadra (Saṅgha). In a medieval Oriya poem of Magunia Das on the image of Jagannātha called Dāru Brahman, it is stated: "The god carved out of wood, Jagannātha, is seated on the throne in the form of the Buddha without hands, feet or toes. I am the Buddha incarnate, I shall protect the people of the Kali era". This was written probably on the eve of the replacement of the decaying Buddhism by Hinduism as the reference to non-active (sthānu), formless (dāru), all-pervasive Brahman (Jagannātha) implies. The worship of Jagannātha by priests who trace their descent from the low-caste Śavaras and the ritual abolition of caste in the distribution of mahā-prasāda in the temple are also evidently Buddhist survivals.

### **The Loss of Separate Existence of Buddhism**

The yoga system of the mystic Nātha-Siddhas, who assimilated the Mādhyamic doctrine of the Void (Śūnya) but gave in their teaching to the masses a new positive significance to it as Reality, the system of the Vedānta of Gauḍapāda and his followers, who utilized the subtle arguments of the Laṅkāvatāra-Sūtra for a positive conception of Ātman-Brahman, and above all the Tāntrika yoga, sexual symbolism and ritual that, though introduced by Vajrayāna Buddhism, became the common meeting-place of all cults in India, concentrating with utter ease and freedom towards a transcendental state of Void and spontaneous bliss (Sahaja), represent a profound synthesis worked out in post-Gupta India. This has become since then the common spiritual heritage of India. The disappearance of Buddhism from India was principally due to the free borrowing and assimilation of metaphysical notions, spiritual exercises and rituals between the Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna schools of Buddhism and Śaivism and Śāktism. Elliot observes "The line dividing



Buddhist laymen from ordinary Hindus became less and less marked. Distinctive teaching was found only in the monasteries which became poorly recruited. Even in the monasteries the doctrine taught bore a closer resemblance to Hinduism than the preaching of Gotama, and it is the absence of the protestant spirit, this pliant adaptability to the ideas of each age, which caused Indian Buddhism to lose its individuality and separate existence." The Buddhist Saṃvarodaya-Tāntra expressly recommended the Līṅga cult and the worship of Śaiva gods. The Buddhist Sādhanaś included the meditation and worship of Gaṇapati or Gaṇeśa. The Buddha himself was first included in Bengal among the ten incarnations of Viṣṇu by the author of the Gīta-govinda, Jayadeva.

### Flexibility and Universality in Religion

The Gupta and the post-Gupta age emphasised not so much the religious creed as religious experimentation and a common moral ideal of service to fellowmen rooted in the notion of the immanence of the deity. Freedom and flexibility which have always characterised the methods of Brahmanism were at no time more prominent than in the age for which the Bhagavad-gītā set forth the ideal in the following words: "I (the Supreme Lord) will never disappoint but fulfil the longings of anybody who seek me as his Supreme Object, full of faith, whatever may be his mode of worship. For all worship reaches Me." The poet Kālidāsa elegantly expresses in the Raghuvamśa the same synthesis and catholicism of the Gītā thus: "The ways which lead to the Supreme goal although they are many and differently laid down in the scriptures, all meet in Him alone just as the various rivers flow into the ocean." India never asks the religious aspirant, "Do you follow the true creed? Have you the right belief?" She rather tarries after the enquiry, "Have you the unswerving devotion, the unflagging zeal and the certitude about the impermanence of life?" The entire religious history of India with her innumerable religious creeds and philosophical sects is summed up in the above attitude.

Like Mahāyāna Buddhism, Tāntrikism, due to its syncretic tendency and universality, spread beyond the boundaries of India. Winternitz observes: "From the 8th century onwards Tāntrikism proceeded from the territory of Bengal and Assam in a veritable

triumph to Tibet and China where it mingled with native cults. Vajrabodhi and Amoghavajra went to China in about 720 A.D., and contributed largely towards the propagation of the *Tāntras*. In Japan where only the *Mantrayāna*, and not the *Vajrayāna*, obtained a footing, the *Shin-gon* sect takes its stand upon the *Tāntras*". In this country there is a feminine form of *Kwa-Non* (Chinese Buddhist deity introduced into Japan at the end of 6th century A.D.) called *Junter Kwa-Non* (Sanskrit *Kuṇṭi*). She is called *Koṭī-Srī* or *Sapta-Koṭī-Buddhamātri-Kuntidevī*, mother of seven thousand Buddhas. The Japanese people derive her from *Durgā* or *Hārīti*, and She is both grim and benign in her aspects like the Indian *Devī*. Towards the end of the 8th century *Tāntrikism* spread to Java where a temple of *Tārā* was built by the *Śailendra* Emperor under the inspiration of his preceptor, *Kumāraghoshā* of Bengal. In the beginning of the 9th century during the reign of *Jayavarman II*, the four *Tāntras*—the *Nayottara*, *Śīrasāheda*, *Vinasikha* and *Sammoha* were taken to Cambodia from North India. It was from Bengal that *Tāntrikism* spread to Tibet, Nepal, Burma and Indonesia, especially under the regime of the Buddhist *Pāla* monarchs. As late as the 15th century one of the inscriptions (1442 A. D.), collected by *Forchhammer* from *Pagan*, *Pinya* and *Ava* in Upper Burma, mentions the gift of 295 texts, along with monastery, lands and slaves, to the Buddhist order by a Governor and his wife. These include not only texts derived from Sanskrit sources in logic, *alambkāra*, astrology, astronomy and war but also *Vajrayāna* and *Siddha-nātha* texts viz. *Mṛtyuvañchana*, *Mahākālachālikā* and *Mahākālachakṭikā*. The first text belongs to the school of *Matsyendranāth*, the founder of *Yogini-Kaula* and *Nāthism*. The last two belong to the Buddhist *Tāntrika Kālachakra* tradition that was in much popular vogue in Bengal, Nepal and Tibet. *Tārānāth's* remark in this connection is apposite: "Although in the countries of the *kōki* realm *Vinaya*, *Abhidharma* and *Mahāyāna* works are well known, the secret mantras had become very rare with the exception of *Kālachakra*, the three *Kāla* sections and a few others". From the 8th to the 15th centuries the Buddhist as well as Brahmanical *Tāntrika* religion and art of Bengal seemed to have greatly influenced Tibet and South-East Asia, communication being established with Tibet across the *Himālayan* passes through *Sikkim* and the *Chumbi Valley* and with Further India and Indonesia by regular sea voyage



from Tāmralipti to Suvarṇadvīpa and Java through Katāha and also by a much frequented land route from Puṇḍravardhana and Kāmarūpa to Upper Burma, Tonkin and Annam. The absolute monism, the emphasis on yogic discipline of the body and mind and regulation and transmutation of the life of the senses, the freedom from ritualism, sacerdotalism and caste and the social egalitarian trend account for the popularity of Tāntrikism and its spread in countries outside India in the wake of Buddhism in its later forms.

PART VII  
CONFLICT AND RE-SYNTHESIS

CHAPTER XXVI

INDIA AND ISLAM: THE PHASE OF CONFLICT

**Indo-Arab Trade and Conflict on the Arabian Sea-coast**

The first contacts between India and Islam were peaceful and friendly in the Indian littoral. The rise of the Arabs saw a considerable expansion of trade between India, Arabia and Europe. The route which became more important than the ancient Indo-Levantine highway across the Euphrates valley lay from the Arabian sea-coast to Yemen and Hadramawt and thence along the Red Sea coast to Syria. The most important merchandise which went to Hijaz was Indian muslin. The Arabic words *shās* (muslin), *shit* (calico), and *futah* (striped cloth) testify to the importance of the Indian cloth trade. Swords imported from India lent might to the Saracenic armies. Spices, drugs and precious stones were also important Indian exports to Arabia. From the seventh century onward the Persian and Arab, like the Greek traders, were settling on the Malabar and Kathiawad coasts and in the island of Ceylon. Such settlements were flourishing under the protection of Hindu kings and chiefs; but the rise of Islam and the expansion of the Saracenic Empire, from the frontiers of China in the East to Spain in the West, within a century after Muhammad's flight from Mecca to Medina, changed the entire Asian political situation. The Arabs after their conquest of Syria and Persia in 670 A.D. obtained control over the Persian Gulf, secured the legacy of the Persian maritime trade and explored the Arabian Sea with a view to conquer the prosperous ports of the Gulf of Cambay and the Arabian Sea, thereby anticipating the Portuguese by eight centuries and a half. The first Arab fleet landed at Thana near Bombay in 637 A.D. This was succeeded by other expeditions to Broach, Dabul and Kelāt.

The Caliph Omar, however, suspended armed interference by means of the navy in the interest of trade and commerce that



continued to flourish peacefully between the Caliphate and India, Ceylon, the Indian Archipelago and China for several decades more. In 712 A.D. the king of Ceylon sent as a present to al-Hajjaj, the Governor of Iraq, a few Mohammedan girls born in that country who were, however, seized by the pirates of Cutch. Protest was made to Dabir who could not restore the girls. Upon this al-Hajjaj sent an expedition under Muhammad ibn-Kasim, supported by his fleet in 712 A.D. His initial success was due to the assistance of treacherous Buddhist priests and chiefs. Very shortly Kāsīm overran Sind, Kathiawad, Multan, Broach and parts of Gujerat and Malwa. Kāsīm encouraged freedom of worship among the Hindus and left the administration entirely in their hands. Al-Astakhri, who visited India in the 10th century, observes that "the Hindus and Muslims were tending towards a harmony of manners and customs". The religious freedom granted by Kāsīm to the Hindus, indeed, followed the traditions of the Hindu principalities on the littoral. According to Masudi, who visited India in the 10th century, Islam was respected and protected by the Hindu kings of Cambay and Gujerat. "The Raja of Cambay was interested in religious discourses and exchanged ideas with Muslims and other people who might have visited the kingdom".

The next Governors of Sind, however, made systematic efforts to penetrate into Gujerat and Malwa. In 738 A.D. a decisive battle was fought at Navasari in which Pulikesena Chālukya routed the invaders. Later on, a further invasion of Malwa penetrating as far as Ujjain was overcome by Nāgabhaṭa, the Gurjara king. Thus did India overcome the forces of the Caliphate that no power could quell in Western and Central Asia, Africa or Spain in spite of the advantages that the Arabs gained from a formidable fleet in the Arabian Sea and a large base of operations in Sind. Nāgabhaṭa's victory over "the mighty host of the Mlechhas, those foes of godly deeds" in the words of the poet Bālāditya, gave peace to India for over two centuries and a half until the invasion of Mahmud of Ghazni.

### **The Struggle of Empires on the Indian Border-land**

Long years of peace made people forget the dangers of foreign aggression. It now actually came not by sea but by land across the north-western frontier. Over and over again in Indian

history, the existence of a powerful kingdom that occupied Iran and Gandhara spelled danger to India. The Persian Empire, the Kushān Empire, the Hun Empire and the Ghaznavid Empire, each of which commanded the valley of Kabul, had no difficulty in sweeping across the plains of the Punjab and even penetrating into the Ganges-Jamuna Doab. The empire of the Huns extended up to Gandhara and the Punjab in the first half of the 6th century A.D. Between 563 and 567 A.D. Gandhara came into the hands of the Turks. In 630 A.D. the Chinese overcame the Turks and took possession of Turfan and Kucha on the northern caravan route to China and in 659 A.D., extended their empire up to Kapisa. At this time the arms of the Muslim Caliphate advanced from Arabia eastwards. About the middle of the 7th century Southern Afghanistan and Makran came into the hands of the Arabs. After the conquest of Iraq and Mesopotamia, the Arabs inflicted defeat on the Persians finally at Nehawand (642 A.D.), on which the last Sassanian king of Persia, Yezdigird III fled to Balkh and appealed for help to the Emperor of China but was murdered at Merv (651 A.D.). In the illustrious reign of the Emperor Tai Tsung of China (627-649 A.D.), the Eastern and Western Turks were defeated, and the Chinese regained influence on the Indian borderland until the beginning of the 8th century. The northern route from China to India was resumed but the southern route through Kashgar was blocked by the Tibetans who became a formidable power in the 8th century, while the route over the Hindukush was closed by the advancing Arabs. Gradually the Turks and the Arabs gained mastery in Central Asia, the Uighur Turks carving out an empire extending from Ili to Tibet and the Yellow River (745 A.D.) and the Arabs seizing Turkestan from China (751 A.D.). At the time of Harun Al-Rashid (785-809 A.D.) Kabul and Sanhar, were annexed to the Caliphate Empire (787 A.D.). The valley of the Helmund came finally into Arab hands in 870 A.D. Towards the end of the 9th century the Caliphate lost its eastern provinces first to the Saffarids (870-903 A.D.) and then to the Samanids of Transoxiana who ruled from the borders of India to Baghdad and from the great desert to the Persian Gulf. Under the Samanids, Bokhara became the intellectual centre of Islam. The Samanid Empire disintegrated and out of its ruins emerged the kingdoms of Ilak khans (999 A.D.) of Turkestan, who ruled (932-1165 A.D.) from Bokhara and of the Ghaznavids (962-1186



A.D.) founded by Alptigin formerly a slave and commander-in-chief of the Samanids in Khorasan—who ruled from Ghazni. About this time the Turki Shahiya dynasty of Kabul was supplanted by the Hindu Shahiya dynasty of Udbhāṇḍapura that flourished from the close of the 9th century A.D. to 1022 A.D. A part of the territory of Kabul came, however, into the hands of Alptigin, who died in 963 A.D. His son-in-law Sabuktigin, who was a Turaksha slave and seized power in 977 A.D., was a valiant soldier and leader. Sabuktigin's encroachment on Indian borderland was forestalled by the advance of Jaipal of Udbhāṇḍapura towards Ghazni. But Jaipal came across a snow-storm and had to conclude a humiliating peace with Sabuktigin who extended his territory as far east as Peshawar. A new strong military state bent on "holy wars" developed under Sabuktigin and his son Mahmud of Ghazni embracing Khorasan, Afghanistan and parts of Central Asia and had now easy access to the strategic area of India's vulnerable frontier.

### **National Resistance against the Kingdom of Ghazni**

The imperial Pratihāra (Parihāra) dynasty of Kanauj, that extended its supremacy in the north-west as far as Pehoa in the Punjab, in the south up to the Vindhya and in the east as far as Northern Bengal, prevented foreign attack either from Sind and Multan or from Afghanistan for some decades. But about the beginning of the 11th century with the death of Mahendra Pāl I the Pratihāra empire became enfeebled, enabling Mahmud of Ghazni to begin his series of inroads aided by large numbers of foreign hordes who were converted to Islam. The Arab occupation of Sind offered a special military advantage to Mahmud. With the downfall of the Pratihāra Empire which in its heyday could resist successfully the Arab invaders, the defence of the north-west now depended upon the prowess of Jaipal of Shahiya Rajput dynasty of Udbhāṇḍapura, Kashmir. The beginning of the 11th century saw Northern, Western and Central India occupied by the great Rajput powers, who, indeed, fought freedom's battle with remarkable heroism and sacrifice continuously for about four centuries since the first Muslim raids. The Punjab and Kashmir were held by Jaipāl with his capital at Bhatindā. Ajmer and Delhi were held by Chauhān Rajputs under Prithvirāj. Kanauj, the imperial city of the Pratihāras, was held by the

Gahadavāla Rajputs who had displaced them. Their king was Jai Chandra, who lived at Benares. Malwa was held by the Pawar or Paramar Rajputs. Their king Bhoja (1018-1060 A.D.) once had a fight with Mahmud of Ghazni. Gujerat was held by the Solanki or Chalukya Rajput clan. The Chandela Rajputs occupied Bundelkhand and the Kalachuris held the Central Provinces. The Pālas, who were also sometimes considered Rajputs, held Bengal. Jaipāl formed a confederacy of a number of Rajput princes in 991 A.D. for offering resistance to Sabuktigin [who, however, signally defeated the Rajputs and captured Peshawar. Six years later Sabuktigin was succeeded by his son Mahmud who, with his trained cavalry of Central Asia, defeated the second confederacy of Rajput princes under Jaipāl in 1001 A.D. The occupation of Peshawar had sealed the fate of the Punjab which was transformed into a base for further devastating expeditions. When the Turkish hordes like the Huns in the previous age menaced Western India in the 11th and 12th centuries, national resistance was focussed by the revival of the Vikramāditya tradition. Several kings assumed the title of Vikramāditya. Among them were the kings of Chedi, Malwa and Kalyān. National opposition was also organised against Mahmud of Ghazni. King Bhoja of Pratihāra dynasty, who ascended the throne in 999 A.D. and who had a strong force of cavalry, tried his might with Mahmud. As Mahmud plundered the temple of Somanāth, the Chālukya king of Gujerat failed to bar his route to Somanāth. But Bhoja quickly marched into Kathiawad, and defeated Mahmud's army so that he had to beat a hasty retreat across the deserts of Rajputana, "many animals and a large number of men of the Muslim army perishing in the way". In Northern India after Jaipāl's death, his son Ānandapāla organised the third confederacy of the kings of Ujjain, Gwalior, Kalinga, Kanauj, Delhi and Ajmer for resisting Mahmud on the plains of Peshawar. Rich households sold off jewels to support the expedition and poor households wove clothes for the army but the superiority of Turkish cavalry and new tactics gained the victory for Mahmud which was followed by terrible carnage and plunder of the temple of Kangra. Mahmud carried off to Ghazni "jewels and unbored pearls and rubies shining like sparks or like wine congealed with ice, emeralds like fresh springs of myrtle and diamonds in size and weight like pomegranates".



### **Destruction of Ancient Cities, Temples and Monasteries**

In the next expedition Mahmud sacked Thāneśwar, Muthra and the imperial city of Kanauj. From Muthra where he razed to the ground the superb temple, "the beauty and decoration of which", according to Utbi, "the pens of all writers and the pencils of all painters would be powerless to delineate", he took away five golden idols, five yards high with eyes of jewels. Thus were devastated several ancient cities of the Punjab, Sind and the Ganges Valley with their magnificent temples and art treasures that sometimes went back to more than a thousand years. Mahmud had no political ambitions. Apart from his conquest of the Punjab that was necessary for providing the base of operations of his quick-marching expeditionary army, his motives were plunder and destruction of temples of the idolators. The riches plundered from India enabled Mahmud to build a great mosque, aqueducts and libraries in his own capital, Ghazni. Al-Beruni, who was Mahmud's chronicler, thus describes the general consequences of Mahmud's invasions: "Mahmud utterly ruined the prosperity of the country and performed those wonderful exploits by which the Hindus became like atoms of dust scattered in all directions and like a tale of old in the mouths of the people. Their scattered remains cherish, of course, the most inveterate aversion towards all Muslims. This is the reason too why Hindu sciences have retired far away from parts of the country conquered by us and have fled to places, which our hand cannot yet reach, to Kashmir, Benares and other places".

After the death of Mahmud in 1030 A.D., India, if we leave aside the Punjab, had a respite from Muslim invasions for a period of 160 years. Meanwhile the empire of Ghazni broke into pieces as the result of the rise of the Afghans of Ghor. Muhammad Ghorī displaced the Sultans of Ghazni who took refuge in the Punjab at Lahore and conquered Sind and the Punjab in 1192 A.D. He invaded India in 1191 A.D. Jai Chandra, King of Kanauj, was the most important monarch of India at the time. He was powerful and valorous but had enmity with Prithvirāj, the Chauhan king of Ajmer and Delhi. The strained relations were said to have been embittered by Prithvirāj carrying away his daughter, Padmāvatī, from the Svayamvara Sabhā at Kanauj, the princess having thrown her garland round the neck of the golden statue of the prince

placed at the threshold by Jai Chandra as his door-keeper. When Hindustan was preparing for contest with Muhammad Ghorī under the leadership of Prithvirāj who enlisted the support of his fellow Rajput princes, Jai Chandra kept aloof. On the historic battle-field of Kurukshetra, Padmāvatī, who was by her husband's side, inspired him in the true martial tradition of a Rajput princess: "O Sun of the Chauhans, none has drunk so deeply both of glory and of pleasure as thou. Life is like an old garment; what matters if we throw it off? To die well is life immortal". Prithvirāj was defeated and put to death and his queen immolated herself in the funeral pyre. Soon different parts of Northern India were conquered by Qutubuddin Aibak, Ghorī's most faithful officer. In 1194 A.D. he defeated and slew Jai Chandra and conquered Kanauj. In 1197 A.D., Bakhtiar Khilji with a small force reduced Bihar. It was he who wantonly destroyed the University of Nālanda and its magnificent library as well as valuable shrines and images. The Muslims thought that the monastery was a fortress. "It was discovered that the whole of the fortress and city was a college, and in the Hindi tongue they call a college Bihar (Vihara)". Most of the "shaven-headed Brahmans", who were really Buddhist teachers and scholars, were put to death. A few fled to Tibet. In 1199 A.D. Bakhtiar conquered Bengal. Lakshmanasena, who had some celebrity at the time as a scholar and poet, could not resist him at Nadia. The sack of Nadia and the Buddhist monasteries of Vikramaśilā and Odantapuri was a great blow to Hindu culture and learning. By 1206 A.D., when Qutubuddin died, his empire extended from the Punjab to Bengal. Rajputana, Malwa and a part of Gujerat remained unsubdued.

### Hindu Nationalism and Resistance

For three centuries the history of the Delhi Sultanate from the accession of Qutubuddin to Bābur's invasion and conquest of Delhi in 1526, was a series of intrigues of Amīrs and Maliks of the Imperial court, murders and wars of succession. Through all these, the Muslim power was, however, consolidated. In 1340 A.D., under Muhammad bin Tughluq, the empire reached its maximum size, including a large section of the Deccan and parts of the Malabar and Coromandel coasts. After the reign of Muhammad bin Tughluq the empire quickly shrank. In Northern India, Hindu resistance and revival found their nucleus in barren Mewar



where the "crimson banner" and the Sun of Hinduism (Hinduan Suraj) were kept blazing by the courage and prowess of the Guhila Rajput rulers from Hammir and Kumbha to Sanga and Pratap and the self-immolation of the Rajput women in the terrible and tragic mass jauhar. Even the military prowess and liberal policy of Emperor Akbar could not win Rāna Pratāp over the side of the Mughal. Elsewhere also in Northern India, both Muslim and Hindu kingdoms that were newly formed, did not submit to the authority of Delhi. The so-called solidarity of the Muslims in India grounded in a common religion and interfused with the egalitarian spirit of Islam is somewhat exaggerated. Muslim subjugation of India was more due to a series of successful adventures and enterprises of Turko-Afghan chieftains than to the direct conquest by the central authority at Delhi, that, however, took full advantage of their fanatical zeal and initiative. Such was the history of the eastward and southward expansion of the Turko-Afghan tribes. The control of the Delhi Sultanate over the outlying region was dubious from the very beginning. Bengal, Jaunpur, Malwa, Gujerat, Kashmir, Khandesh and the Bahamani kingdom all threw off the allegiance of the Delhi Sultanate. Centrifugal tendencies were in fact manifest from the beginning of the Muslim conquest. The history of several of the independent Sultanates was characterised by court intrigues, conspiracies, murders of kings, and wars of succession. In fact it is the dissensions amongst the Muslim kingdoms that not merely ate into the vitality of Islam in the country but completely overshadowed the sense of social solidarity or of political unity with which the progress of Islam was associated in other lands. Any political unity built up had to wait in India until the time of Akbar through the subjugation and consolidation of the several independent kingdoms that had arisen on the ruins of the Delhi Sultanate. The spirit of Hindu awakening took full advantage of the internal dissensions in the Muslim world and was clearly manifest since the days of the Tughluqs. It was of course the Vijayanagara Empire that was the spear-head of the Hindu revival in the South. But throughout India the independent Sultanates in the provinces entrusted the Hindus with high civil and military offices, while the village administration retained its full autonomy. The history of the Hindu empire of Vijayanagara was perhaps one of the most famous in the history of India. In its heyday it extended to

Vizagapatam in the east, south Konkan in the west and Rameswaram in the south, and also included certain islands and ports in the Indian Ocean within its ambit of influence. The Vijayanagara Empire successfully checked Muslim advance in the south beyond the Tungabhadra. For about two centuries and a half this prosperous empire by land and sea was the home of refined Brahmanical culture and resurgent Hindu nationalism and resistance. From the death of Muhammad bin Tughluq to the accession of Akbar Muslim authority in India, in fact, markedly declined.

### **The Causes of Hindu Subjugation: Miscegenation**

Yet it is surprising how the rich and prosperous states of Northern India could not bear the shock of Muslim aggression. The causes of Hindu defeat lie deep. Since the beginning of the Śaka and Kushan invasions from about the middle of the 2nd century B. C. and especially the incursions of the white Huns who ultimately destroyed the Gupta Empire about 480 A.D. the Kshatriyas were exterminated in very large numbers and became almost extinct. The memory of this destruction lives in the Purāṇic legends of Paraśurāma, which is mentioned in the story of the creation of the Agni-kula or Fire-born Rajputs—the Pawar, the Parihar, the Chauhan and the Solenki—produced by the gods at Mount Abu when the land was without any masters. But the Rajput legend is no history. The Rajputs are mostly Indianised, Central Asian folks admitted into the Hindu fold, such as the Yavanas, Gandharas, Śakas, Tusharas and Pahlavas, enjoined in the Mahābhārata to perform Vedic rites as their Dharma for obtaining entry into Hindu society. There is no greater proof of the vitality of the Brahmanical social organisation than the assimilation by the 11th century even of the barbarous Huns as Kshatriyas. Mihiragula accepted Śiva-Bhāgavatism as his religion and issued coins with the image of the bull, the emblem of Śiva. According to a Jain work of the 12th century, a Hun King, seeking the hands of a princess, attended her Svayamvara Sabha. An inscription of 1167 A.D. records that Yasahkarṇa, a Kalachuri king married a Huna princess named Āvalladevi. As the Hunamandala passed into the hands of the Rajputs, the Huns came to be regarded as one of the thirty-six Rajput clans. Later on, another important foreign tribe who came to India with the Huns, viz., the Gurjara, of which one clan was Gurjara-Pratihāra, was



assimilated and Brahmanised to the extent that the Pratihāra dynasty adopted Hindu names and Brahmanical rituals, claimed themselves as "ornaments of the race of Raghu" and established a powerful empire in Northern India with its capital at Kanauj or Mahodaya on the eve of the Muslim conquest. Kānyakubja or Mahodaya had been the chief city of Northern India. Since Harshavardhana (610-650 A.D.) transferred his seat of Government from Thanesvara to this place and retained its importance for at least four centuries. As the foreign immigrants easily accepted Buddhism, Bhāgavatism or Śaivism, the Brahmanical culture with a view to assimilating them into the caste structure designated them as Kshatriyas and permitted inter-marriage on a large scale between the new Rajput-Kshatriyas and the upper castes. Instances of such inter-marriage between Rajput women and Brāhmaṇs became common from the 10th and 11th centuries. We find Rājasekhara, the Brahman poet of the Court of Mahendrapāla and Mahipāla, the Pratihāra Emperors of Āryāvarta (903-948 A.D.) and author of 'Karpūra-manjarī' marrying a Kshatriya princess—"the crest garland of the Chauhan family". Many Kshatriya princes married the daughters of Vaiśyas as subordinate wives. We have in the Kathāsaritsāgara of Somadeva dated between 1063-1081 A.D. a picture of society in which there was a great intermingling of races and castes, with the Gāndharva marriage-form as the accepted pattern. The exaltation of foreign immigrant stocks as Agni-kula Rajputs and the stereotyping of Gāndharva marriage encouraged a good deal of racial admixture and assimilation as the Rajputs spread all over India. Many indigenous tribes such as the Chandāls and the Bundelas could also obtain recognition as belonging to the Rajput stock. The fiction of the genesis of the Rajput Kshatriyas covered the gap between the facts of racial intermingling associated with the re-grouping of the ruling castes of India in the 8th, 9th and 10th centuries, and the ancient theory of Varṇa gradation. The price paid for the foreigners' acceptance of the faith and institutions of Brahmanical culture and his absorption into Brahmanical society was however too heavy. Miscegenation on a large scale not only disturbed Hindu polity and institutions more deeply than what the Hindu law-givers could anticipate and what may be discernible from the Epics, the Purāṇas and literary works, but also led to a marked deterioration of the racial stock.

The danger from miscegenation was specially serious in India because fighting and defence were left only to a single caste, viz., the Kshatriyas; while the whole nation due to the system of caste did not have any military training at all. On the eve of the Muslim conquest the Kshatriyas were represented mostly by thirty-six clans of the Rājputs—converted and Indianised Bactrian Yavanas or Greeks, Śakas, Huns, Ābhiras, Gurjaras, Pahlavas, Chamanas, Maitrekas and other foreign tribes who ranked formerly as degraded Kshatriyas in the Smṛitis but are now exalted as Agnikula Rājputs. There was also an admixture with the indigenous peoples like the Gonds, the Bhars, the Gujars, the Dhaki Khasiyas, the Bhotiyas and other ethnic groups. Free racial admixture with barbarian hordes, going on from the second and especially from the sixth to the eleventh centuries, could not but affect the social composition of India unfavourably. This was the underlying demographic cause of Hindu downfall aggravating as it also did the defects of the caste organisation.

### Coarseness and Sensualism as Reflected in Contemporary Literature

The entire tone of people's sentiments and interests also suffered a marked deterioration. Life in the cities and courts became gross, luxurious and sophisticated. The sanctity of love, marriage and the family in Gupta India was superseded by coarseness, infidelity and sensualism, stemming from the barbarians' code of life. The belief in magic, charm and witchcraft gained ground among all classes of people, and gambling, prostitution and deceit flourished, of which we have abundant evidence in the Kathāsaritsāgara. The Brāhmaṇas as a class came into disrepute. Such was the perversion of values that in the hands of the poet, Rājaśekhara, the demon Rāvaṇa, instead of Rāmachandra, became the hero, and the jealous lover of Sītā in the Bāla-Rāmāyaṇa. More than Rāvaṇa's misdeed and cruelty, his love and jealousy play important roles in the drama. Thieves, cheats, rascals, gamblers, hetairae and rouses are numerous in the Kathāsaritsāgara. Not merely Brāhmaṇas, Kshatriyas and Vaiśyas but also religious ascetics and even the gods fall from their ancient estate. Gods, angels and gandharvas live all-too-human lives, expelled from heaven by some curse or magic and can regain it only through human intervention. The magical, the miraculous and the super-



natural seemed to have cast a blight on both life and literature in this decadent age, and even religious festivals such as swing festivals of Gauri or Sāvitṛī vratas, processions and pilgrimages became occasions of clandestine adventures and elopements while subterranean tunnels with supernatural means of communication, and the idol of Kālī screening the entrances, magic, witchcraft, dream and miracle were all woven into the love intrigues.

At the beginning of this millennium the Arabs had been in possession of Sind and Multān for about three centuries and the Pratihāra empire, that according to the description of the Court-poet, Rājasekhara, comprised the distant regions from Kuluta in the north to Kerala in the south, was challenged by the Rāshtrakūtas. The latter under Indra III defeated Mahipāla and captured Kanauj, the capital of the empire to which he was probably restored through the intervention of his feudatory the Chandelas. In another century Kanauj under Rājyapāla Pratihāra would be seized by Mahmud of Ghazni (1018 A.D.). In Āryāvarta decadence had set in. A sturdy contemplative religion gave place to left-hand Tāntrikism with its sensualism, magic and human offering as gruesomely described in Bhavabhūti's *Mālati-mādhava* and Somadeva's *Kathāsaritsāgara*. *Vetāla-pañchavimśatikā* is full of sensation-mongering, superstition and supernaturalism. Degraded Brāhmaṇism and Buddhism as well as Kāvya and folk-tale combine their resources for engendering among the entire population the craving for marvel, awe and excitement rather than commonsense, irrationalism and immediacy rather than the very anciently and widely practised self-discipline and search for the Absolute and the Universal. At Kanauj or Mahodaya itself Rājasekhara decries Vaidika religion and extols Tāntrika Kaulāchāra. The magician Bhairavānanda by his Tāntrika magic brings about a meeting between the king and the imprisoned Karpūramañjarī and their union. He ignores maṇtra and taṇtra; his teachers have excused him from the ancient Indian practice for knowledge and meditation.

“With drink and with women we fare mighty well,  
As unto salvation—we go on the Kula path  
A fiery young wench to the altar I've led  
Good meat I consume, and I gazzle strong drink;

And it all comes as alms—with a felt for my bed  
What better religion could any one think?

Gods, Viṣṇu and Brahm . . and others may preach of salvation by  
trance, holy rites and Vedas

'T was Umā's fond lover alone that could teach  
Us salvation plus brandy plus fun with the ladies.

*(Translated by Lanman).*

Not only did salvation, wine and sex enter into an unholy combination in the Kaula religion, but the public swing festival of the Devī (Gaurī or Lakṣmī) that lasted for a month and was common from the 10th to the 13th centuries became the occasion for amorous dalliances and escapades. Like the jewelled roof-terraces and the picture-galleries (*citta-bhitti niveśa*), even the public gardens where the religious swing festival was celebrated served as the rendezvous for lovers who saw their sweethearts in the swing in front of the image of the goddess with waving chowries raised aloft, with showy rows of dazzling-white banners, and with bells, ascending, descending, coming and going.

“With the tinkling jewelled anklets  
With the flashing jingling necklace  
With the show of girdles garrulous  
From their ringing, ringing bells  
With the sound of lovely jingles  
From the rows of rolling bangles  
(Pray) whose heart is not bewildered  
While the moon-faced maiden sings”.

Using the Sauraseni and Mahārāṣṭrī Prākṛiṭ onomatopoeic words in alliteration and harmony of sound, meaning and rhythm with rare skill and sensitiveness, Rājasekhara has achieved a remarkable effect in the swing-lines. But the whole is reminiscent of the effeminacy of the age. His contemporary Kṣhemiśvara, in his two dramas, the *Naiṣadhānanda* and the *Chaṇḍakauśika*, though dealing with worthy ancient themes, reveals a degenerate taste, and strikes a note of lack of dignity and moral integrity. Śiva, for instance is painted as an unscrupulous gambler who having lost his all—his skulls, serpents, ashes and hide, refuses to dice. Two other Sanskrit Kāvya, the *Kuṭṭanī Matam* (the views of a Go-between) by a minister of the Kingdom of Kashmir and



the *Samayamāṭṛkā* (the Autobiography of a Prostitute) deals with clandestine ruses and scandalous adventures in which the nobility and monkhood are equally involved. The prostitute becomes successively the mistress of a noble, a street-walker, a go-between, a false nun, a corrupter of the youth and a frequenter of religious places. Thus does she have her infamous sway in all walks of life. Similarly the widely popular *Śukasaptati* or *Seventy Tales of a Parrot*, full of unchaste women's cunning and deception on their credulous husbands, though amusing, throws light upon the general laxity and dissolution of family loyalties during the age.

### Parochialism

With the degeneracy was combined the absence of national sentiment or patriotism. Cultural assimilation of hordes immigrants is a task of centuries. As this was hardly completed, pride of clan or tribe, local patriotism and parochialism rampant among the Rajputs prevented the growth of any stable confederacy or larger union. Ethnic groups that were in some measure distant from one another could not develop easily a national outlook characteristic of the *Vikramāditya* tradition in the Gupta struggle against foreign invaders. It is true that in the *Hamira Mahākāvya* we discern in some measure Hindu revivalism but the voice was too feeble and hardly spread beyond the mountain fastnesses of Mewar. Nationalism did not exist at the time of the Muslim invasion in the sense it did incite princes and peoples in the Gupta age. The martial Rajput clans failed India at a critical moment. Or rather Brahmanical culture failed these recent Sons of Kings, whose haughtiness, impetuosity and clannishness, fanned by bards, scholars and poets alike, rendered a common national effort difficult. The older Hindu theory of an empire extending from sea to sea (*āsamudrakṣhiṭṣā*) suffered eclipse in a regime of balance of power and feudal hierarchy of chiefs of numerous tribes and clans. Such were the Gurjaras, Rashtrakūtas, Chandelas, Kalachuris, Chauhāns, Parihārs, Pawārs, Solenkis, Tomeras and Gaharwars, carving out independent kingdoms of their own and chronically fighting among themselves in Northern India. The traditional Hindu imperialism might have contributed towards building up a strong national unity and defence jeopardised by the development of Rajput feudalism.

### Caste Exclusiveness

The pride and exclusiveness of Rajput and other military aristocratic groups soon reacted upon Indian society as a whole. The metaphysical doctrine of the four *Varṇas* now came to be understood and interpreted in the sense of a four-fold rigid caste stratification grounded on birth. This was a natural reaction to the claims of semi-divine status and privilege put forward by the Rajput aristocracy that regarded themselves as coming of the bluest blood in the land, and to the real danger of social intercourse with the Muslims who encouraged conversions and threw open the highest offices to the Hindu apostates. Ibn Batuta mentions that "in the reign of Qutbuddin a Hindu wishing to be converted was brought before the Sultan who gave him rich robes and bangles of gold", and also describes cruel raids by Muslim governors on Hindu villages. The Hindu inhabitants were killed off or taken captive and converted. The Hindus also retaliated, and Ibn Batutā soon after he left Delhi on his mission to China (1342 A.D.) was taken captive and then released through compassion during a Hindu attack near Aligarh. Even within a hundred miles from Delhi, the capital of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq, the Turko-Afghan dominion was in a state of chronic disturbance. The origin of a considerable section of the present Muslim population in India is the decree of Muslim rulers that Hindu converts will be exempted from the *jazia* or poll-tax that was a burden on the poor. Sultan Firuz Tughluq writes: "Information of this (exemption) came to the ears of the people at large, and great numbers of Hindus presented themselves, and were admitted to the honour of Islam. Thus they came forward day by day from every quarter, and adopting the faith, were exonerated from the *jazia* and were favoured with presents and honours". As a matter of fact it is the small proportion of conversions which is surprising, the strength of Hinduism overcoming the pressure of poverty and bribery. Yet the danger of mass Hindu conversion was real. Thus the liberal classic theory of social ordering and gradation according to spiritual status in the *Mahābhārata*, the *Bhagavad Gītā* and the *Smṛitis* of Manu and Yājñavalkya was discarded and the foundations laid of caste barriers and food and drink taboos on the eve of and during the first Muslim contact. Hinduism was gradually developing a hard crust hiding the life-giving kernel and juice.



### India's Relative Isolation

This was reinforced by India's relative isolation for full five centuries as a result of the Arab conquest of Persia, Mesopotamia and Central Asia in 641 A.D. The Empires of Ghazni and Ghor that held the Punjab and also Central India astride the ancient trade routes to China and Western Asia blocked India's over-land trade and contact with China and the Mediterranean world. In South-east Asia colonisation, proselytisation and trade languished due to the Hundred Year's War (11th and 12th century) between the Śailendra and Chola Empires, and the ultimate victory and control of the Śailendra kings of the eastern waters. As the channels of colonisation and maritime adventure were closed in the Indian Archipelago, Hindu culture became moribund. No culture in the world can remain aloof for five centuries without ossification. Al-Beruni (11th century) referred to the national pride of the Hindus thus: "The Hindus believe that there is no country but theirs, no nation but theirs, no religion like theirs, no science like theirs. If you tell them of any science or scholar in Khorasan and Persia, they will think you to be both an ignoramus and a liar. If they travelled and mixed with other nations they would soon change their mind for their ancestors were not so narrow-minded as the present generations". Thus while the Arabs took to Baghdad the learning and sciences of the Hindus, especially philosophy, astronomy and medicine, and various Hindu works were translated with the assistance of Indian scholars invited to the imperial court, enabling Indian civilization to mould the philosophy and mysticism and art and literature of the puissant Arab nation, the Hindus failed to borrow from the Chinese and the Arabs the outstanding advances even in such a vital branch of study as military art. The easy rout of Hindu armies in the open terrain was largely due to the old-fashioned Hindu strategy based on ancient texts, the lack of training of both infantry and cavalry and the impotence of the war-elephants in the face of the shock-tactics of the fast manoeuvring, well-trained Turko-Afghan cavalry. India also had no well-bred horses nor mules for which she had to depend upon Azov, Arabia and Persia. The Turko-Afghans with their mobile hordes of cavalry took recourse not only to shock-tactics but also to unscrupulous stratagems including even the defilement of the sources of the water-supply of the Hindu armies

calculated to produce widespread dismay and depression in all ranks. They worked on the principle that all is fair in war; while the Hindu princes on the whole carried their code of chivalry to extremes and disdained military tricks or devices. The Turko-Afghans largely depended upon archery as the Rajputs upon their swordsmanship in battle. The Turkish archers were experienced and accurate in their aim. Armed with Turkish bows and long arrows as well as swords, they rode on horses that could be easily replaced, and quick movements and shock tactics were characteristic of the skilful hordes of the Turkish cavalymen. The elephant troops of the Indian armies wounded and frightened by the arrows and javelins of fast-moving Turk cavalry would often stampede and bring confusion into the ranks of the Indian battle array. A defeat in battle led to such loss of honour and status that they often immolated themselves along with their entire retinue and families in a collective conflagration without any attempt to reorganise their forces for a fresh struggle. This is known as the custom of *jauhar* (*jatugriha*) of which the notable instances are the self-immolation of Jaipal of Udabhānda defeated by Mahmud of Ghazni, Hammir Deva of Ranthambohr who was defeated by Alauddin Khilji, of the Raja of Kapila defeated by Muhammad Tughluq, of Bhayya Puran Mal and Medini Rai of Chanderi defeated by Sher Shah and Babar respectively, and of the common people of Delhi during the massacre by Timur. The collective '*jauhar*' that elicited the profound admiration even of the Muslims from al-Biruni downwards was largely the reaction against the brutality and absence of chivalry and even of fairness on the part of the Muslim invaders who were prosecuting 'holy wars' fanatically and relentlessly and from whom no quarter could be expected. But the common people seeing their cities and temples sacked, plundered and desecrated and their heroic chiefs and leaders reduced to despair and mass suicide to a man and woman—were completely demoralised; nor was the Hindu social structure such as to enlist their co-operation with the chiefs and soldiers for stubborn, prolonged resistance. Nor since the shocking experience of the Hun avalanche did the martial classes of Hindustan encounter such an unscrupulous, perfidious and pitiless foe. The Hindu warriors "poured out their blood like water" but could not stem the advance of an enemy who violated every canon of war known to the Hindu. The tragic destiny of the Hindu



warrior of the Middle Ages has elicited the feeling comment of the romantic and illustrious conqueror of Hindustan that the people knew how to die but did not know how to fight.

### The Resilience of Brāhmanical Culture

But the ossification of Brāhmanical culture was just beginning. Its resistance is well indicated by the fact that it faced the menace of conversion to Islam and tackled the cognate problems of social adjustment through a large volume of Smṛti and Saṁhita literature, including commentaries and digests, that was written between the tenth and sixteenth centuries. In the tenth century the Devala Smṛti, probably compiled in Sind, the Atri Saṁhita and other works laid down rules and regulations of reconversion of Hindus who were enslaved or carried away by the Mlechchhas, forced to eat forbidden flesh and dine and cohabit with the Mlechchha women and of Hindu women who were ravished by the Mlechchhas and became pregnant. The performance of purificatory rights or śuddhi was prescribed for bringing back such unfortunate persons into the Hindu fold. The Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa definitely lays down that a ravished woman does not become degraded or excommunicated thereby. But she becomes pure on performing a penance. In Sind both conversion and reconversion took place on a mass scale. This was noticed by Al-Biruni, who mentions Hindu slaves in the Muslim regions escaping and returning to their area and religion. They were compelled to perform some Hindu expiatory rites. Small communities of Muslim converts also were later on gradually re-absorbed into the Hindu population and re-adopted Hinduism in the capital of Sind. The Devala Smṛti mentions Hindus as being made impure also by contacting and sitting along with the Mlechchhas in Mlechchha sabhās (assemblies); for them also expiation was enjoined. Thus the Smṛtis began to deal with a variety of problems of śuddhi and prāyaścitta that became a leading topic of discussion. The great jurist Viṣṇuśaraṇa, who flourished in the court of Vikramāditya VI of Vijayanagara at the beginning of the 12th century, propounded similar progressive views in respect of prāyaścitta and śuddhi or reconversion of Hindus in his famous commentary of the Yājñavalkya-Smṛti entitled Mitākṣarā. In Northern India and Sind, and Gujerat in particular, conversion of the lower castes to Islam was going on. But in the South it was after two centuries that

the problem of reconversion of the Hindus arose with the conflicts between Vijayanagara and her Muslim neighbours. Thus Vijñāneśwara's liberal viewpoint is all the more praiseworthy. Such liberalism could not be expected of all Smṛti writers. Bengal in the 12th century produced the famous Smārta, Sulapani, author of the important work Smṛti-Viveka. Kulluka, the well-known commentator of Manu-Smṛti, and Chandeśwara who flourished in the beginning of the 14th century in Bengal and Mithilā, respectively supported, on the whole, a rigid defensive orthodoxy against the tide of Mlechchha contamination. Among the conservative Smārtās should also be mentioned Mādhava, (1335-1360) who wrote in Vijayanagara the Kālanirṇaya, a well-known commentary on Parāśara-smṛti, and Viśveśvara (1360-1370) who wrote the Madanapārijāta. In Mithilā, Vāhaspati Miśra (1450 A.D.) wrote important works on Smṛti and ethics though he later on drifted into Nyāya. Raghunāṇḍan who lived at the time of Chaitanya in Bengal and saw the inroads into Brāhmanic culture, caused by the degenerate forms and practices of Buddhism and by Muslim influences, laid down strict caste and food rules and regulations that still hold good for the upper castes in the Province. The tendency to lean upon stricter taboos and rules of expiation can be easily understood in the face of the growing dangers of forcible conversion, bribery and Muslim social intercourse. Jimūtavāhana modified the laws of inheritance, curtailing the rights of the head (kartā) of the joint family and investing sons with the right to claim partition to immovable property not acquired by the kartā himself. These modifications hold good in Bengal and represent an important line of adjustment of property rights to new economic conditions especially in a maritime and trading province like Bengal.

### The Turko-Afghan Court

The Turks and Afghans who occupied the throne of Delhi were hardly the torch-bearers of Saracenic civilization, and Delhi could not stand any comparison with Baghdad, Cairo and Cordova, except in some measure in the reign of Alauddin Khilji. Barani's testimony, though somewhat exaggerated, was as follows: "The most wonderful thing which people saw in Alauddin's reign was the multitude of great men of all nationalities, masters of every science and the experts of every art. The capital of Delhi, by the



presence of these unrivalled men of great talents, had become the envy of Baghdad, the rival of Cairo and the equal of Constantinople." The Turko-Afghan court was on the whole too full of intrigues of the nobility, and of alternatives between massacres and orgies to develop and sustain a refined culture. The nobility was also heterogeneous, comprising largely the Turks and Afghans, but also Egyptians, Abyssinians, Javanese and Indians. Such a mixed fluctuating class could have no normal and cultural standards of its own, while the institution of slavery was a great curse. As many as 200,000 slaves were owned by Sultan Firoz Shah. Every campaign brought thousands of slaves to Delhi. Fief-holders and officers were instructed to capture slaves whenever they were at war and to "pick out and send the best for the service of the court". Thousands became artisans of various kinds. Thousands were every day in readiness to attend as guards in the Sultan's equipage or at the palace. All slaves were converted to Islam. After each Sultan's death many slaves were killed by his successor. Some of the slaves no doubt rose to power and prominence through sheer ability and hard service after manumission like Qutbuddin, Iltumish and Balban but the bulk of the slaves lived a debased, demoralised life, and Sultans and nobles made profit out of their purchase and sale, slaves being brought from foreign countries like China, Turkestan and Persia. The price of a boy, eunuch or damsel ranged, according to Barani, from 500 to 2,000 tankhas. It was the Amirs and nobles of the court who had to bear the brunt of the Sultan's despotism, limited only by the practical consideration of the military support he could obtain from his immediate entourage. The Ulemas guided state policy which theoretically included the forcible conversion of infidels, destruction of their temples, discontinuance of non-Muslim religious rites and imposition of a poll tax (*jiziyā*) in lieu of protection of lives and property of non-Muslims. A Sultan, like Muhammad bin Tughluq showed toleration but was condemned by the Ulemas. The Muslims who held land paid only ten per cent of the gross produce of the land; while the Hindus in the Ganges-Jamuna Doab gave 50 per cent since the time of Alauddin Khilji. There were also a grazing tax and a house tax. In the Doab a village held by proprietary right, in free gift or as a religious endowment, was brought back into the exchequer in Alauddin's reign.

### The Introduction of the Farming System

The Turko-Afghan system of government was both military and feudal in character, confined mainly to the conquered territory in the plains of the Indus and Ganges. As a foreign power it rested upon the military support of officers and troops and of the Amirs, nobles and local maliks; and as different regions came under the Delhi Sultanate, Amirs, nobles and military officers were appointed to the government of districts, or given big jagirs, and the soldiers of the army given grants of land enough to support them in comfort. The system of assignment followed, indeed, the older Muslim Abbasid, Ghaznavid and Ghori tradition. Ibn Batuta mentions that the Governor of a Province in India received five per cent of the revenues of a Province or town paid to Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq. The Governor used to appoint Muslim headmen for villages under his fiefs and collected taxes from the ryots. In Bengal he records that the Hindus under Pathan rule were mulcted of half the produce of the land, and paid taxes over and above that. The standard share of one-half of the gross produce demanded by the state along with certain pasturage taxes on cattle was for the first time introduced and extorted with rigour by Sultan Alauddin as recorded by Barani. Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq enhanced the assessment on the land considerably. According to Badauni the rates were doubled, and there is evidence that a number of abwabs (cesses) such as ghari (house tax) and charahi (pasture tax) were newly imposed. The farming system was sought to be introduced everywhere in the subjugated territory. It no doubt stabilised the collection of revenues but had its risks. Even the land-holders of the Doab were in constant revolt. Whenever the authority of Delhi became weak, the assignments (aqtas) grew more extensive and numerous. Every Afghan chief, warrior or noble who carved out an independent territory for himself by defeating a Hindu Prince or chief held the land for himself and his family. What he enjoyed, the ordinary trooper also demanded and came to enjoy. Only the size of the assignment differed, the trooper regarding the village assigned to him as his hereditary property. The theory, of course, was that the assignee was the agent of the Delhi Sultanate. But the Afghan assignee became accustomed to think that any Province, Paraganā or town was his own hereditary property. Thus as late as in the reign of



Sikander Lodi a royal farman granting an aqta to the heir of an Afghan noble had to make it clear that the grant was made in the assignee's personal capacity, and not because of his relationship. Such was the feudal assignment pattern characteristic of all military despotisms. The alternative or subsidiary system was that a Hindu Prince, Raja, Rana or Thakur who was subdued remitted a fixed tribute to the royal treasury and left in peace with a good deal of autonomy within his jurisdiction. As important Provinces came under the direct administration of the Sultanate, these were managed by several Shiqdars and Foudjars appointed as heads of Paraganās for the collection of revenue. Finally, in the villages proper the Muquaddams and Khuts enjoyed rent-free lands, along with certain concessions for assisting the government in both revenue assessment and collection. Under the Viceroy or Naib Sultan there was accordingly the hierarchy of officials from Shiqdars, Foudjars and Amils to crop-appraisers whose success in assessing and collecting land revenues and sending the surpluses to Delhi depended upon the oppression they could exercise, without grave local disturbances, upon the assignees or the actual tillers of the soil and their own greed and influence in the imperial court. On the whole, the village communities were not much disturbed nor disintegrated in most parts of India, although within a striking distance from Delhi the village headmen, the Khuts, Balahars, Choudharies and Muquaddams were reduced to abject poverty in the reign of Alauddin. But before long they regained their status and privileges. Muhammad bin Tughluq had to recognise their status and offer them security and reward. The military despotism of the Delhi and other independent Sultanates in the plains of Northern India was a faint echo of the Abbasid-Ghaznavid tradition, and had to come to terms with the autonomy of the Hindu chiefs and village communities that protected the general body of population against undue oppression and exploitation.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### THE CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE IN TURKO-AFGHAN TIMES

#### **The Imposition of the Jiziya**

The military rule of the Delhi Sultanate was precarious from its very inception, and Hindu resistance as well as Muslim establishment of independent territories in Bengal, Jaunpur, Malwa, Gujarat and Kashmir as well as in the Deccan mitigated the effects of foreign despotism that was considerably enfeebled for about two centuries intervening between the death of Muhammad bin Tughluq in 1351 and the unification of Northern and Central India by Akbar, who built up his Empire on the basis of alliance with the Rajput chiefs (1562). Rajasthan for about a century in that later epoch supplied to the Moghul Emperors some of the most distinguished generals and diplomats of the age. No doubt, in areas where the strong hand of the Sultan, his viceroy, Muqta or Amil could reach, the Hindus were demoralised. All high offices were closed to them. They could not join military service. Differential taxation was imposed on them. The capitation tax called the jiziya, borrowed from the Abbasids, was imposed on all non-Muslims. The lowest class Hindus were liable to pay one dinar, the middle class two dinars and the rich four dinars per head per annum. All non-Muslim traders were also liable to pay double the import duty charged from the Muslims. Ibn Batuta observed that as high as a quarter was assessed as duty on all imports, although this was reduced later by Muhammad bin Tughluq. Religious rites and ceremonies could not be performed publicly. No new temples could be built nor old ones repaired. Even Muslim converts who were poor considered themselves as belonging to a superior ruling race and segregated themselves as far as possible from the Hindu population. Meekness and humility were expected of all Khiraj Guzars (payers of tribute). "When a revenue officer demands silver from them, they should without



question and with all humility and respect tender gold. If the tax collector chooses to spit in the mouth, the latter must open his mouth without hesitation." This was the canonical theory mentioned by Barani to whom it was given by a Qazi. The real situation was different. The weakness of the central government, intrigue and faction in the imperial and viceregal courts, lack of co-operation among the officers, the chronic revolt of the big landholders, the pressure of internal campaigns and the constant danger from Mongol raids permitted neither persecution nor forcible conversion except spasmodically and intermittently.

### Enslavement

Yet the considerable slave population bears ample testimony to conversion from Hinduism and growth of Muslim population in Hindustan. A military despotism which received but cold support from its millions of subjects resorted to the effective but odious device of stationing legions of the only class who were firmly loyal to the monarch viz. the slaves in hundreds of centres all over the empire for putting down every type of rebellion and recalcitrance. The other edge of the blade was employed to cause diminution of the Hindu population through the service of enslaved Hindus as domestic hands in Muslim households. There was hardly any rich and respectable Muslim home which had not its male and female slaves. The slave girls of Assam, Khorasan, China and Turkestan came especially to be well-known throughout the East. Many of these were occupied in domestic and menial work, others were purchased for sensual indulgence. There was also a special class of slaves, the eunuchs, who were employed for care and supervision of the harem. In the Turko-Afghan period the eunuchs came largely from Bengal and the islands of the East. The slave, usually a prisoner-of-war, was the property of his master whether Sultan, Amir or any other wealthy person. There were certain injunctions in Islam which commended protection of the life and dignity of the slaves in some measure, while slaves of ability and enterprise could also rise to important positions. Manumission was possible after some time when the erstwhile slave could obtain a respectable position and status. Firoz Tughluq introduced certain humane measures that led to a marked improvement of the status of slaves. Shaikh Hamdani mentions some rights that accrued to a slave against his master, the right of

religious education, work for a fixed number of hours, leave during hours of prayer, treatment without indignity and contempt and refusal of undertaking work opposed to the Shariat. In practice, however, the slave was the exclusive property of his master possessing not even his own name or identity and can be disposed of and punished in any way by the master. Yet the slave in the Indian social milieu usually was neither recalcitrant nor disloyal. The royal slaves on the contrary often showed great loyalty and devotion to their monarchs and also received proper awards. Sultan Muhammad of Ghor gave away his whole kingdom to his slaves who succeeded to the thrones of Delhi and Ghor. In Delhi the dynasty of slaves ruled for more than six decades. The political influence of the slaves in Delhi greatly increased during the reigns of Iltumish, Balban and Sultana Raziyya, and became decisive under the successor of Firoz Tughluq. But the prevalence of male and female slavery that became a widespread practice since the Turko-Afghan period in both Muslim and Hindu states contributed towards the brutalisation of the upper class, the loss of human dignity of the class of workmen and artisans and the lapse of normal family relations. Especially marked was the loss of human dignity of the female slaves, though Firoz Tughluq's reforms protected them against physical injury or death in the hands of their masters.

### **The Status of Women**

The status of women in Hindustan reached indeed its lowest ebb in the Turko-Afghan period. The high status and respect enjoyed by them in the home and social, and even political life during the Gupta period now suffered a complete reversal. In Persia women were much more educated and refined and though they observed 'purdah' they were otherwise free. Ibn Batuta saw large assemblages of women listening to the preacher in the principal mosque at Shiraz. But in India the 'purdah' came to be much more rigidly enforced. Firoz Shah forbade the visit of Muslim women to mausoleums outside the city of Delhi interpreting the injunction of the Shariat as forbidding all outdoor movements. From Delhi the practice spread to all provinces and states, both Muslim and Hindu. Not to speak of the women of the families of chiefs and nobles, even slave girls were carried in closed and locked litters. Barbosa mentions that the women of



the Gujarati banyas were going about veiled and shrouded. In far-off Orissa the queens of Raja Rudrapratap of Jagannatha came to visit Chaitanya in covered litters. Simultaneously, and both as cause and consequence, an unwholesome and exclusively male code of ethics developed. Woman's chastity was highly prized, while man's profligacy was at its premium. Amir Khusrau's writings embody the one-sided code governing the sex relations of the age. No woman is to be trusted, nor can she be married by any decent person even when a gossip against her chastity proves unfounded and malicious. A decent girl ought to die rather than submit to the amours of a lover not her husband. But man can debauch himself at his pleasure. Woman who is the very personification of evil is always at his beck and call to beguile him. Such is the social climate of man's polygamy, concubinage and general sexual license, and woman's helplessness and subjection that led to the elaboration and refinement of the 'purdah' as an institution. This was imitated from the Muslim rulers by the upper classes of Hindu society. The insecurity of the times, the raids of Muslims on Hindu women, and the fear of rulers and high officials demanding girls for the harem, all contributed towards the development of the purdah. Hindu society under the pressure of new political and social circumstances safeguarded itself from social conquest by sacrificing its womanhood.

Yet in a state like Rajputana, women enjoyed a very much higher status and greater freedom as of old. In fact the deference paid to women among the Rajputs blossomed forth in the Turko-Afghan age into the characteristic noble institution of chivalry. Nor was their education neglected. In Jaisi's *Padmāvatī*, we are told that the heroine learns the wisdom of the tetrad of the Vedas—all that is within the *Rik*, the *Yajus*, the *Sāman* and the *Atharvan*. Her knowledge of language is such that each sentence has four different meanings. The *paṇḍits* cannot surpass her at interpreting the *Amara* (lexicography), the *Bhārata* (*Mahābhārata*), the *Piṅgal* (prosody), and the *Gītā*. She can read *Bhāṣvati* (astrology) and *Vyākaraṇa* (grammar), *Piṅgala* (prosody) and *Purāṇas*. She can recite from the mysteries of Veda so that good men are pierced to the hearts. As the story of the *Padmāvatī* unfolds itself, the heroine goes to the house of her two loyal Kshatriya adherents, Gora and Badal who by their valour enable Raja Ratnasena of Chitor to escape from the royal prison of Alauddin Khilji in Delhi. The

picture of the noble status and education of the upper-class Indian women given by Jaisi is corroborated by the observations of European travellers. Varthema (1503-1508) describes at length the life of a Hindu chieftain who in his travels was accompanied by his wife and children, four or five riding horses, tame monkeys, parrots, civet-cats, chitas and falcons. A century later Pietro della Valle (1623-1624) also found that the Hindu women in Gujarat went about "with their faces uncovered, and can be freely seen by everyone both at home and abroad". From the descriptions of a traveller of the 17th century, Edward Terry (1616-1619), we also learn that the Hindu women are not confined but "go abroad". Rajput chivalry and high status and education of women were not encountered far and wide in Hindustan. On the whole such pernicious social practices as purdah, child-marriage, Sati and female-slavery greatly increased during this period and the social manners and outlook changed decidedly for the worse. Sati was noticed by Conti. In Central India i.e. India proper excluding the North-west, he observes, "the dead are burned, and the living wives, for the most part, are consumed in the same funeral pyre with their husband, one or more, according to the agreement at the time the marriage was contracted. The first wife was compelled by the law to be burnt, even though she should be the only wife. But others are married under the express agreement that they should add to the splendour of the funeral ceremony by their death, and this is considered a great honour for them". The Vāyu Purāṇa regarded as one of the oldest Purāṇas refer to the preparation for self-immolation at the pyre of the queen of King Bāhu who was pregnant and was dissuaded from this by the Bhārgava Aurva. The Bṛhad-dharma Purāṇa observes: "A devoted wife who follows her husband in death, saves him from great sins. Among the twice-born there is no greater exploit for women because by this she enjoys in heaven the company of her husband for a manvāntara. Even when a widow dies by entering into fire with a favourite thing of her husband, who died long ago and in full contemplation of him, she attains the same state (as mentioned above)". Such was the defence of the system of Sati that it became an established practice among the upper classes. No compulsion was however exercised on the Hindu widow for self-immolation. This is the testimony of such European travellers of the 17th century as Pyrard de Laval (1607-1611) and Edward



Terry (1616-1619) both of whom were impressed with the widow's dignity, courage and serenity on the occasion. A widow who did not follow her husband into the fire lived an austere life. Ralph Fitch (1583-1591) noticed that "her head is shaven and there is never any account made of her after". She cuts her hair and spends all her life following as a neglected creature, as Terry (1616-1619) noticed. Thomas Herbert in the same century found that Sati was prevalent more in Bengal and Coromandel than elsewhere.

### **The Trends of Agriculture and the Village**

Agriculture was the mainstay of state revenues, and the Turko-Afghan rulers did not bring any peasantry with them. Wheat, sugarcane, cotton, pulses, oil-seeds and poppy were the major cash crops grown on a considerable scale by the peasantry, especially in the well-irrigated zones of Hindustan. Malik Muhammad Jaisi refers to the use of the Persian water-wheels (rahat) in Oudh, which was productive and prosperous. The region of Kara and Manikpur (Allahabad) grew large quantities of rice, sugarcane and wheat for export to Delhi, as mentioned by Ibn Batuta. The region of Hissar and Firuzabad grew wheat and sugarcane along with the present cultivation of sesamum and pulses due to the introduction of canals in the reign of Firoz Shah Tughluq. Susruti became well-known for its excellent quality of rice that sold in Delhi. Jaisi who lived in Oudh refers to as many as twenty-three varieties of rice of various hues and fragrant with smells. Fruit gardening also developed in the neighbourhood of the big cities. Delhi, Chitor, Jodhpur, Gwalior and Dholpur adopted improved methods of fruit-farming and became famous for a large variety of fruits for which the Turko-Afghan Sultans and nobility imitating the rulers and nobility of Persia had special preference. Rajputana in particular became the orchard of India at the time of the Delhi Sultanate. The "smiling pomegranates" of Jodhpur became famous in the court of Delhi. The prevalent type of agriculture throughout Northern India was however the cultivation of millet, barley, rice, cotton, pulses and oil-seeds with wheat and sugarcane added wherever canals and wells utilising the Persian wheels and large leather buckets improved the conditions of water supply, as in the localities of Delhi, Lahore, Sirhind, Dipalpur, Hissar, Firuzabad, Agra, Chandwar, Bayana, Jaunpur,

Lucknow or Patna. Babar remarks: "Autumn crops grow in Hindustan by the downpour of rains themselves; and strange it is that spring crops grow even when no rain falls". The Muslims lived mainly in the cities and towns, and the Hindu cultivating classes had to be protected, assisted and fostered. Barani observes that in two years during a famine, 70 lakhs of tankhas were advanced as SONDHAR or *taquavi* to the agriculturists. These loans could not be recovered, and were written off under Firuz Shah. Grain was also distributed from the royal stores. Sultan Muhammad ordered during a famine that every person in Delhi should be given 6 months' provisions from the imperial granary, at the rate of a pound and a half per person per day, small or great, freeman or slave. This is recorded by Ibn Batuta. Sultan Firoz completed five irrigation canals of the Sutlej and Jamuna for the amelioration of the condition of the peasantry, and reclaimed much waste land. The Jamuna canal to Hissar was as much as 150 miles long. In the Doab as many as 52 peasant colonies were planted, growing such remunerative crops as wheat, sugarcane and pulses as well as a variety of fruits.

Civil administration depended on a large number of Hindus in the lower rungs of the bureaucracy. The village accountants and headmen, who helped the administration to assess and collect the revenue from the peasantry, obtaining a commission for these tasks, continued to be Hindus. Under Ghyasuddin Tughluq, the village headmen and accountants, *Muqaddams* and *Khuts* were exempted from the payment of grazing dues (*charai*) or revenue (*Khiraj*). Ibn Batuta speaks of the Hindu Chaudhury of each *Paraganā*, under whom was the revenue-collector *Mutasarrif* or *Amil*. Below the latter was the crop inspector or appraiser called *Mushrif*. Below was the array of *gumasthas* and *peons*. All these were probably Hindus. Hindu *Rais*, *Ranahs*, *Thakurs*, *Sahs*, *Mehtahs* and *Pandits* are mentioned as rising to prominence and wealth in Delhi under Muhammad bin Tughluq, and the Hindu *Kharajis* and *Dhimmis* being rewarded by the Sultan with rich awards and appointed to governorships, high offices and important posts. The testimony of *Fatawa-i-jahandari* may not be reliable. Only the *Qazis* were installed in the cities and towns for the administration of justice taken over from the Hindus. Even *Qazi* judicial administration came into disrepute. Ibn Batuta mentions that the learned class had lost



its prestige, and Muhammad Tughluq who was terribly stern in administering justice freely punished Shaikhs and Maulvis for misconduct.

### **The Establishment of State Karkhanas**

Industry, trade and commerce were hardly disturbed by the Muslim conquest. The Hindu craftsmen, traders, merchants and bankers continued to ply their crafts and occupations as usual. In the capital city of Delhi, as in some of the provincial capitals later on, certain handicrafts such as cloth and silk-weaving were organised under state karkhanas to meet the demands of the courts. The general insecurity of life and forced labour and conversion under Muslim rulers and nobility led to a considerable exodus of Hindu craftsmen from Northern India. This was attempted to be offset by the establishment of royal stores and karkhanas after the Persian model by the Delhi Sultanate. These were managed by distinguished nobles assisted by subordinate superintendents (*Mutasarrifs*) who all received huge salaries and maintained a whole array of architects, masons and craftsmen of various kinds. The number of craftsmen under Alauddin was 70,000, out of whom 7,000 were masons and stone-workers reported to be so skilful in their work that they carried out the construction of a building in a fortnight at the longest. Firuz Shah Tughluq was anxious to obtain as many slaves as possible for both the royal court and the karkhanas and encouraged all officers, feudatories and nobles to send slaves as annual tribute for which a corresponding remission was made to them from the royal treasury. "Those chiefs who brought many slaves received the highest favour, and those that brought few received proportionately little consideration." Out of 200,000 who came to Delhi, Firuz employed 12,000 as craftsmen and masons and 40,000 in the royal equipage. Muhammad Tughluq employed 4,000 manufacturers of gold and tissues for brocades. There were also 4,000 silk-weavers in the karkhanas. The Hindu craftsmen taken as slaves in the karkhanas and converted to Islam, became accordingly the mainstay of the development of various artistic industries under the Delhi Sultanate whose karkhanas manufactured and stored vast quantities of fine muslins and silks, caps, curtains, tapestry, waist-bands, sashes, embroideries, shoes, harness, saddles, furniture, tents, armour and war material, not merely for the royal household and harem, army

and various state departments but also for gifts to the Amirs of the kingdom and to foreign rulers.

### The Principal Industries of Luxury

Besides the royal karkhanas of Delhi there were famous industrial centres in the provinces whose luxury goods found ready markets abroad. Bengal was noted for her fine muslins and silk-goods. The extraordinary variety of Bengal silks and cottons in the Turko-Afghan period is abundantly evident from the large number of names we meet with in the accounts of Varthema, Barbosa and Mukundaram—dhoti, sari, bairam, namone, lizati, caintar, douzar, sinabaff, kala pati sadi, agun pat sadi, pater bhumi, kanchi pat sadi, neta, tasar and pater pachhda. Like Bengal, Gujarat was also famous for fine cloth and silk goods. Deogir and Mahadevanagari were among the important centres of cloth manufacture. Besides the Deogiri cloth, the Deccan and Gujarat fine varieties included the baramia, salahiya, sherin, kattan-i-Rumi, siraj, shustari and bhirain. Deogiri cloth and Bengal muslin are both described by Amir Khusrau as so thin in texture that the body was visible through it. Dyeing and calico-painting supported the manufacture of cloths that showed bright colours and stripes. Barbosa and Varthema mention "painted cloth". Artistic industries based on work on steel, gold, silver and alloy also commanded foreign markets. Swords and daggers made in India had the highest reputation in Persia and Arabia being the finest in temper. Bengal was noted for the manufacture of basins, cups, steel guns, knives and scissors according to Mahuan. Gold and damascened silver work, Bidari inlay, ornamented and other delicate work were met with in many big Indian cities. The Sultans and nobility greatly prized such fine metal work and indulged on auspicious occasions in having imitation gardens with artificial fruit trees worked with gold and silver and jewellery.

But no monopoly of arts and crafts seems to have been established by the Sultans of Delhi as it was the case under the Mughal Emperors. Young nobles and soldiers seemed to have been given useful work in these karkhanas during the reign of Sikander Lodi. Certain branches of foreign trade came however under the royal monopoly. Ibn Batuta mentions one Saiyyad Abul Hasan Abadi carrying on business with royal capital and bringing goods for the king from Iraq and Khorasan. The great



bulk of India's foreign trade flowed, however, through the normal channels of Hindu private enterprise.

### The Principal Ports

Ibn Batuta (1333-1346) described Aden as the port of the Indians whence large ships owned by Hindu merchants came from Cambay, Quilon, Calicut and many other Malabar ports. Both Calicut and Quilon, which were compared by him with Alexandria, ranked as the major ports of the world in his time. Calicut was visited by merchants "from all quarters", from China, Sumatra, Ceylon, Maldives, Yemen and Fares". It was one of the largest harbours of the world, observed Ibn Batuta, who saw thirteen Chinese ships in the harbour and met the famous Indian ship-owner, Mithqual, who possessed vast wealth and many ships for his trade with India, China, Yemen and Fares. Calicut remained for centuries a most convenient mart for the vast trade of Persia, Syria, the Levant, India and Ceylon on one side and Sumatra, the Spice Islands and China on the other. A century and a half after Ibn Batuta, Varthema (1505-1508) found Calicut a famous emporium crowded with merchants from Ethiopia, Arabia and Persia, Syria and the Levant, Bengal and Sumatra. As many as fifteen thousand Arabs were domiciled here. "Having come to the place where the greatest fame of India is gathered up", Varthema observed the beginning of the bloody struggle between the Zamorin and the Portuguese that led to the ruin of this ancient port. Other important Arabian seaports of India visited by him were Cambay, Chaul, Goa and Cannanore. Besides Cambay, Nicolo de Conti (1419-1444) visited the ports of Quilon, Cochin, Calicut, Pacamuria, Helly (Monte de Ely) and Pendifetania (Pudipatana) in Malabar and on the Coromandel the port of Maliapura, the Mecca of Nestorian Christians. Nikitin (1468-1475), the Russian traveller, saw the ports of Cambay, Chaul, and Dabul and named the Indian Ocean as the "Doria Hondustankaia", according to trade parlance. It was from Dabul that he sailed for Ormuz travelling by land via Shiraz, Ispahan, and Tebriz to Trebizond, and thence by sea to Theodosia, modern Feodosia in Crimea. The Genoese traveller, Hieronimo di Santo Stefano (1496) sailed down the Red Sea touching at the ports of Massowa and Aden whence he crossed the Indian Ocean reaching the famous port of Calicut. From there he visited Ceylon and

Coromandel coast and sailed across the Bay of Bengal for Pegu, Java and Sumatra. Suffering shipwreck among the Maldives, he ultimately found his way to Cambay whence he managed to travel to Ormuz. In the Eastern waters from the flourishing ports of Saptagram and Sonargaon (south-east of Dacca) to Sumatra, Java and beyond there flourished a brisk and lucrative traffic. Bengal cloths, sugar, long pepper, ginger and cinnamon, found their markets in the Indian Archipelago during the 13th and 14th centuries. The vast and prosperous overseas trade through the ports of Saptagram, Sonargaon and Chittagong in Bengal, Broach and Laheri in Sind, Cambay in Gujarat, Goa, Quilon, Calicut and Hili (probably Nileśvara) on the Malabar coast and Kayal (Marco Polo's Cail) and Kaveripattanam (probably Ibn Batuta's Fattan) on the Coromandel Coast, continued to drain foreign gold and silver to India. The caravan trade with China, Central Asia and the Mediterranean world was, however, subjected to the political ups and downs in Khorasan and Turkestan.

### **New Trends of Trade**

Certain new trends of trade were discernible. India was gradually developing into the position of the agricultural mother of Asia and the industrial workshop of the world—a pre-eminence which was established by 1500 A.D. From the ports of Gujarat, apart from a large variety of printed cloth, silks and muslins, cereals such as rice, wheat and millets were supplied to countries round the Persian Gulf, while Bengal or Bangala according to Ibn Batuta (1333-1346) was a vast maritime country with regular trade with the Indian Archipelago. Varthema (1503-1508) mentioned that the two ports Khambayat or Cambay in Gujarat and Bangala, the port of Bengal, supplied all 'Persia, Tartary, Turkey, Syria, Barbary, that is Africa, Arabian Felix, Ethiopia, India', and many islands of the Indian Ocean with a variety of cotton and silk goods. He refers to about three ships of different countries visiting Cambay every year and estimates that the export of cotton and silk from Bengal comes to fifty shiploads. He declared the Indian craftsmen to be "the greatest and most expert workers throughout the world". With reference to Bengal, he recorded that this was "the richest country in the world for cotton, ginger, sugar, grain and flesh of every kind". Bengal supplied cereals, sugar and textiles to Malaya and the Indian Archipelago.



Mahuan found the export trade of Bengal sugar especially remunerative. Leather was used in packing sugar parcels for overseas trade. Barbosa also found sugar, the principal article of export from Bengal. The two maritime provinces of Gujarat and Bengal enjoying excellent harbour facilities were the most prosperous, according to the testimony of Wassaf for Gujarat which he describes as "a rich and populous country containing 7,000 villages and towns and the population rolling in wealth" and of Ibn Batuta for Bengal which he describes as a prosperous, fertile and swarming region. In Bengal both north-west, with its towns of Gaur (Laknauti) and Tanda and south-west (Rarh) with Hooghly and Saptagrām which Ibn Batuta did not visit, were opulent and thronged with population. The celebrity of the port of Saptagrām goes back to the first or second century of the Christian era. It is described in the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea*, as the port of Ganges and maintained its importance down to 1585 when Ralph Fitch visited it and found it "a fair city for a city of the Moors, and very plentiful of all things". The Arab traveller entered Bengal through the estuary of the Hooghly, crossing the confluence of the Ganges and Jamuna (modern Sagara) which was a sacred place of Hindu pilgrimage and passed by the famous port of Saptagrām (Satgams) and proceeded to Sylhet in Assam in order to meet a celebrated Muslim saint, belonging to the sect of Qureish. Staying there for three days he sailed down the river which must be the old course of the Brahmaputra and Meghna to Sudakwan, identified with Chittagong, which is described as "a large town on the coast of the great sea". The banks of the Meghna, he found heavily populated. "On its banks there are water wheels, orchards, and villages to right and to left, like the Nile in Egypt. We travelled down the river for fifteen days between villages and orchards, just as if we were going through a bazar". He embarked on a junk for a 40-days' voyage to Sumatra from Sonargaon (15 miles south-east of Dacca), one of the old Muhammadan capitals which he reached by his river journey. In the south Malaybar (i. e. the Malabar coast from Sandabur or Goa to Quilon) and Mabar (i. e. the Coromandel coast) lined with numerous ports which contributed to the wealth and profitable commerce of the two extensive hinterlands. The brisk commerce from the southern coasts, visited in successive ages by the Greek, Roman, Arab and Persian merchants from the

West, and the Chinese merchants from the East, continued unhampered until the advent of the Portuguese, despite the decay and ruin of many ancient and famous pattams or ports. Ibn Batuta testifies to the importance particularly of Cambay, Calicut, Quilon and Kāveripattanam as transshipment ports for the trade with China and the Spice Islands. Varthema mentions Cannanore as an important port that carried on considerable trade with the Persian Gulf and had many Arab merchants and traders in the city. Gujarat became important for the production of cotton, pepper, ginger and indigo in the 13th and 14th centuries, while Bengal became well known in the commercial world for her production of cotton, rice, sugar and ginger apart from her celebrated cotton and silk fabrics. Mahuan, a Muslim Chinaman and Secretary of the Chinese envoy and traveller Cheng Ho (1406) mentions the following important manufactures of Bengal: fine muslins, silk handkerchiefs and caps embroidered with gold, basins, cups, steel guns, knives and scissors and white paper. It was this export trade of Bengal that contributed to the remarkable prosperity of the region. According to Barros, the wealth of Bengal before the reign of Sher Shah was considered equal in amount to the joint wealth of Gujarat and Vijayanagara. The indigo trade with the Mediterranean world was developing from the ports of Cambay, Broach and Saptagrām. Various other kinds of Indian export are mentioned by European travellers. Barbosa mentions cornelians, gingelly oil, sandalwood, spikenard, tutenag, opium, and certain other drugs unknown to Europeans, but greatly esteemed by the people of Malacca and China. A new and important item of Indian import, apart from gold, silver, copper and vitriol came into prominence in this period—the supply of horses from Kis, Hormes, Dofar and Soer, as mentioned by Marco Polo, who visited Kayal in 1288 A.D. and especially referred to the unfavourable climate of South India for the breeding of horses. He mentions Mabbar (the strip of land extending from Kulam to Nellore in South India) as the chief entrepot of trade in Arab horses. Jaisi speaks of the horses coming from Persia, Arabia, Irāq, Turkestan, Balkh, and Bhūtān. One of the southern kingdoms imported as many as 2,000 horses every year, coming largely from the ports of Arabia and the Persian Gulf. Ibn Batuta also refers to the flourishing trade in horses of the Turks, who brought them in droves of six thousand or so from the country



of Azov to Sind, and thence to Multan, the most famous horse market of Northern India, where a horse would fetch from a hundred to five hundred dinārs. Horses were in great demand in India at the time due to chronic wars, these being "used in battle covered with armour". Both the northern and southern kingdoms from the 13th to the 16th centuries were indeed anxious to obtain an uninterrupted supply of war-steeds from Arabia, Persia and the Caucasus. Varthema found Cannanore to be the port to which steeds were brought from Persia, there being a levy here of 25 ducats for each horse.

On the whole the balance of trade had been entirely in India's favour. As a result "merchants of all countries" according to the author of *Masalik-al-Absar*, "never cease to carry pure gold into India, and to bring back in exchange commodities, herbs and gums". The great port-towns of India such as Cambay, Broach, Cannanore, Calicut, Fattan, Saptagram, and Chittagong and the inland marts such as Multan, Lahore, Delhi, Patna, Gour, Deogiri and Vijayanagara were frequented by foreign traders and merchants many of whom settled down. The major foreign trading groups were the Moors from Arabia and the Khurasanis from Middle Asia who traded all over the country. The Moors and Turks played a most important role in India's sea-borne commerce while the Khurasanis were the principal intermediaries in the land trade with China, Persia, Arabia and the Mediterranean. Foreign trade and shipping were not monopolised by the Arabs. Mahuan records that a class of rich people in Bengal built ships and took to commerce with foreign lands. The principal indigenous trading groups were represented by the Multanis of Northern India, the Gujarati banyas on the Arabian sea-coast from Sind to Malabar, and the Banjaras or Caravanis of Rajputana, Central India and Gujarat. Commercial transactions were undertaken on a large scale in the Turko-Afghan period along with the system of deposits and hundis circulating from town to town through branches, agencies and brokers. Business rules and conventions came to be incorporated into the statutes of Firuz Shah Tughluq. Merchants and traders could amass vast wealth. Nicolo Conti observes that the merchants between Indo and Gange were so rich that one of them owned forty ships which he employed for the shipment of his own goods. All of them were estimated to be worth 50,000 ducats (gold) each.

### The Extravagance and Drain of Public Money

The economic condition of the common people was not as intolerable as was sought to be made out by some of the Muslim ecclesiastics and court chroniclers who wanted to curry the favour of the Sultans and produce an impression in the Moslem world about the abject misery of the Kafir subject population. Qazi Mughis-uddin, for instance, observes, "No Hindu could hold up his head, and in their houses no sign of gold or silver tankas or jitals was to be seen, and Chowdhris and Khuts had not means enough to ride on horseback, to find weapons, to get fine clothes, or to indulge in betel". But the testimony of the poet Amir Khusrau, who bemoans the fate of the common man, is not unreliable: "Every pearl in the royal crown is but the crystallised drop of blood fallen from the tearful eyes of the poor peasant". The burden of taxation on the Hindu population was no doubt heavy and increased under the Sultans who were more greedy, oppressive and profligate than usual. Debased courts, where drinking and gambling were pernicious vices, and large harems, which were constantly replenished by the supply of girls from far and near, caused a serious drain on the material resources of the country. Every ruler sought to hoard considerable quantities of gold to provide against an evil day. Vast sums of money were spent on queens, mistresses or concubines, whose numbers were governed only by the Sultan's whims and caprices, while enormous numbers of slaves amounting to thousands were maintained in the royal establishment. The number of royal slaves rose from 50,000 under Alauddin to 200,000 under Firoz Tughluq. Fabulous sums were also squandered away in the royal gifts. Muhammad Tughluq in making his gifts did not take into consideration a lower measure than a lakh and a crore of tankas, or a maund of gold, silver or valuables. He disdained to look upon gold, silver, pearls and emeralds except as potsherds and stones. Such is the testimony of Barani. The public banquets also entailed a large drain on the treasury. Malik Muhammad Jaisi describes the extraordinary variegation of the menu in a royal banquet. "The gardener came and shouted, "They have taken everything and cleared me out. The kitchen has taken everything savoury, who asks about me now?" No less than fifty tray-fulls of choicest dishes were provided for his staff every mid-day by Imad-ul-mulk,



the muster master of Balban. The entire resources of the kingdom were at the command of the Sultan who had absolute power to confiscate the wealth and property of the nobles. The heavy land taxes, the cesses and special taxes, import duties and tributes, were all at his disposal.

Such were the general extravagance and drain of public money that when the Sultan and his vast retinue went about on tour in the country there were widespread privation and suffering. Amir Khusrau mentions that when Sultan Kaiqubad and his entourage halted at Jaipur 'the earth was denuded of all grass and the river dried of water and thanks to the compulsory requisitions of the royal party the people were left without any food for themselves or grass and fodder for their animals.' Agriculture, in India, has always been a gamble in the rains. The luxury and profligacy of the Sultans which were imitated by all rulers, chiefs and nobles throughout the country including even Rajputana dissipated the resources of the land and greatly reduced the staying power of the peasantry.

### **Grain Prices during Famines**

The monsoon was as precarious in the past as it is now and there were appalling hardship and mortality during famines. Ibn Batuta records the famine price of wheat at six tankas per maund when a famine broke out in India and Sind. Again the price of corn was recorded at 16 jitals per seer. During a famine which visited the land in the reign of Sultan Firoz, grain prices rose to one jital (corresponding to pice) per seer. The Hindus flocked to Delhi with their families from the Siwalik Hills. Barani observes that twenty or thirty of them drowned themselves in the Jamuna when they found their life unbearable. There was considerable loss of life at the time of famines that occurred in the times of Jalal-ud-din Khilji, Muhammad bin Tughluq and Firoz Tughluq. Wars and campaigns also led to an abnormal rise of prices. In Sindh at the time of the invasion of Firuz Tughluq the price of grain rose to 8 to 10 jitals per seer.

### **Prices of the Principal Commodities**

But apart from famines and wars the general level of prices and cost of living were low. Though the standard of living was unsatisfactory, the bulk of the population was free from want and

misery. Ibn Batuta describes the food of the common people in Sind—shorghum and peas, of which they make bread, with fish and buffalo milk; in Rohilkhand—bread made of peas or a handful of black-chick peas fried with little rice, and they used to wear “double woven cloaks”. In Kanauj, the traveller found prices cheap and sugar plentiful. In Goa, Maharashtra, he found the food of the Brahmans and Khatris consisting of rice, vegetable and oil of sesame. Neither did they slaughter animals nor drink wine. Corn, milk and curds which are regarded by Ala-ud-din Khilji as the barest necessities of life were in plenty in his reign. Women had their spinning wheels in their cottages. A man could buy, in the reign of Ibrahim Lodi, for only one Bahluli (equal to 1.6 jital) as much as ten maunds of corn, five seers of oil and ten yards of coarse cloth. In the reign of Alauddin, a soldier with one horse could live comfortably with 234 tankas a year, i.e. less than 20 tankas per mensem. According to the testimony of Ibn Batuta, the price level was the lowest in Bengal, “Nowhere in the world have I seen any land where prices are lower than there (in Bangala)”. Ibn Batuta gives the following illustrations of cheapness: a piece of fine cotton cloth of excellent quality, thirty cubits long, sold for 2 tankas, a beautiful slave girl for 8 tankas, a goat for 3 tankas, 1 chicken for one jital, 15 pigeons for 8 jitals, a ram for 16 jitals, sugar for 32 jitals per maund and rice for 8 jitals per maund. The Indian (Delhi) dinar or silver tanka weighing 175 grains was equivalent to  $2\frac{1}{2}$  Moroccan dinars or 120 dirhams (small). Thus 64 jitals = 8 dirhams = 1 tanka or dinar of Delhi, according to Ibn Batuta. In Bengal 1 tanka or 8 dirhams was sufficient to buy food stuffs for the maintenance of the family of a Moroccan comprising three persons, man, wife and servant for a whole year. The wages of ordinary labourers were between 10 and 12 tankas per mensem. The prices of the major commodities during this period, are given below as compared by Muhammad Ashraf:



Commodities		Ala-ud-din	Muhammad-bin-Tughluq	Firuz Shah
Prices in Jitals per maund.				
Wheat	...	7½	12	8
Barley	...	4	8	4
Paddy	...	5	14	x
Pulses	...	5	x	
Lintils	...	3	4	4
Sugar (white)	...	100	80	x
(soft)	...	60	64	120, 140
Mutton	...	10	64	x
Ghee	...	16	x	100

For other commodities including certain luxuries, the following prices are recorded in the reign of Alauddin when the price level has been considered as normal:

Coarse blankets	...	6 jitals per piece
Fine	...	36 „ „
Chadar	...	10 „ „
Aligarh muslin	...	6 tankas
Delhi muslin	...	17 „
Milch cow	...	3 or 4 tankas
She-goat	...	12 or 14 jitals
Pony	...	10 to 12 tankas

A female and a male slave in the household cost 5 to 12 tankas and 20 to 40 tankas respectively in the reign of Ala-ud-din; later in the reign of Muhammad Tughluq the price was 8 tankas for a female slave in Bengal. Ibn Batuta records 8 tankas for a slave in Bengal. The general level of prices was the lowest during the reign of Ibrahim Lodi when 1 bahloli (=1.6 jital) could buy 10 maunds of corn, 5 seers of oil and 19 yards of coarse cloth, and was adequate enough to feed a person together with a horse and attendant the whole way from Delhi to Agra.

1 gold tanka = 175 grains of gold (Muhammad Tughluq's tanka of 199 grains).

64 jitals = 8 hashtkanis (or dirhams) = 1 silver tanka or dinar of 175 grains of silver.

= 1 Rupee in Akbar's time (180 grains), a little more than the modern rupee.

= 2s. 3d.

### The Cost of Living

It is estimated that the ratio of gold to silver in the Turko-Afghan times was 7 or 8 to 1 as compared with 9 to 1 at the time of Sher shah and Akbar, 14 to 1 at the time of the East India Company and 22 or 23 to 1 today. There was a vast accumulation of gold in the country due to the considerable commerce of Gujarat, South India and Bengal, and the exceedingly favourable balance of trade. Both silver and copper tankas could buy in normal times many times more than the coins do at present. The general cost of living of the age could be gauged from Ala-ud-din's fixation of 234 tankas per annum or  $19\frac{1}{2}$  tankas per month as the pay of a soldier, on which he could subsist at a moderately minimum standard of living, and of 78 tankas in addition for the upkeep of two horses. Four persons could enjoy a meal comprising roast beef, bread and butter, according to Masalik-ul-absār, costing 1 jital only. On this basis the average dietary of a person having two meals a day would cost 15 jitals per month. An average family of 3.4 consumption units would require per month 51 jitals or about  $\frac{3}{4}$  tanka per month. With other expenditure and amenities the cost of living of a family works to about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tankas per mensem. In the reign of Ibrahim Lodi the chronicler records that 5 Tankas were sufficient for the maintenance of a whole family and its retainers (who were quite a few then) for a whole month. Thus the pay of the soldier varying from 20 to 30 tankas was exorbitant in relation to the price level. The slaves of the royal household who obtained in addition to food and clothing 10 tankas and 20 tankas respectively under Muhammad bin Tughluq and Firuz Tughluq, were also generously remunerated. A wet nurse, we are told by Amir Khusrau, was paid 10 tankas. A slave was given a daily ration of 3 seers of meat together with spices and a monthly ration of 2 maunds of wheat and rice in the reign of Muhammad Tughluq. Besides he was paid 10 tankas per month and 4 suits of clothes every year. The average cost of living would be somewhere about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tankas for a whole family during this period, the tanka providing double the amount of the necessities of life that could be purchased with the silver coin or the rupia of the reign of Akbar. The following would show a rough comparison of the prices of the principal commodities during the reigns of Ala-ud-din and Akbar as compiled by Muhammad



Ashraf. (The dam of Akbar is about  $1\frac{3}{5}$  times a tanka in value or bears a ratio of 5 : 8.).

Commodities			Under Ala-ud-din	Under Akbar	
(Prices per maund) ...			In Jitals	In Dams	In Jitals
1	Wheat	...	$7\frac{1}{2}$	12	$9\frac{3}{5}$
2	Barley	...	4	8	$6\frac{2}{5}$
3	Rice	...	5	20	16
4	Sugar (unrefined)	...	20	56	$44\frac{4}{5}$
5	Ghee	...	16	105	84
6	Oil	...	$13\frac{3}{10}$	80	64
7	Salt	...	5	16	$12\frac{4}{5}$
8	Mutton	...	10	54	$43\frac{1}{5}$
9	Mash	...	5	16	$12\frac{4}{5}$
10	Gram	...	5	$16\frac{1}{2}$	$13\frac{1}{5}$

Reckoning that the average price level doubled in the time of Akbar as compared with the time of Ala-ud-din, the cost of living under the Sultanat is only one-fourth of what prevailed in India in 1938. This will be evident from a later discussion of the subject.

### The Standard of Living

Afif records in the reign of Firuz Tughluq the following prices of transport which were exceedingly cheap. A man going from Delhi to Firuzabad had to pay four jitals for a carriage, six for a mule, twelve for a horse, and half a tanka for a palanquin. For one going from Delhi to Agra, 1 bahloli (= 1.6 jital) would suffice for himself, his horse and his four attendants in the reign of Ibrahim Lodi. Coolies were found ready for employment, and Afif remarks that they earned a decent income. He also mentions that the peasants had plenty of gold and silver, and no woman was without ornaments, and no home wanting in excellent beds and coaches. The upper class used to consume regularly bread, roast meat, reori, halwa, yakni and such fruits as melons and cucumber. We learn from Ibn Batuta that Sultan Muhammad Tughluq's hospitality gift for the nobility included Indian flour, flesh meat, sugar, candy, ghee and betel, and the equipment included a light cot, which a slave could carry on his head, mattresses, pillows, and coverlets, made of silk, and robes of goat hair and of linen, embroidered in gold. Gold brocades and

embroidery were commonly used as apparel and plates of gold and silver for eating purposes by the nobility. There was profound disparity of wealth and income as between the common man and an Amir. While an ordinary worker, servant or menial earned only ten or twelve tankas per mensem, a single pair of Firuz Tughluq's shoes cost 70,000 tankas. Sultan Muhammad bin Tughluq gave a Persian merchant as a token of hospitality 1 lakh tankas of gold; and a poet for his laudatory verses 1,000 silver tankas for each verse. The Amir Malik Shahin Shahna left on his death, according to Afif, 50 lakhs of tankas in cash besides jewels and other valuable articles. Bashir, another noble of the time of Firuz Tughluq, accumulated the sum of 160 millions. No wonder that the poet Amir Khusrau said: "Every pearl in the royal crown is but the crystallised drop of blood from the tearful eyes of the poor peasant".

### Changes in the Class Structure

The Indian social hierarchy rooted in the metaphysical conception of Varṇāśrama was a horizontal gradation, compatible with a good deal of mobility from one functional group to another on the basis theoretically of spiritual rather than pecuniary status, that was not obscured by the assimilation of large number of foreign immigrant folks into the social structure as Kshatriyas or Rajputs. Islam in the 13th century introduced in India for the first time a vertical social stratification, grounded in wealth, political privilege and power, that went completely against the social traditions and attitudes of the country. At the top of the social ladder were in the order of precedence the Khans, Maliks and Amirs, usually Turks and such foreigners as the Persians, Afghans and Mongols. Some of the Afghan nobles had as many as 30,000 to 40,000 paid men in their establishments. Many were the struggles and squabbles between the Turkish, Indian and foreign nobility that all strove for power and privilege in the Court of the Sultanat of Delhi. The high officials, both civil and military, were usually recruited from this heterogenous social group. They all enjoyed high salaries (the Ministers receiving 20,000 to 40,000 tankas and the Secretaries 14,000 tankas yearly) and lived in great pomp and luxury with large retinues. Below them was the ordinary Muslim population who lived largely in the cities—soldiers, lower-grade officials, artisans, clerks and shop-



keepers—and which also included the slaves mostly converted from Hinduism, who were brought up in Muslim households. The Muslim masses converted from Hinduism, did not improve their social status materially and in fact followed on the whole Hindu social practices and even caste distinctions. Even in the same city the Muslims derived from different social strata lived separately in different quarters. Honour, office and privilege went usually to the Muslims of foreign extraction, under the Sultanat and the Muslim masses had to acquiesce. The foreign Turkish nobles were, on the other hand, too anxious to make their fortunes quickly in Hindustan and return to their country with ill-gotten riches. Thus the kingdom suffered, and the administration became corrupt and inefficient.

The Hindu population was labelled zimmi (or protected subjects), "infidels and polytheists" and suffered from a number of civil and political disabilities. They had to pay the *jizya* as a badge of religious inferiority and their exercise of religious rites and ceremonies was by sufferance. No public demonstrations were permitted. The Hindus had also to reckon with the indirect effect of discrimination as well as forcible conversion under bigoted rulers and chiefs or during times of famine. But long social and cultural intercourse between the Hindus and Muslims had its inevitable effects. There were inter-marriages between the noble houses of the Hindus and Muslims that in some measure softened religious bitterness and led to the mutual borrowing of social customs and manners. Certain Muslim houses adopted the Hindu rites of *Sati* and *Jauhar*. The Sultanat left the village administration largely in the hands of Hindu headmen and accountants. Both Qutubuddin and Balban appointed Hindu nobles to high offices of the state. The list of officials in the court of Muhammad Tughluq includes such Hindu names as Nanka, Lodha, Pira and Kishen. Himū, a *Banya* by caste, rose to be the chief minister and general of Sultan Adil Shah Sur, who entrusted him with the subjugation of the Afghans of the *Kassani* sect and after his victory conferred on him the title of *Vikramāditya*. Later on he transferred to him all the wealth and power of the State, leaving nothing for himself except the barest means of subsistence. The Mughal conquest of Hindustan was achieved by the Mughals fighting against and defeating the Hindu minister and commander of the Afghan army. But the subject Hindu

population in the Provincial capitals and towns was on the whole exploited and demoralised by foreign conquest, the effects of which were aggravated by the prominence of the Ulemas and Saiyyads and the power of the foreign nobility coming into Hindustan. The land tax, amounting to one-third of the gross-produce along with other burdens, bore heavily and almost exclusively on the mass of the Hindu population who were agriculturists. Yet agriculture, industry and trade of the country were kept alive for the rulers by the Hindus who lived sheltered lives in the villages far away from the luxury, vice and intrigue of the Muslim courts. The Muslim conquest introduced new racial and political elements of power and privilege into the social stratification of India. The Turko-Afghan rule for three centuries focussed new social trends associated with the widening of the social distance between the rich and the poor in a stratified community, on the one hand, and the social democracy of God's elect, on the other, which Hindu culture had to reckon with.



## CHAPTER XXVIII

### INDIA AND ISLAM: THE RAPPROCHEMENT OR HINDUSTĀNĪ PHASE

#### **Blend of Hindū and Islamic Traditions in Art and Literature**

The Turko-Afghan power of Delhi even at its height did not represent the true culture of Islam in India. As it markedly declined during the reign of the Tughluqs in the face of Hindu resistance, the centre of Muslim civilisation migrated from Delhi to Jaunpur, Gaur, Ahmadabad and Māndu under Muslim rule in the 15th century. In these various kingdoms, there was a great revival of architecture and learning based on a synthesis of Hindu tradition and Muslim culture. This was possible because the Afghans in spite of their iconoclastic zeal were no strangers to Indian culture and way of living, Gāndhāra forming an integral part of Indian empires in different epochs. In Delhi, the architecture of the slave and Khilji periods, such as the famous Kutub Minar, the Jama—at Khana Masjid and the Alai Darwaza showed the predominance of Islamic influences. Yet we find Hindu motifs of temple-bells and chains in the massive pillars of the Kutub mosque, while its screen of arches also bears Hindu influences. The earliest Muslim city of India, the first among the seven Muslim cities of Delhi, shows an unmistakable admixture of Hindu and Islamic traditions and techniques in art and architecture. But in the provinces the blend was surer, more discriminative and more creative, and regional styles bore a greater impress of Indian genius than of foreign influence. This has been stressed by Sir John Marshall who emphasises the development of new "Indian styles" of architecture distinct in every region, such as Bengal, Bijapore, Gujarat and Malwa in the Turko-Afghan period. "At Jaunpur and in the Deccan", he observes, "the local styles enjoyed greater ascendancy, while in Bengal the conquerors not only adopted the fashion of building in brick, but adorned their structures with chiselled and moulded enrichments frankly imitated

from Hindu prototypes". So, too, in Western India they appropriated to themselves almost 'en bloc' the beautiful Gujarati style, which has yielded some of the finest buildings of medieval India, and in Kashmir they did the same with the striking wooden architecture which must have been long prevalent in the part of the Himālayas. The Adina Masjid built at Pandua, and the Sona Masjids and the Quadam Rasul at Gaur, the Jami Masjid in Ahmadabad and the Hindola and Jahaj Mahals in Mandu are some of the best specimens of Indian architecture, characterised by a judicious blend of grandeur and massiveness of structural forms due to Islamic influence with the beauty, finish and refinement of Hindu decorative motifs and designs skilfully dovetailed by Hindu architects and craftsmen.

### The Literary Synthesis in Khusrau, the Parrot of India

The synthesis of Muslim and Hindu elements of culture bore an even richer harvest in the field of literature. In the twelfth century four Muslims, Masud, Kutubali, Akram and Faiz, won celebrity as Hindi poets. In the fourteenth century the Hindu physical sciences found a place in Izullidin Khalid's *Dalail-i-Firuz Shah Tughluq*, (1351-1388). Amir Khusrau, the famous poet who flourished in Delhi in the fourteenth century, is regarded by many as an originator of Urdu, literally, camp dialect, that combined Hindi and Persian. He was born in Patiala, his father being a Turk and mother a Rajput (Pawal) woman. In his poems on the various seasons of India he chose a theme familiar in Sanskrit kāvya but gave a poignancy, naturalness and freshness by leaning upon the dialects used by the common people. Thus even after a lapse of centuries his songs are still sung in the villages of Northern India. Such absorption of the spirit of poetry of Hind shows Khusrau's genius. Commenting on the language of Hind, Khusrau remarks that it is superior to the language of Rai and Rum (cities in Persia) but inferior to the Arabic; and in his exquisite verses he used such important dialects of Hindi as braja-bhāsha, avadhī and khari boli. Even Sanskrit words have come into Khusrau's verses and poetical prose writings. The development of Urdu is an indubitable evidence of the linguistic rapprochement of the Hindus and Muslims. Certain Hindi works are also attributed to Amir Khusrau. Khusrau himself observes "I have scattered among my friends a few chapters of Hindi poetry also,



but I would be content here with a mere mention of this fact". "The parrot of India", (hoopae) as he was called by Alauddin, wanted to vie with Nizami in the establishment of his literary kingdom in Persian in both Hindustan and Western Asia and any writings of his in Hindi must be regarded as his pastime to which he attached little importance, especially as he had to "sweat in labour from head to foot and from morn to night and from night to morn" for his earnings? Thus Khusrau's Hindi poetry largely comprised stray songs, dohas and ghazals (with alternate Persian and Hindi lines) transmitted from mouth to mouth. One of the beautiful Hindi dohas traditionally attributed to him was recited at the grave of his spiritual preceptor, the famous Sufi Nizam Uddin Aulia; "The fair one lies on the couch with her black tresses scattered on her face: O Khusrau, come home now, for night has fallen all over the world". The consensus of opinion is that Khusrau could neither excel nor even equal his great predecessor Nizami. Among his many romances the most successful was that in which he utilized not the materials of Persian stories that were so superbly used by Nizami, but Indian legends. This was the *Hasht Bihisht* or the Eight Paradises in which his plan was novel, at least for Persian literature. Khusrau's enduring reputation rests however on his exquisite lyrics, characterised by a burning passion, superb choice and economy of words and unique sense of music. The *ghazals* were his strikingly original contribution to Persian literature, won the appreciation of both Sadi and Hafiz and were widely imitated throughout Asia. The mystical vein in the poet's ecstasy and rapture also contributed towards the lasting popularity of the ghazals, many of which Nizamuddin Aulia loved to hear during his meditations in his life time and which have since then been recited by the Sufis and their disciples, who have danced in joy over them. We give below one of his ghazals (Translation by Mohammad Habib) singing about the emptiness of the world and the muddy vesture of decay:

"Thou takest life out of our clay  
And yet within our hearts doth live—  
Inflicting on us pang on pang  
Doth yet a pallative give.

Thy flashing sword has laid all waste  
The troubled garden of my heart;

Yet what a glory to this wreck  
 The rays of thy great throne impart.  
 "The two vain, empty worlds," they say,  
 "Is price that all must pay for Thee."  
 Raise up the value, raise the cost.  
 This is too cheap—as all can see.  
 From the vain tenement of clay  
 My soul one day shall freedom find;  
 And yet my heart for ever shall  
 Remain with Thy great love entwined.  
 Khusrau: Thy grey locks and old age  
 Sort not with love for idols young;  
 And yet for such a senseless quest  
 Thou hast thy soul for ever flung."

The following ghazal (Translation by Mohammad Wahid Mirza) deals with man's awakening.

"The tipsy rose woke early in the dawn  
 And filled the poppy's cup with sweetest wine,  
 Here drowsed the jasmin by the rose's side  
 There stood alert the cypress straight and fine.  
 The wind blew soft, the narcissus dosed  
 Its body swayed, now drooped and now arose,  
 I in the garden by my friend lay 'wake  
 My friend—forsooth the moon itself was she,  
 But soon alas, my side she left  
 And grief was all that was left for me."

While he was only eight, Amir became the disciple of Sheikh Nazimuddin, and this connection proved immensely fruitful to the poet-mystic especially towards the latter part of his literary career. We give below a religious verse (Mohammad Habib's translation) from Nazimuddin:

"The garment by thy separation torn  
 Living, once more, once more reknit, I must  
 And if I die, accept my frank excuse  
 Alas, the hopes that crumble into dust".

### The Genesis of Hindi Literature

If Urdu owes its origin to Amir Khusrau, who devoted his long creative life to productions in Persian, Urdu and Sanskrit,



Hindi romantic poetry perhaps owes its beginning to one of his contemporaries Mulla Daud (about 1400 A.D.), the author of *Narak āur Chānda ki kāhānī*. Several Muslim poets followed up the Hindi literary romantic tradition including Kutban, author of the *Mrgāvati*, Manjhan, author of the *Madhumālātī*, Jaisi, who lived in the time of Humayūn and was the author of the *Padmāvati*, and Usman, author of *Chitrāvalī*. The dominating features of this romantic movement in Hindi literature, in which Muslim writers took such a leading part, were the treatment of human love in the pattern of divine love and the merging of the sensuous and the spiritual in the ceaseless adventure of the love-intoxicated soul that defies social conventions. This literary movement merged in the later mystical-philosophical movement of Sufism under the influence of the Hindu philosophy of life. The leading figure among these Muslim poets was Malik Muhammad Jaisi, who was born in 1494 and spent the latter part of his life in the seclusion of the Ramnagar jungle at Amethi in Oudh. He is the harbinger at once of Hindi literature and Hindu-Muslim cultural amity, his epic on the life of the Rajput heroine *Padmāvati* (1540) showing a harmonious blending of ancient Hindu Yoga and medieval Sufi mysticism. He is profoundly influenced by the teaching of Kabir (1410-1518) (whom he mentions in the *Akhra-wat*, stanza 43), and traditionally regarded as a Sufi of high calibre. At the same time he gives abundant testimony to his familiarity with the Goraknāthi Yoga tradition. No doubt he takes an honourable place as one of the first and brightest in the shining galaxy of saints and poets in the middle ages who could neither be called specifically Hindu nor specifically Muslim and brought about that religious syncretism which found its culmination at the time of Akbar. Jaisi's profound indebtedness to the Upanishadic thought is evident in the following from his preface which expresses at once God's immanence and transcendence :

"The Lord hath no life, and yet He liveth ;  
 He hath no hands, and yet He maketh all things ;  
 He hath no tongue, yet He telleth everything ;  
 He hath no bodily form, yet that which He shaketh, is shaken.  
 Ears hath He not, yet heareth He all things ;  
 Heart hath He not, yet the Wise One discriminateth all things ;  
 He hath no eyes, yet all doth He see ;  
 How can any one discern as He doth?"

Yet Jaisi in Sufi fashion speaks of the human and divine love slipping into each other. "He who is wounded by the words of love (viraha), what is hunger and what is delusion to him? He changeth his appearance and becometh a hermit, like a jewel covered and hidden in the dust". "The body which love hath has neither blood nor flesh". The doorway of love is regarded as leading to the Yogi's emancipation as in the cases of the classical lovers of India: Bikram (Vikramāditya) and Sapnavati (Champāvati), Madhupachh and Mugdhāvati, Raj Kunwar and Mrgāvati, Khanadavat and Madhumālātī, Sursari and Premāvati, and Anirudh (Aniruddha) and Ushā. The poet also speaks of such deep love as that of the moth which seizes the lamp flame with its lips and of the bee which does not see the thorn of the Ketaki flower. Like Laila of Persian romance the lover in Jaisi is burnt by love's distress and becomes like a heap of ashes. He grasps the Pingalā and Suṣumnā Naris of Hindu Yogic contemplation, (derived by the poet-mystic from the tradition of Gorakhnāth whose shrine he somewhere mentions is sacred—the spiritual preceptor (guru) par excellence who gives his disciple a new incarnation and a new body) and his gaze becomes absorbed in vacant contemplation. "The man of love is like a drop of water that is mingled in the ocean. He is lost and cannot be found by seeking". All this is Persian and Sufi romanticism dovetailed into the Hindu philosophy of life. In the first stanza of his Envoy the poet gives indeed the key to his allegorical treatment of the love story. "We make the body Chitaur, the mind the King: we recognise the heart as Singhala, the intellect as the lotus lady. The spiritual guide is the parrot who showed the way: without a spiritual guide who can find the Absolute in this world? Nāgamatī is the cares of this world: he whose thoughts are bound up therewith does not escape. Rāghava the messenger is Satan, and the Sultan Ala-ud-din is illusion. Consider the love story in this manner: receive instruction if you are able to receive it." In literary style the Padmāvati of Jaisi like its predecessors the Mrgāvati of Kutban and the Madhumālātī of Manjhan combines the passion and idealism of the Persian masnavis with the discipline and restraint of the Hindu classical Charitakāvyas. Thus these achieved in literary treatment a fusion of Sanskrit and Persian techniques and motifs and in religious expression the integration of the universal mystical elements of Hinduism and Islam. Such are the basis and



background of the genesis of provincial literature—the cup of strong naive emotions from which the Hindu and Muslims alike drank deep, Urdu proceeding from Amir Khusrau and Hindi proceeding from Jaisi, both embodying a fervent, deep-rooted synthesis of Hindu and Islamic myths and doctrines as well as of literary styles of Sanskrit and Persian.

### **Interchange of Thought between India and Arabia**

The development of a vigorous vernacular literature followed the intellectual and cultural impact between Delhi and Baghdad. Indian thought reached Baghdad with the conquest of Sind in the beginning of the eighth century; and it was in the times of Caliphs Mansur and Harun Rashid that Indian philosophy and religion came to be widely known and discussed in the Arab intellectual circles. Not merely a number of Indian scholars were maintained at the courts of these Caliphs but the Buddhist monasteries of Balkh and Bokhara also ransacked for famous Indian works to be translated into Arabic. The Indian system of numerals (Al Ruqum—Al Hindiyyah) along with the astronomical tables was introduced into Arabia in the eighth century A.D. It was an Indian ambassador who brought the latter to Baghdad in 773 A.D. Several Indian astronomical works were translated from Sanskrit into Arabic at this time, the first being the *Sind-Hind*, the well-known astronomical treatise of Brahmagupta, translated by Al Fazari about 775 A.D. with the assistance of Manika. Abdulla bin Ahmad Sarquasti and Ibn Said of Spain entered into a discussion of the theories of Brahmagupta in the West. Similarly Charaka and Susruta were translated into Arabic at the end of the eighth century. No less than fifteen translated works of Hindu medicine are mentioned by Ibn Nadim. There was the Hindu physician Dhan who held charge of the famous hospital at Baghdad, and who helped in the translation of Hindu works on medicine. The works of Kanke Pandit, the Hindu astrologer in the court at Baghdad, were also translated. Panchatantra moral tales were also translated as *Kalilah wa Dimnah* from Persian into Arabic by Ibn Al-Muqaffa in the eighth century A.D. *Alf laylah wa laylah* is another story book translated from Sanskrit into Arabic. Many Arab scholars and mathematicians such as the astronomers Ismail and Ahmad Khafi Darlani visited India. The interchange of science and learning between India and Arabia was exceedingly

fruitful in the development and transmission of the Hindu positive sciences especially astronomy and medicine to Europe. Aljahiz wrote (second century A.H.) "The Hindu excels in astrology, mathematics, medicine and various other sciences. They have developed to perfection arts like sculpture, painting and architecture. They have collections of poetry, philosophy, literature and the science of morals. From India we received that book called *Kalai lahma Damnah*. Contemplation has originated with them." Similarly Yaqubi observes in the ninth century A.D.: "The Hindus are superior to all other nations in intelligence and thoughtfulness. They are more exact in astronomy and astrology than any other people. The *Siddhānta* is a good proof of their intellectual powers, by this book the Greeks and the Persians were also profited. In medicine their opinion ranks first". Caliph Mamun established an academy at Baghdad for religious discussions in which many Indian monks and scholars actively participated. Thus Hindu religion and metaphysics also came to be well-known in the intellectual circles of the cities of the Caliphate. In the port of Sairaf, west of Iraq, there lived a large number of Hindus—Gujaratis, Multanis and Sindis, mostly merchants who adopted the dress of the Muslims and spoke colloquial Arabic with ease.

In India in the court of Delhi several Muslim scholars acquired knowledge of Sanskrit and translated Sanskrit works into Arabic and Persian. Many Hindu treatises on philosophy, medicine, mathematics and astrology were in this period translated into Arabic and Persian. A medical work was translated from Sanskrit to Persian in the reign of Sikander Lodi. On the other hand, many Hindu writers began to write in Persian and Hindi. It is also significant that Hindu astronomy and medicine borrowed several new notions and terms from the Arabs. It is pointed out that the calculations of latitudes and longitudes and of certain items of the calendar were borrowed from the Arabs. The zeal for learning and science led to the invention and manufacture of paper in India. The "white paper" of Bengal made from the bark of a tree and "smooth and glossy like a deer's skin", as described by Mahuan, and the paper of Gujarat manufactured according to improved methods referred to by Nicolo Conti became widely known throughout the East. Amir Khusrau refers to the Shami paper in Delhi imported from Damascus or Samargand. It appears that the supply of paper could not cope with



the demand at all during the regime of the Delhi Sultanat. Thus even the royal farmans had to be washed off under Balban according to Barani. The capital of Hindustan fostered a thriving market of books and plain and illustrated manuscripts. The booksellers of Delhi plying their regular trade are mentioned by both Amir Khusrau and Barani.

### The Rise of Provincial Literatures

The provincial literature was also then rising into great prominence in India and many Muslim rulers gave great fillip to it. Sanskrit ceased to be the court language in Delhi and the Muslim kingdoms. The vernaculars necessarily acquired greater importance. But more than the political cause the ferment caused in society by the advent of the Moslems and Islam indirectly led to the quick development of provincial language and literature as the common people and not merely the elite were deeply stirred by the course of events. It is true that Chānd Bardāi's Prithvirāja Rasau represents for Hindi literature an advanced stage of evolution while it was under the impetus of religion that the Siddhas composed poems in Sandhya dialect and Chandidās (about the end of the 14th century) and Vidyāpati (about 1400 A.D.) wrote their exquisite lyrics in early Bengali. But it was the socio-political impact of Islam that really explains the quick progress of the vernaculars that were already in the course of evolution and came under the protection of the Muslim rulers. On the other hand, the Muslim rulers by cultivation and fostering care of the vernaculars brought themselves in intimate contact with the social and spiritual life and aspirations of the people. Amity and co-operation between Muslim rulers and Hindu subjects had a marked impress on the administration. In Bengal, Hindus were appointed to the highest offices of the State by Sultan Husain Shah. Like Rūpa and Sanātan in Bengal, there was Medini Rāi appointed by the Muslim ruler in Malwa. In the Muslim states of Bijapur and Golconda also Hindus held the highest positions. Inter-marriages between Hindus and Muslims of the ruling strata were not unknown in this period, contributing towards the mingling of the divergent cultures. The daughter of Deva Rāya I, King of Vijayanagar was married to the Bahmani king, Sultan Feroz. Yet the marriage did not bring amity but aggravated the enmity between the two states. The climax of the intermingling between the

Moslem and the Hindu and inauguration of a liberal pro-Hindu policy was reached in Bengal when Adil Shah Sur entrusted his chief minister and commander Himu, a Hindu to lead the national resistance against the Moghuls in 1556 A.D. It was in this social climate of Hindu and Muslim rapprochement that literature and the fine arts progressed rapidly towards a distinct "Hindustani" phase in Northern India. In Bengal, several translations of the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata from Sanskrit into Bengali were undertaken at the instance of the Sultans who engaged scholars for this purpose. Mention may be made of the translations of the Mahābhārata under the patronage of Sultan Nasrat Shah, of Paragal Khan, general of Sultan Husain Shah and of Chuti Khan, governor of Chittagong. Similarly the Bhāgavata was translated from Sanskrit into Bengali at the instance of Sultan Husain Shah. The well-known Bengali version of the Rāmāyaṇa by Kṛttivāsa which is read widely even today was produced at the instance of a "king of Gaur". Mention is made of Amir Khusrau having discussions on music with a distinguished Hindu musician named Gopal Nāyak. Gwalior was a most important centre of Hindu music. Under the patronage of Rājā Mān Singh a Sanskrit work entitled Rāgadarpaṇ was composed. In architecture and music, dress, manners and literature Hindu and Muslim rapprochement progressed in such manner as to draw the observant Babar's attention. He characterised this as "the Hindustani mode"—the theme of much modern controversy.

### **Hindu culture in the Independent Kingdoms of North India**

Hindu art and culture, however, showed greater distinctiveness and unique achievement in the independent kingdoms of Rajputana, Gujerat, Malwa and, above all, Vijayanagara where the spirit of national defence and ideological resistance to Muslim culture led to a literary, cultural and religious renaissance. Smaller Hindu states such as Kalinjhar in Bundelkhand and Mithila in Bihar also participated in the Hindu cultural revival as scholars and poets took refuge there. In Rajputana, the famous Hammiravijaya sang of the glory of Hammira in terms of glowing patriotism. The Rajput bards sang of the many heroisms of their patrons. Foremost of these minstrels was Chand Bardāi who composed the famous epic Prithvī Rāj Rasau, one of the earliest creations in Hindi literature. In stirring rhyme the bard describes the heroic



exploits of Prithvī Rāja and his love for the fair princess Padmāvati. Here is Chand's description of the meeting of the fair Padmāvati and Prithvīrāja who seizes and carries her off as his bride.

“Filling a golden tray with pearls,  
Lighting a lamp she waved it round,  
Taking her confidante with her, boldly the maiden,  
Goes as Rukmiṇī went to meet Murāri;  
Worshipping Gaurī, revering Śankara;  
Circumbulating and touching their feet.  
Then on seeing King Prithvīrāja,  
She smiled bashfully, hiding her face through shame.  
Seizing her hand, putting her on horse-back,  
The king, the Lord of Delhi, took her away.  
The rumour spread that, outside the city,  
They are carrying off Padmāvati by force.  
Drums are beat, there is saddling of horse and elephant,  
They ran, armed in all directions  
Seize ! Seize ! shouted each warrior.”

During the furious onslaught between the Chauhān and Rāthor warriors, the litter of the Princess stood in the battleground itself, and, “stained with blood, looked like the henna on the bride's feet”. The bride after all reached Delhi, and that is how the Rajput brides were won, says the bard. A contemporary of his, Jaganāyak, composed *Alhakhanda* in which he describes the heroism and love of Alha and Udal, the brave fighters of Prince Paramardideva of Mahoba. Another poet was Sārangadhara who in his two works *Hammir Rasa* and *Hammir Kāvya*, takes up the theme of the deeds of valour of Rai Hamir of Ranthambhor and of Amir Khusrau. Rajputana also became important for its cultivation of Sanskrit literature. An important drama *Hammir-mardana* was written by Jay Singh Suri (1219-1229 A.D.). The fighter prince Kumbha was himself a poet. He wrote a treatise on music entitled *Sangītarāja* and a comment on Jaideva's *Gītagovinda*.

In Gujarat and Malwa important Sanskrit works were also produced. As a matter of fact, Gujarat in the 12th and 13th centuries became the scene of Sanskrit revival under the patronage of Viradhāvala and Kumārapāla. The movement was associated with a distinguished Jain scholar Hem Chandra Suri who was

called the Vyāsa of the Kali age (Kalikāla Vyāsa) due to his comprehensive learning and exposition of ancient culture through the medium of Jain thought. Among his great works is the *Purusha Charita*. A galaxy of Jain scholars followed him in Gujarat: Bālachandra Suri, author of *Vasatha-Vilās*, and *Vastupāl*, poet-minister in the court of Viradhāvala and author of *Nara-nārāyaṇīya*. Gujarat revived the traditions of Harsha's Kanauj and Bhoja's Dhārā.

In Mithilā a minister of Harihara Simha (who defeated Ghiyasuddin Tughluq in 1320-1324), Umāpati, was the author of the drama *Pārijāta-haraṇa*. His court poet Jyotirīśvara composed several important works including a comedy, *Dhūrtasamgama* and *Varṇaratnākara* in prose in the beginning of the 14th century. Vidyāpati, the most famous poet of Mithilā, flourished in the court of Śiva Siṅha at the end of the 14th century. He was the author of several works on smṛti and vyavahāra such as *Bhūparikrama*, *Likhanāvalī*, *Durgā-bhakti-tarangiṇī* and *Purusha-parikshā* and of a historical poem, *Kirtilatā* written in *apabhramśa* dealing with the defeat of the Turkish invader Uslan by the rulers of Mithilā. But Vidyāpati's fame as one of India's great poets rests on his composition of innumerable exquisite religious lyrics (*padas*) dealing with the love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa in Maithili or brajabolī which was adopted by many poets in Bengal, Assam and Orissa in the 15th century. The following poem describes Rādhā's *abhiṣāra*, symbolic of the human soul's search for the Eternal Beloved in the darkness of the night under a cloudy sky. (Chapman's translation):

"The night is already waning  
 What may the Maid have met  
 In ways by snakes infested,  
 And by other dangers set?  
 God bring, all safe and unafraid,  
 Unto the bower, the timid Maid.  
 May she encounter nothing  
 To trouble her sweet heart,  
 'Neath cloudy sky, o'er miry ground,  
 While we are still apart.  
 In darkness of the night so deep,  
 One steps, but stumbles as in sleep.



But here is the little Maiden,  
 She comes, she comes'. Oh, say  
 Were you then, all unmindful  
 Of the dangers of the way?  
 'Love conquers every danger quite—  
 Says Vidyāpati, and says aright'."

Here the poet delineates the suspense and shyness of Rādhā as she meets Kṛṣṇa at the trysting place:—

"The Maid adorns herself to-day :  
 There is a tryst to bide.  
 She goes, but often on the way  
 She starts and looks aside,  
 Trembling with shyness and with fear :  
 The doors are shut, but folk may hear.  
 With her blue sari covers she  
 Herself, and in her heart  
 Full many pleasant hopes agree  
 To stay, nor soon depart.  
 In one love-laden happily  
 'Tis surge and swell as of the sea.  
 The way that she has to go is found  
 By clever comrade dear,  
 The Maiden's eyes are on the ground.  
 In shyness, not in fear.  
 So on she goes, in love to make  
 The air all scented in her wake.  
 As golden creeper moves to seek  
 The young tamala tree,  
 And finds it in the end, though weak,  
 Moving persistently.  
 And clasps it in a close embrace,  
 So she hath found the trysting-place."

The following poem (translation by Chapman) is one of the popular ones throwing light, as it does, upon the essence of Vaishṇava human-cum-divine love. That love which is human, fitful and consuming becomes divine and serene in another context; that which gives a release from oneself and from the world,

however momentary, becomes a prelude to the final release and peace. It is the Divine love which gives the true meaning to the human and makes the body one's real home or temple. "The same flower that you cast away, the same you use in prayer, and with the same you string the bow":

"Oh, what a happiness this night has been  
With my Beloved's lovely moon-face seen  
I feel my life and maidenhood well-spent  
And peace reigns in the world's ten-quartered tent.

Home is now home ; now, by his sight and touch  
My body consecrated, is worth much.  
Let a hundred thousand cuckoos their descants sing  
And hundred thousand moons the heavens ring.  
Come the south breeze, and Kāma's five arrows turn  
Once into fifty thousand darts, then twice  
When in his presence my body again shall burn  
I shall regard it as consecrated thrice  
Says Vidyapati : O Lady, fortunate are you,  
And may your love prosper which is ever new."

### Three Centuries of Cultural Renaissance in Vijayanagara

It was, however, the empire of Vijayanagara, one of the glorious empires in India's history that defended Southern India against Muslim aggression and advance which revived Sanskrit learning and culture systematically for nearly three centuries and at the same time gave a great impetus to the development of provincial literatures. Architecture, art and Sanskrit and provincial literatures viz., Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, showed remarkable achievements under the patronage of Vijayanagara emperors who revived in the South the glorious traditions of Chandragupta Vikramāditya, Harsha and Bhoja. The Emperor Kṛṣṇadeva Rāya (1509-1529) was like Harsha and Samudragupta, scholar, musician and poet. He composed five Sanskrit works and was the author of the monumental Telugu work *Amuktamālyāda*. In his court flourished the *Aṣṭadiggajas*, the eight famous poets who supported the world of Telugu literature. The poet-laureate of Kṛṣṇadeva Rāya, Peddanna, is one of the great masters of Telugu literature. The Vijayanagara Empire extending from sea to sea with its "three hundred ports" was indeed the centre of Hindu



civilisation for three centuries until the advent of the Mahratta power, the custodian of the glorious heritage of Hindu culture against the advance of Islam. The aims of the Vijayanagara state were thus formulated by the Emperor Kṛṣṇadeva Rāya himself in his Telugu *magnum opus*. "A crowned king should always rule with an eye towards Dharma. He should rule collecting round him people skilled in state craft. He should levy taxes from his people moderately, he should counteract the acts of his enemies by crushing them with force, should be friendly, should protect one and all of his subjects, should put an end to the mixing up of the castes among them, should always try to increase the merit of the Brāhmanas". No wonder that when he died the loss was mourned by the poet Somanāth as the departure of Kṛṣṇa after the end of his incarnation. Nuniz who visited Vijayanagara observes: "Being held in high esteem by the rulers, the Brāhmanas exercised a predominant influence not merely in social and religious matters but also in the political affairs of the State". The Brāhmanas are described by him as 'honest men, given to merchandise very acute and of much talent, very good at accounts, lean men and well informed, but little fit for hard work'. As in the Maurya and Gupta empires of old, a "Universal empire" is mentioned as the political objective of the Vijayanagara monarchs in some inscriptions. Vijayanagara was no doubt a military empire constantly fighting with the Muslim states of Bijapur and Golconda, and the fight was bitter and grim because on it hung the issue of the life and death of Hindu culture and population in the south. Such bitterness of feeling between Hindus and Muslims did not eclipse the age-long Hindu tradition of religious toleration. Barbosa (1516) observes: "The King allows such freedom that every man may come and go and live according to his own creed without suffering any annoyance and without enquiry whether he is a Christian, Jew, Moor or Hindu". Yet the pattern of administration was essentially Hindu. There was a council of ministers, appointed by the king; local government, grounded in the panchayat with full executive, judicial and police powers and the widely ramifying organisation of guilds and corporations, was kept in proper vigour and efficiency. While in Northern India, in spite of the efforts of a Ghiyassuddin Tughluq, who restricted the grant of jagirs, and sought to remove the abuses of the farming system and preserve the customary law, village communities were disinte-

grating and pañchāyats eclipsed, all of South India with the Kṛṣṇa as the northern boundary maintained the village assembly as an active and integral part of the administration. Artisans' and traders' guilds and corporations also played an important role in government. The system of Hindu polity had its last, lingering stronghold in India in the state of Vijayanagara, as Brahmanical culture was disseminated widely among the population through the patronage of Emperors and provincial governors and the establishment of numerous well-endowed Sanskrit colleges in the empire. The great scholar and commentator of Śāṅkara, Mādhava Vidyāranya was one of the founders of the empire itself. His younger brother was Sāyanāchārya, the famous commentator of the Vedas. Great works on the Smṛtis were produced in Vijayanagara. Mādhavāchārya's Pārāśara Mādhaviya which is still regarded as a most authoritative Smṛti work was produced in Vijayanagara. Some of the queens were also great poets such as Gangādevī and Tirumalambādevī. Vijayanagara also became the home of Hindu classical music. Several important treatises on music and dancing were produced here.

Art and architecture also showed a most remarkable development in this empire. South India was the home of Vaishṇava theism and Vijayanagara for many decades showed the ardent devotional spirit of the people expressing itself in lyrical intensity and exuberance in temple structure and architecture. The dominant feature of the Vijayanagara style is lavish ornamentation carried to meticulous perfection, coupled with simplicity and restraint. The Hazara Rāma temple is regarded as one of the most perfect specimens of Hindu temple architecture in existence. Equally superb in beauty is the temple of Viṭhalaswāmin. Much of the temple architecture exhibits the combination of Hindu roofs and cornices with Mahommedan arches and the walls are covered with relief scenes representing episodes of the Rāmāyaṇa and Dasehra and Holi festival episodes. Painting, music and drama were greatly favoured by the state that indeed helped to bring about a great literary and artistic renaissance based on the assimilation and synthesis of the various cultures of the South.

### **The Luxury and Splendour of the Southern Empire**

The famous Italian traveller Varthema (1503-08) who visited Vijayanagara, during the reign of Narasimha Saluva, was pro-



foundly impressed by the luxury and magnificence of the city, the pomp and power of the King, and the use of trained, elaborately armoured elephants. "The city was great and grand; the court splendid; the revenue, enormous; the army boasted 40,000 horsemen and 400 elephants, and was continually doing battle with the Muslim and neighbouring pagan States. The elephant wears armour, in particular head and trunk are armed. To the trunk a sword of two arms' length is fastened, and as broad as man's hand. Seven armed men go upon the said elephant, shielded by a sort of castle; and in that manner they fight. The king's horse wears jewels which are of more value than are some of our cities. When he journeys for pleasure, three or four kings and five or six thousand horsemen attend him." (Boulting's summary). The Portuguese merchant, Domingo Paes, who also visited Vijayanagara early in the 16th century was profoundly impressed by the splendid temples he passed on his way and characterised the style as Romanesque. "You must know that it is round temple made of a single stone, the gateway all in the manner of joiner's work, with every art of perspective. There are many figures of the said work, standing out as much as a cubit from the stone so that you see on every side of them, so well carved that they could not be better done, the faces as well as all the rest; and each one in its place stands as if embowered in leaves; and above it is in the Romanesque style, so well made that it could not be better. Besides this, it has a sort of lesser porch upon pillars, all of stone and the pillars with their pedestals so well executed that they appear as if made in Italy; all the cross-pieces and beams are of the same stone without any planks of timber being used in it, and in the same way all the ground is laid with the same stone, outside as well as in." The wealth, artistic glory and splendour of Vijayanagara were attested by several contemporary Portuguese and Arab writers. Abdur Razzaq, an ambassador from Herat, who came to Vijayanagara in 1443 remarks that "All the inhabitants of the country, whether high or low, even down to the artificers of the bazaar, wear jewels and gilt ornaments in their ears and around their necks, arms, wrists and fingers". "The bazaars are extremely long and broad. Roses are sold everywhere. These people could not live without roses, and they look upon them quite as necessary as food. . . . Each class of men belonging to each profession has shops contiguous the one to the

other; the jewellers sell publicly in the bazaars pearls, rubies, emeralds and diamonds. In this agreeable locality, as well as in the king's palace, one sees numerous running streams and canals formed of chiselled stone, polished and smooth." He also describes an avenue with figures of lions, tigers, panthers and other animals on each side so well painted as to seem alive. The city was thronged with population. Paes declares that "no troops, horse or foot, could break their way through any street or lane, so great are the numbers of the people and elephants". Again, we have the following evidence from Paes about the standard of living of Vijayanagara: "In the city you will find men belonging to every nation and people, because of the great trade which it has and the many precious stones there, principally diamonds. This is the best provided city in the world and is stocked with provisions such as rice, wheat, grains, Indian corn and a certain amount of barley and beans, moong, pulses, horse grain and many other seeds which grow in this country, which are the food of the people, and there is a large store of them and very cheap. On the same subject of dietary, Nuniz mentions that the kings of Vijayanagara eat mutton, pork, venison, partridges, hares, doves, quail and all kinds of birds. He also refers to rats, cats and lizards that probably formed the items of diet of lower strata of the population such as hordes of Brinjaris, Lambadis and Kurubas.

Among the customs and institutions that elicited comments from foreign observers were the custom of duelling which seemed to have been common in Vijayanagara, Malabar and the Deccan as a whole and the rite of Satī prevalent among both the higher and lower classes, the enormous holocaust of sheep, goats and buffaloes at religious festivals, the exaction of heavy dowries on marriages and the system of Devadāsīs or temple prostitution. Prostitutes many of whom were skilled dancers and singers and amassed huge fortunes were held in esteem by kings and nobles, had access to the palace and played an essential part in court ceremonials. "The splendour of their houses, the beauty of the heart-ravishers, their blandishments and ogles are beyond description", observed Abdur Razzaq with the indignation of a Muslim divine. According to the account of Nuniz, women in the country reached a high proficiency in both general education and the fine arts, and played an important role in the social, literary and artistic life of the country. The King of Vijayanagara has



"women who write all the accounts of expenses that are incurred inside the gates (of the palace), and others whose duty it is to write all the affairs of kingdom and compare their books with those of the writers outside. Even the wives of the king are well-versed in music".

### Commerce and Standard of Living in the South

The vast wealth of the Vijayanagara Empire was due not merely to the skill and craftsmanship of artisans organised into separate guilds and fraternities with their own private temples whose existence was noted by Paes but also to the flourishing trade and commerce, thanks to the liberal commercial policy adopted by the Emperors who gave every encouragement to the trade of the Arabs and Portuguese. The Portuguese had a flourishing business on the Malabar coast at this time and eventually got possession of Goa. What attracted the Portuguese to Vijayanagara were chiefly gold, precious stones and diamonds and the enormous profits of the trade in Arab horses, so useful for the chronic warfare in the South. Barbosa describes with admiration the city of Vijayanagara as "of great extent, highly populous and the seat of an active commerce in country-diamonds, rubies from Pegu, silk of China and Alexandria, and cinnabar, camphor, musk, pepper and sandal from Malabar". Ceasar Frederici (1567), the Italian traveller, indicates briefly the major imports and exports of the Vijayanagara Empire. He remarks that merchandise which went every year from Goa to Beznagar were Arabian horses, velvets, damasks and satins, Portuguese taffeta, and pieces of China, saffron and scarlets; and from Beznagar they had in Turkey for their commodities, jewels and pagodas, which be ducats of gold; the apparel they use in Beznagar is velvet, satin, damask, scarlet or white bumbust cloth, according to the estate of the person, with long hats on their heads called Colae".

It was estimated that the horse trade in Vijayanagara was of the value of 15,000 ducats annually. The Empire possessed three hundred sea-ports, according to Abdur Razzak, and maintained fleets for both coastal and overseas trade. The most important ports were Calicut and Malabar. The centre of ship-building was the Maldive islands. In her commercial and maritime enterprise Vijayanagara maintained fully the traditions of the Chola Empire. The Empire had her trade dealings with Pegu, the

Malaya Archipelago and China on the East, and with Persia, Arabia, Turkey, Egypt and Portugal in the West. The major exports were textile goods, gold, precious stones, diamonds, spices and sugar; while the major imports were Arab horses, Portuguese taffeta and Chinese silks, velvets and satins. The Empire had ships of her own which plied specially in the eastern waters. Her energy was pre-occupied with defence, preventing the acquisition of any maritime possessions like those of the Chola Empire.

In spite of the opulence of the Empire, the common people however had a hard lot. The rich were very rich and the poor were very poor. "The nobles", remarks Nuniz, "are like rentiers, who hold all the land from the king; they also pay him every year 60 lakhs, as royal dues. The lands, they say, yield 120 lakhs of which they must pay 60 to the king and the rest they retain for the pay of the soldiers and the expenses of the elephants which they are obliged to maintain. For this reason the common people suffer much hardship, those who hold the lands being so tyrannical". It appears that the practice in South India was to leave the cultivator only half of his crop as compared with the traditional Hindu five-sixths in Northern India. The traditional share of the state, recognised by the Smritis all over India, was one-sixth of the produce. In practice, however, the state often took a larger share. There were other taxes such as those on grazing and marriage and various levies on arts, crafts and trade. The exigencies of a military Hindu state like Vijayanagara demanded heavier taxation of the people. It is from this background that the grandeur of Vijayanagara has to be viewed.



## CHAPTER XXIX

### THE SECOND GREAT REFORMATION: RĀMĀNANDA AND THE PEOPLE'S MOVEMENTS OF BHAKTI AND SOCIAL REVOLT

#### The Alvars of South India

At the beginning of this millennium (1000 A.D.) Mahmud of Ghazni began the first of his seventeen expeditions of plunder and destruction of Hindu temples in India shaking the very foundations of social and spiritual life of the North. Just at that time in Southern India the age of the saints and mystics was ending and that of teachers and philosophers was commencing. The last of the mystics was Nammālvar whose disciple, Nātha Muni made in 1000 A.D. the famous collection of hymns that are still recited (Prabandha) in the major temples of South India. We give below two hymns (translation by Popley) from the Kural, the Tamil Veda of Tiruvalluvār. The first extols the virtue and sanctity of the householder's life, a Brahmanical rejoinder to the stress of asceticism in Buddhism and Jainism in the fashion of the Bhagavad Gīta.

“ He lives home-life who stands in virtue's path  
And helps the orders three in their good paths.  
He lives true home-life who's a help  
To the lost, the poor and the dead.  
Pitris, gods, kin, one's guests and self—  
To serve these five is duty chief.  
Ne'er shall he lack of offspring in his house,  
Who fearing ill, gives ere he enjoys.  
If in the home true love and virtue dwell,  
Home-life is full of grace and fruit.  
If home-life's lived always in virtue's way,  
What good is there in leaving house and home?  
He, who lives home-life worthily,  
Shall first among all strivers be.

Home-life that helps the saints and swerves from  
virtue ne'er  
Endures more trials than lonely hermit life.  
Home-life itself is virtue's way ;  
The other, too, is good, if men no fault can find.  
He, who lives home-life worthily on earth,  
Will win a place 'mong gods who dwell in heaven".

The following is in a humanistic vein singing the blessedness of love:

" Is there a bolt that can avail to shut up love ?  
The trickling tears of loving eyes would tell it out.  
All for themselves the loveless spend ;  
The loving e'en their bones for others give.  
The link of soul and body, say the wise,  
Is but the fruit of man's own link with love.  
Love doth the trait of tenderness beget ;  
That, too begets true friendship's priceless worth.  
The bliss of earth and heav'n the blessed gain,  
The learned say, is rooted in a loving life ;  
The foolish say, ' Love helps the good alone ',  
But surely 'tis a help 'gainst evil too.  
As the sun's heat burns up all baseless things,  
So virtue doth burn up all loveless things ;  
To live the home-life with a love-less heart  
Is like a withered tree flowering in barren sand.  
To those who lack the inward means of love  
What use is there in any outward means ?  
The living soul subsists in love ;  
The loveless are but skin and bone."

The Ālvārs, itinerant minstrels of Bhakti, swept through the South from the 7th to the 9th centuries although the earliest of them are placed in the 2nd century A.D. Their philosophy occupies an important though neglected niche in the broad trend of the Bhakti movement of India. It was they who were the real harbingers of the Rāmānuja-Rāmānanda tradition through their stress of the divine grace and man's ardent devotion as the great way of deliverance. The most celebrated of the Ālvārs is Nammālvār, author of Tiruviruttam, that is full of the burning



passion for the Divine. God embodies himself in divergent forms and antagonistic creeds, but the Ālvār proclaims his adherence to the way of love for the One.

"Many a different way of worshipping  
And many clashing creeds from different minds,  
And in the many creeds their many gods  
Thou'st made, spreading abroad thy form! O thou  
Matchless, I will proclaim my love for Thee!"

An interesting figure is Āndāl, the only woman mystic among the Ālvārs, who in her yearning for the eternal Beloved pictured herself, as did many Vaishṇava bhaktas of North India in the later centuries, as a cowherd maiden of Gokula seeking union with Kṛṣṇa-Govinda by every possible means. Her Divine love takes the form of mother Jaśodā's tenderness for the golden babe, "the young parrot dearest". The Gopis go to the jungle after the cows to have a glimpse of the Divine cowherd, and beg of him his drum, symbolising the boon of singing God's name on the earth.

"After the cows we to the jungle go  
And eat there—cowherds knowing nought are we,  
And yet how great the boon we have, that thou  
Wast born amongst us! Thou who lackest nought,  
Govinda, kinship that we have with thee  
Here in this place can never cease!—If through  
Our love we call thee baby names, in grace  
Do not be wroth, for we,—like children,—we  
Know not—O Lord, wilt thou not grant to us  
The drum we ask? Ah, Lord!"

In the following hymn Āndāl fervently sings of Kṛṣṇa participating in the play of children in the home:

"Dost thou enter into the house and come to the inner courtyard where we have come to play? Dost thou show thyself and smile at us and break our hearts as well as our houses? O Govinda, thou didst once measure the whole earth with one step and heaven with another. If the love thou hast for me should change, or if we were to quarrel, what would people say who have seen us together?"

(TR. ABRAHAM AND MASITAMANI).

## The Age of Philosophers in the South

For full five centuries since the invasion of Mahmud of Ghazni in the North and the compilation of the "Four Thousand Hymns of the Ālvārs" by Nātha Muni in the South, we have in India a galaxy of teachers and reformers from Nātha Muni (1000 A.D.) to Chaitanya (1485-1534 A.D.), whose philosophies, hymns and ministries acted as a balm and life-giving stimulus for the wounded soul of India. Nātha Muni's real and spiritual grandson was Yamunāchārya, the precursor of Rāmānuja. Vaishṇava and Śaiva theology lost the sharp edges of difference in the assertion of the unity of the godhead and the ardent adoration of a personal deity. Buddhism and Jainism were rapidly declining. The feeling against formalism and caste system was waxing stronger. On the intellectual side, the protest against the pure ceremonialism of the Pūrva Mīmāṃsa was gaining strength, and Śankarāchārya's doctrine of Māyā relaxed its hold.

## The Moral Earnestness and Egalitarianism of Ramanuja

It was in this intellectual climate that the great philosopher Rāmānuja (1037-1137), who first obtained his lessons in Śankara's Kevala Advaita at Kāñchī, expounded his well-known principles of Viśiṣṭādvaita (qualified monism). Viśiṣṭādvaita in many respects has a greater appeal to the contemporary mind than the uncompromising, transcendental monism of Śankara, harmonising as it does reason and intuition, immanence and transcendence. Here it is not knowledge but knowledge-cum-mystical intuition which brings out clearly the nature of the Absolute (Brahman) and the relation between the Absolute and the real, self-conscious and eternal self (jīva). The self (jīva) is a mode of the Absolute, essentially free, changeless and supreme (cit), but entangled in the chains of karma, and relations with gross matter (acit). When the self sheds its finiteness and mutability—and this it can only do as a result of intense spiritual yearning as felt by the mystics such as Nammālvār, whom Rāmānuja adores, and as enjoined in the Viṣṇupurāṇa on which he, as contrasted with Śankara, leans so much—it finds its real home in the Absolute. In such an adventure of the soul, treading the path of devotion and surrender (prapatti), God helps. For God is redemptive Love and pines for union with jīva. Thus does the limited and ignorant self rise into



its essential infinitude and omniscience, and Truth and Goodness become realised in every act of love, sharing and service of man. With reference to the assertion of the Bhagavad Gita, "Noble are they all (the four orders of doers of righteousness), but the man of knowledge (jñāna) I deem my very self", Rāmānuja asks about the nature of this knowledge, and answers thus is his commentary on the scripture: "My very life depends on him. If it be asked how, the reason is that in the same manner that He cannot live without me, His Highest Goal, I cannot live without Him". The wretched, forlorn man, caught up to God by his bhakti-cum-jñāna, becomes His fellow-worker in aiding mankind to regain freedom. Mankind is finally embraced in eternal, collective ecstasy and bliss. The above is no doubt a more positive demand for service and love, grounded in the spiritual intimacy and the redemptive love and goodness of God, than the doctrines of transcendence and illusion (Māyā) of Śankara.

Morality in the system of Śankara-Vedānta suffers due to the inadequate appreciation of the imperfections and evils of the universe. These demand not the Absolute that creates the world and man and abandon them to their fate, but the One who wishes, impels and loves. The doctrine of Rāmānuja stresses the notion not of an abstract Pure Being, but its attributes of Goodness and Beauty to an infinite degree (Saguṇa Īśvara) and rejects Śankara's doctrine of Māyā that neither gives scope for God's (Īśvara) mercy and redemption (kṛpā) in this sinful world, nor for the ardent yearning, ecstasy and joy of the mystic (bhakti). From the moral viewpoint the conceptions of God as the inner counsellor and censor (antaryāmin), and the law of karma embodying the Divine will and purpose that cannot be set aside even in world destruction and creation constitute a call of the self to righteousness. Bhakti or prapatti itself becomes the fruition of a righteous and disciplined life in which God's compassion is a perennial support and inspiration. From the religious viewpoint, God as Pure Essence is superseded by the God who vouchsafes fellowship to man as part of his sport and desire (līlā), a loving and just Lord, whose supreme status man can claim and attain for eternity. From the social viewpoint, the notion of God's immanence in all good and noble effort of man, by whomsoever it may be undertaken, fosters an infinite social goodwill and tolerance that break down the narrow boundaries of caste and

sect, and build up a religious fraternity dedicated to love, service and sharing. Viśiṣṭādvaita is morally earnest, religiously stirring and socially egalitarian.

### **The Democratisation of Vaishnavism**

Rāmānuja was not only a profound philosopher but also a spiritual leader of great courage and liberal social outlook. Like Śankara he made a tour in the North, visiting Banaras, Ajodhyā, Dwārakā, Jagannāth and Badari and had disputations with the Buddhists at Banaras and Jagannāth. Returning to Śrīrangam, he divided South India into seventy four dioceses under lay āchāryas for the propagation of Viśiṣṭādvaita doctrine. Due to the persecution of the Chola emperor he had to live in the Hoysala kingdom for about twenty years in the course of which he built several irrigation tanks, monasteries and temples, including the temple of Mailcoté (Dakṣiṇa - Badrikāśrama north of Seringapatam) where the Pañchamas obtained the privilege of entering once a year to offer their worship. Tradition says that he brought to Mailcoté the image of Rāmapriya (Kṛṣṇa) with his Muslim bride from Delhi with the assistance of the untouchables. All this is reminiscent of his wide-mindedness and sense of social justice. His biographers stress that he rose superior to caste and had non-Brahmin disciples such as Pillai and Urangavillidāsa. Without provoking a social outbreak, Vaishnavism was democratised in some measure in the South as a result of the influence of Rāmānuja through the study and dissemination of the Prabandhas in Tamil, the institution of temple festivals and the permission given to non-Brahmins to adopt the sect marks and habits of life of the Vaishnavas, and to the Pañchamas to have the right of entry to at least one temple of God. To Rāmānuja India also owes the first use of the Provincial language in worship and ritual that was far-reaching in its social levelling influences.

### **Vedānta Deśika's Doctrine of Prapatti**

The philosophical movement stressing the reality of the world and the eternal self as distinct from both the embodied self and the Brāhmaṇ which was led by Rāmānuja was followed by his younger contemporary Nimbārka (who died about 1162), Madhva (1200-1275), Lokāchārya (1213) and Vedānta Deśika (1268-1369).



Madhva was a philosopher of the highest intellectual calibre comparable with Śankara and Rāmānuja. Vedānta Deśika was a versatile writer and scholar of encyclopaedic learning, a great poet and dramatist and author of many works in the vernacular. Vedānta Deśika obtained the titles of Kavi Tārkaika Simha or the lion of poets and logicians and Sarva-tantra Svatantra or the expert in all arts and handicrafts. He was proficient as a dialectician, philosopher, poet and dramatist and even as an artist and handicraftsman. Among his Sanskrit works may be mentioned the *Seśvara-mīmāṃsā* and the *Adhikāraṇa-sāravali*, the *kāvya*s *Yādavābhyudaya* and the *Harṁsasandēśa*, and the allegorical drama, *Sankalpa-sūryodaya*. Vedānta Deśika's Tamil works include the *Pramata Bhanga* and the *Rahasyatrayasāra*. With comprehensive learning and deep piety Vedānta Deśika developed specifically the doctrine of *Prapatti* or self-surrender (*ātma nīkṣepa*) and self-abasement (*kārpaṇyam*) as contrasted with *bhakti* or devotion. This led to a schism among the followers of Rāmānuja, Vedānta Deśika becoming the leader of the *Vadagalai* or northern school which was opposed by the *Tengalai* or southern school under *Manavala Mahāmuni*. The latter holds that *prapatti* is the only mode of salvation and precludes any effort on the part of the devotee, and that one who follows the way of *prapatti* is entirely exempted from the normal duties of castes and other obligations, their *prārabdha karma* being entirely annihilated by God's grace. But both Rāmānuja and Vedāntāchārya hold that *prapatti* is merely one way of salvation, that the traces of *prārabdha karma* are left and that the duties of life must not be forsaken. The schism was not without its social implications, especially with reference to the treatment of the lower castes. The northern school confined equality to conversation alone, and forbade the teaching to them and to the *Kshatriyas* and *Vaiśyas* of the mantra of worship of *Nārāyaṇa* with the syllable *Om* prefixed. The southern school asserted the complete equality of the castes and permitted the use of *Om* by all.

At the end of the 12th century the Muslim arms were carried to Bihar and Bengal, the monasteries of *Nālandā* and *Vikramśilā* were razed to the ground (about 1197) and *Navadvīpa*, the capital of Bengal, sacked and its temples desecrated. The devotional lyrics (*Gitagovinda*, 1170 A.D.) of *Lakshmaṇa Sen*'s court-poet *Jayadeva*, delineating symbolically the varied nuances of love

of the human soul for the Divine were silenced by the thunder of Bakhtiar Khilji's artillery. In the holy city of Banaras nearly a thousand temples were destroyed by Kutubuddin (1206-1210 A.D.).

A century later the Muslim power spread gradually to the South with the usual tale of plunder and ruin. Malik Kafur's expeditions to the Deccan which ended in 1311 A.D. led to the defeat of the Yādava dynasty of Deogiri and the Hoysala dynasty of Mysore, the plunder of the Malabar and Coromandel coast, the destruction of temples and the seizure of gold, jewels and women. The philosophers Lokāchārya and Vedānta Deśika had themselves to flee for their lives during Muslim vandalism and massacre. A mosque was built at Adam's bridge, and Śrīrangam, where so many Vaishṇava saints, including Rāmānuja, lived and taught, was pillaged in 1326.

### **The Rise of the Second Great Reformation**

1300 A.D. by which year the whole of India experienced Muslim devastation and outrage witnessed in the South the birth of Rāmānanda (c. 1299-1410), who initiated in Northern India a socio-religious movement resembling in many respects the Buddhist. It broke down caste barriers and religious ritualism, admitted to discipleship persons of all classes and communities without distinction, and employed the vernaculars for the propagation of faith. This we may call the second Great Reformation, deeper and more far-reaching in its influence on the life of the common man in India than Śankara's first Reformation. The latter touched only the fringe of the Indian population—the upper intellectual strata and schools of high philosophy and seats of Sanskrit learning. The impulsion of the second Great Reformation came from the South to the subjugated and distracted North. A casteless Hindu proselytisation movement that produced some of India's finest mystics and devotees from her lowest castes was her best rejoinder to Islam, that was effecting conversions in India by coercion, bribery and distribution of Muslim food in times of famine as well as by the preaching of Muslim saints and divines scattered throughout the length and breadth of the country. A mystical orientation of Hindu faiths, a social egalitarian movement and development of Provincial literatures were all associated with the teachings of Rāmānanda and Kabir in Northern India, of Nāmadeva and his



successors in Mahārāshtra and of Chaitanya and his disciples in Eastern India. To these movements Nānak and his successors added in the Punjab political integration, the welding together through martyrdom and sacrifice of the Sikh community. It is not without significance that when Rāmānanda, the leader of the Second Reformation, was going about on pilgrimage through India, starting from Mailcoté in Vijayanagara (where more than two centuries back Rāmānuja threw open the gates of the temple of Rāmapriya to the Panchamas), and acquiring the experience among men of different castes and communities that led to his bold departure of admitting degraded classes to full religious equality and formulation of a creed capable of expressing Hindu and Muslim devotion alike, the kingdom of Vijayanagara was being founded (1336) as the sole bulwark of Hindu resistance to Muslim advance in South India for more than three centuries. The socio-religious and political integration was contemporaneous, indubitable proof of the genius and vitality of Hindu culture in the so-called "dark age" of Indian history.

### Ramananda's Religious Synthesis

The second Great Reformation or socio-religious revolution gradually spread and influenced the North from Mahārāshtra to Bengal and from the Punjab to Orissa. Rāmānanda, who may be regarded as the fountain-head of most of the religious movements of Northern India till late in the 18th century, bringing under their ambit the common people of the land, should be considered as one of the greatest figures in Indian history and culture. From the South he imbibed the mystical devotion of the Tamil saints and the doctrine of absolute self-surrender (*prapatti*) and reliance upon god's redemptive love and goodness of the Viśiṣṭādvaita school. But he protested against the Southern caste orthodoxy that would not admit the Śūdras to religious education, not to speak of religious equality and brotherhood which in the discipline of Rāmānuja were not translated into practice. He also repudiated the barren ceremonialism of the Mīmāṃsā school as well as the Vedic way of life that he found to be an anachronism. In the fourteenth century Pārtha Sārathi Miśra's works on the Karma Mīmāṃsā and Śāyanāchārya's commentary on the Vedas aroused great interest. Nor was he much concerned with the conservation of the social order and the regulation of caste,

family and marriage that were being stressed by the famous contemporary Smārtas such as Mādhavāchārya of Vijayanagara, Kullūka of Bengal and Chāndeśvara of Mithilā. Buddhism with its later Tāntrika accretions was then rapidly on the decline although Rāmānanda is said to have a disputation with the Buddhists in Banaras and Govardhana. Rāmānanda must have seen during his big pilgrimage through the country the ruin and devastation caused by the Muslims in such holy cities as Mathurā, Prayāga and Banaras and also the appeal of conversion to the Hindu masses, underlined by the Muslim Sūfī and other saints, of the Islamic social democracy. Rāmānanda's synthetic genius responded fully to the critical situation in Hindu religion and culture. His basic way of approach was that of Bhakti, the gospel of which was broadcast among the masses in the vernacular that replaced Sanskrit as the medium of preaching and discourse. Bhakti in this case was the adoration of Rāma, who in the Hindu legend and worship has not the peculiar local and erotic associations of Kṛṣṇa in the social context of Mathurā and Vrindāvan that may not be acceptable to the Muslims. In fact the rehabilitation of Rāmaism, with its exaltation of the noble and righteous life of the Avatāra, god and king among men, played an important role in the reconciliation of Hinduism and Islam.

### **The Spread of the Ramanandi Movement**

The Rāmānandī movement gradually proliferated into three branches: the major branch was Rāmaite, another was Kṛṣṇaite, and the third, under the leadership of Kabīr and other Nirguṇa santas, preferred the combination of the Vedāntic conception, Advaita or Viśishtādvaita with Yoga and meditation on the chakras etc. of the Nātha and Sahaja traditions that could appeal more easily to the Muslim devotees. The teaching and the preaching were through the vernacular hymns composed in thousands by mystics, saints and poets. Rāmānanda and his first band of disciples resembled in this respect Luther and his companions, who led the Protestant movement in Europe by preaching and composing hymns in the vernacular. Thus an ecclesiastic adherent of Papacy complained in Europe that the people were singing themselves into heresy. Not less significant for the mass movement was the stress of social and religious fraternity and of the sense of compassion. Social equality and complete



abolition of ancient prejudices in respect of caste and sex were distinctive features of the religious order of the Rāmaits or Bairāgis that Rāmānanda founded. One of Rāmānanda's oft quoted teachings is, "Let no one ask a man's caste or with whom he eats. If a man shows love to Hari, he is Hari's own". Men and women of every caste and creed could now be admitted to this ascetic order and could participate in their meals and prayers together in the monasteries (akhaḍās).

According to tradition, "Bhakti originated in the Drāviḍa land; Rāmānanda brought it to the North and Kabir spread it to the seven continents and nine divisions of the world". For the first time in Hindu religious history a religious order was established that threw open its doors not only to the twice-born but also to the lowest castes as well as to women. Śankara, Rāmānuja, Nimbārka and Madhva taught in Sanskrit. Rāmānanda and his band of disciples preached in the vernacular during their tours in Northern India. The variety of castes from whom Rāmānanda's apostles were recruited is noteworthy. There were the cobbler Ravidās, the Muslim weaver Kabir, the barber Sena, the Rajput Pipa, the Jat peasant Dhanna together with several Brāhmaṇs that belonged formerly to the Rāmānuja order and left it with him. There were also probably included in his first band of apostles a butcher Sadna who made use of the sālagrāma stone (symbol of Viṣṇu) for weighing meat, a chamar Raidās and also two women Padmāvatī Surasuri and the wife of Surasurānanda. Besides these twelve or thirteen first disciples he had several others belonging mainly to the lower castes including the prostitute Gangā. Of greater social significance was the important position assigned to women by Rāmānanda who designated two of them as his apostles.

Rāmānanda lived and worked till very ripe old age, tradition mentioning his death in 1410 A.D. The great movement initiated by him went straight to the heart of the masses through his use of popular and ardent Hindi, his broad sympathy and catholicism and admittance of the untouchables and of women to his religious order. According to the Bhaviṣya-purāṇa Rāmānanda took back into the Hindu fold many Hindus forcibly converted to Islam. These were called the Saṁyogis (the re-united) and found in Ajodhya. A miracle is attributed to him that these Hindus found themselves provided with the rosary, and the Bairāgis' marks

on their foreheads and reciting Rāma's name. Apart from forcible conversion into Islam, the age of Rāmānanda saw the sack of Chitor by Alauddin Khilji, the tyranny and oppression of Muhammad Tughluq and the invasions of Timur. Rāmānanda's gospel of mystical devotion to the compassionate and parental Rāma Chandra was a balm and anodyne for the oppressed Indian people.

Many miracles and legends were also associated with the lives and devotions of his twelve apostles as recorded in the Bhaktamāla. There is the fine legend, for instance, of Surasuri who when wandering alone in prayer in the forest was attacked by Muslim robbers and was thereon guarded like another Umā by God in the form of a tiger till she was out of danger. Dhanna, another apostle, was a simple Jat peasant who was served by God as his ploughman. All these tales were told and retold in the various dialects of Hindi which at once came to great prominence. Two of Rāmānanda's own apostles, Surasurānanda and Kabir were poets whose hymns are famous. Tulsidās, the celebrated Hindi poet, traced his descent from Rāmānanda in line of teacher and pupil through the apostle, Surasurānanda, the husband of Surasuri. The development of Hindi as a literary language was materially due to the influence of Rāmānanda and of his followers who wrote in one or other of the various dialects of Hindi. Even Rāmānanda's initiatory Mantra formula was not in Sanskrit but in Hindi—the words Śrī Rāma. The salutation among Rāmawats is Jaya Śrī Rāma, Jaya Rāma or Sitā Rāma. Rāmānanda's religious order was caste-less and sect-less and the establishment of its headquarters in Banaras contributed towards his deep influence on the religious development and organisation of the future. The syncretism of Kabir, the castelessness of the Sikh religion, the mystical abandon of the school of Bengal Vaishṇavism and the rise of outcaste and women mystics and saints all over Northern India can be traced to Rāmānanda's teaching.

### **The Development of Sufism in India**

The Muslim saints and mystics who were going among the masses with their simple monotheism and creed of social and religious equality now found effective rival Hindu proselytisers. An intense spiritual consciousness, aroused among both the Hindus and the Muslims, nurtured the new band of Muslim Sufis, on one



side and the Hindu Bhaktas, free men of God and lovers of humanity on the other. The following song of Rāmānanda that seems to be the only one preserved shows a profound similarity between his attitude and that of the Sūfī saints:

"Where shall I go? The music and the festivity are in my own house, my heart does not wish to move, my mind has folded its wings and is still. One day my heart was filled to overflowing, and I had an inclination to go with sandal and other perfumes to offer my worship to Brahman. But the guru (teacher) revealed that Brahman was in my own heart. Wherever I go I see only water and stones (worshipped), but it is Thou who hast filled them all with Thy presence. They all seek Thee in vain among the Vedas. If Thou art not to be found here, we must go and seek Thee there. My own true guru, Thou hast put an end to all my failures and illusions. Blessed art Thou: Rāmānanda is lost in his Master, Brahman; It is the word of the guru that destroys all the million bonds of action."

The Sūfī movement developed and spread in India in this epoch acting as a bridge between Hindu and Muslim religious thought and practice. The springs of Sūfism are varied and complex. Islam itself had its own mystical way. But the early contacts of Islam with Christianity, Gnosticism and Neo-platonism as well as with Hindu Bhāgavatism were no doubt formative factors in the development of Sūfism. In Persia the Sufi movement included several celebrated poets such as Sadi, Rumi and Hafiz who were influenced by Hindu monistic pantheism and developed an artistic religious symbolism and imagery for human-cum-divine love. Sūfī metaphysical notions bear the distinct impress of Hinduism. Thus the conception of Fana is derived from the notions of Brahman and Nirvāṇa. The Sūfī utterance 'I am the Truth' echoes the Vedāntic dictum, "Thou art That" (Tat tvamasi). The Sūfis have borrowed also Hindu Yogic breathing exercises (Pasi anfas) and methods of meditation and repetition of mantra (zikr). The development of Sūfism in India is usually associated with the foundation of the Chishti order by Muinuddin Chishti (1142-1236) in Ajmer in 1193 and of Suhrawardi order by Bahauddin Zakariya Multani (1169-1266) in Multan. Before them certain Sūfis and Darvishes from Bokhara, Samarqand and other places came to India and their

piety and religious zeal led to sporadic conversions. Among these were Nathan Shah (969-1039) who settled in Trichinopoly; Ghazi Miyan who died a martyr's death at Bahraich, U.P. (1053) and whose mythical marriage with Zuhra Bibi is still celebrated in Northern India; Sultan Rumi (1053) who converted the Koch king in Mymensingh, Bengal; Abdullah (1065) who was the first leader of the Bohras of Gujarat; Al Hujwiri of Lahore (1072) who came with the army of Masaud, son of Mahmud Ghaznavi and who five centuries later came to be known as Data Ganj Bakhsh Lahori, the perfect saint and patron of all Sufis in India; Nuruddin (1094-1143) who was a missionary in Gujarat and became the head of the Khojas; and Baba Adam Shahid (1110 A.D.) who courted martyrdom in Vikrampur, Bengal in the reign of Ballāla Sen. It was, however, the Chishtis and Suhrawardis who were far more systematic and successful in the propagation of their faith through the effort of their khalifās and disciples and the maintenance of contact with the Sūfis of Afghanistan, Persia and Arabia on the one hand and the Indian saints on the other. The principal centres of Indian Sūfism were Lahore, Multan, Delhi, Ahmedabad, Ajmer, Jaunpur, Gour and Dacca. Abul Fazl mentions the following old Sūfi fraternities of India.

1. Habibi Khwaja Habib Ajmi, contemporary with Hasan Basri (d. 728 A.D.)
2. Zaydi Sheikh Abdul Wahid bin Zayd (d. 743 A.D.)
3. Adhami Khwaja Ibrahim bin Adham Balkhi (d. 777 A.D.)
4. Ayyadi Khwaja Fudayl bin Ayyad (d. 803 A.D.)
5. Karkhi Maruf Karkhi (d. 815 A.D.)
6. Saqati Hasan Sirri Saqati (d. 865 A.D.)
7. Tayfuri Bayizid Bistami Tayfur Shami (d. 874 A.D.)
8. Hubayri Khwaja Hubayratu-'l Basri (d. 900 A.D.)
9. Junaydi Junayd Baghendi (d. 910 A.D.)
10. Chishti Abu Ishaq Chishti (d. 965 A.D.)
11. Gaaznini Abu Ishaq Gaaznini (d. 1034 A.D.)
12. Suhrawardi Sheikh Shaihabu-'d-Din Abu Najib Suhrawardi (d. 1167 A.D.)
13. Firdausi Sheikh Najmu-'d-Din Kubra Firdausi (d. 1221 A.D.)
14. Tusi Alau-'d-Din Tusi, contemporary with Najmu-'d-Din Kubra



Islam in its dissenting and mystical phase, even refusing the Pir as a guide in the communion with God, gradually established itself from Gujarat to Bengal in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and assimilated a good deal of Indian religious and philosophical doctrines. There was also a great proliferation of the Sūfī fraternities. The reason is given by Abul Fazl, "Any chosen soul who in the mortification of the deceitful spirit and in the worship of God, introduced some new motive of conduct and whose spiritual sons in succession continued to keep alive the lamp of doctrine, was acknowledged as the founder of a new line." (Ain-III, p. 397). Even the Chishti order which has been most popular came to be sub-divided into fourteen sub-orders, three of which came from Bengal: Kirmaniya, founded by Abdulla Kirmani of Birbhum (1142-1236), Nizamiyah founded by Nizam-ud-Din Auliya (1236-1325) and Husamiyah founded by Nur-ud-Din Qutub-i-Alam (died 1416). There was a considerable divergence of Indian Sūfī practices and beliefs from those of the Western Muslim world, and at the same time a free borrowing of these from amongst the different orders. An interesting sub-division of the Chishti order is the Qalandariyah or the order of itinerant ascetics, who completely abandoned the world and even the external practices of religion and lived by singing and begging like the Bauls. It is true that many of the early Sūfīs backed by the Muslim rulers sought the conversion of the Hindus. But subsequently they entirely gave up the idea of conversion turning more against the Islamic dogmas and towards Hindu religious beliefs and practices. The religious position of a few of the later Sūfīs, grounded in the immanence of the deity and abjuration of external prayers and rites, became, indeed, entirely inconsistent with the conversion of the so-called infidels. This contributed materially to further the rapprochement between Hinduism and Islam, the dissenters of both becoming permeated by the ardour of divine love and grace on which man as the forlorn creature has the right to count, irrespective of creed, country and race.

It was after the Bhakti movement had spread far and wide in the 14th and 15th centuries that the Sūfī faith and movement were transformed and popularised by borrowing from the mystical devotionism, and the Nātha and Sahaja Yoga traditions, and at the same time influencing several Hindu dissenting sects. Three

important Sūfistic orders were founded in the 15th century, the Madari order by Badiuddin Shahd Madar (died 1436) of Makanpur, U.P. and the Quadri order by Muhammad Ghauth Jilani of Jilan (1482-1517), while the Naqadshbandi order receiving impetus from Muhammad Baqi Billah of Delhi (died 1603) also attracted a large number of Muslims and converts. There was a considerable interchange of spiritual love imagery and meditative practices among the various Hindu sects and Sūfistic orders, especially in the period of Mughal religious toleration from Babar to Akbar that encouraged a good deal of cultural and religious accommodation and compromise. Sūfism also was introduced into Indian literature by such famous romantic Muslim writers in Hindi such as Mulla Daud (c. 1440), Kutban (c. 1500), Manjhan, Jāyāsī (1540) and Usman (1613). It is these "romantics" who brought the passion and symbolism of Majnu and Lailā's love and desolation into Indian poetry and religion. Kabīr's association with the Sūfī faqīrs contributed towards the adoption and popularity in Indian mysticism and literature of the Persian love-symbolism as the mode of approach to the Divine.

### **Sufism and Bhakti, Twin Bridges between Hinduism and Islam**

The Indian variety of Sūfism was moulded by the intimate contact of the Muslim saints with the Yoga asceticism of the Natha and Sahaja traditions, and the dominating, intense devotion to the personal deity of the Vaishṇavite faith that went back to ancient Bhāgavatism. As the Muslim power gradually consolidated itself, the even tenour of life of the common people was left undisturbed. Conversion to Islam became common among the lower social strata due to caste disabilities, and other social handicaps and prospects of exemption from the jizya and to distress during famines and enslavement during wars. But this did not disturb seriously the social fabric since the converts avoided beef-eating and widow re-marriage and generally conformed to the Hindu way of living. The Hindu population paid their homage to Muslim faqīrs and saints, went on pilgrimage to the tombs of *pīrs* and worshipped with the Muslims at common shrines to avert epidemic disease or agricultural calamity that Hindus and Muslims shared in the villages. Both Hindu and Muslim orthodoxy no doubt looked askance at these practices.



But the dissenting spirits of both religions, the Hindu Bhaktas and Bairāgīs and the Muslim Sūfis and Faqīrs took upon themselves the task of breaking down barriers of caste and religion, and preaching an intense love of god which transcended the narrow limits within which Hinduism and Islam were practically confined. Thus did the Sūfi doctrines of Islam and the Bhakti doctrines of Hinduism mingle harmoniously on the Indian soil. As we cannot trace in the Adina mosque and the Taj Mahal which is Hindu and which is Muslim art and craftsmanship, we cannot similarly distinguish between the Hindu and Muslim elements in the hymns of Hindu saints such as Rāmānanda, Kabīr, Nānak, Dādū or Mirābāī and the Sūfis such as Sachal, Shan Latif and Guru Arjuna. It is the religious dissenters of the middle ages, the Bhaktas and Sūfis, who through their eclectic teachings and devotional ecstasies largely fashioned the religious faith and devotion of modern India. A reliable estimate is that two-thirds of the Indian Muslims are under the influence of one or other of the Sūfi orders. The outer shell of religion divides sects and communities. Sūfism and Bhakti which constitute the mystical core or essence of Islam and Hinduism have been the binders of Hindu and Muslim cultures.

### **The Eclecticism of the Ramanandi Tradition**

All the South Indian teachers and philosophers, Rāmānuja, Nimbārka, Madhva and Rāmānanda, imitated Śankara in establishing religious orders, secular and coenobitic, for the propagation of their doctrines. The order of Bairāgīs or Rāmānandis founded by Rāmānanda had the largest clientele, estimated at 2 millions with large monasteries in Northern India. The success achieved was largely due to the liberal eclecticism and humanism of the new gospel, the emphasis of social equality inculcated among the lower orders and the use of the various dialects of Hindi in preaching and singing that elicited mass enthusiasm in Northern and Central India.

Rāmānanda was a worshipper of Rāma and used the Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa which he seemed to have taken to Northern India in 1430. The Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa bridges mystical devotion and the philosophy of the Vedānta by superseding the historicity of Rāma Chandra, the son of Daśaratha, and the slayer of Rāvaṇa by his metaphysical Essence as Pure Knowledge much in the same

manner as in the previous age the Mahāyāna replaced the human character of the Buddha by a universal, pure Buddha nature. Rāmānanda could thus appeal to both the intellectuals through the Vedāntic interpretation of Rāma-Vishṇu as Pure Being, Consciousness and Bliss (Sachhidānanda) and the common people through the repetition of the redeeming name of Rāma as the one God of love, goodness and compassion. More than a century and a half, however, were yet to pass before Tulsidās (1532–1623), inspired by the life and teaching of Rāmānanda, composed his immortal and inspiring 'Rāma Charita Mānasa or The Lake of Rāma's Life' (1574), which superbly reconciled metaphysics, morals and bhakti in the exalted epical background of the life and deeds of Rāma Chandra for more than a hundred million common men and women of Hindustan. Rāmānanda achieved also a profound synthesis between Rāma-worship and Yoga practice by which he became the perennial inspirer and teacher of succeeding generations of mystics, devotees and saint-poets. Tradition makes him a great Yogī, the disciple of Rāghavānanda, who once saved his life through his yogic power. In his small work entitled Siddhānta-Patala there is a perfect reconciliation of mystical devotion (bhakti) and yoga. The ashes, the burning fire and the Trikuti, which are common parlance with the medieval Natha Yogis, find their place here along with the tulasī-plant and the śālagrāma so favourite with the devotees. Rāmānanda probably introduced the worship of the śālagrāma (a rounded stone from the river Gandak) as the symbol of the formless, attribute-less God (Nirguṇa Brahman). To this day the Bairāgis of India are worshippers of the śālagrāma. Thus Vedāntic knowledge, ritualistic worship and nirguṇa yoga have harmoniously blended in the Rāmānandī tradition. Finally, the abolition of caste distinctions, the emphasis of social and religious brotherhood, the religious teaching and discourse in the vernaculars and the exaltation of the humanity of Rāma Chandra as god, king and prophet, all contributed to strengthen the appeal of the new gospel for Muslim and Hindu devotees alike.

### **The Gospel of Social and Religious Equality**

Rāmānanda's teaching seems to have penetrated also into Mahārāshtra. According to tradition Rāmānanda is the spiritual preceptor of Viththalapant, the father of Jñānadeva or Jñāneśvara,



who is the founder of the mystical movement in Maharashtra. He is well-known for the famous commentary on the *Gītā* – the *Jñāneśvari* that he dictated to one of his pupils, and also for his many *Abhangas* or mystical lyrics in Marathi. In *Jñānadeva* we distinctly mark the *Rāmānandi* spirit of social and religious equality. He declares, "There is none high or low with God, all are alike to him. The Ganges is not polluted nor the wind tainted, nor the earth rendered untouchable because the low-born and the high-born bathe in the one or breathe the other, or move on the back of the third". A kindred soul was *Nāmadeva* of *Pandharpur* (1400-1430) who went on pilgrimages with his elder contemporary saint *Jñānadeva*, and wrote many mystical poems in both Hindi and Marathi that have been incorporated in the *Granth Sahib* of the Sikhs. He was born a low caste calico-printer and refused entry to the temple of *Rāmeśvara* during his pilgrimage to the South. But the God left the temple to meet his devotee.

"I took up my blanket, went back,  
And sat behind the temple.  
As *Nāma* repeated the praises of God,  
The temple turned to his saints".

*Nāmadeva* did not believe in ritualism, even in the offering of flowers to God. The flowers are enjoyed by the bee and God was already in the bee.

"In every heart and in all things uninterruptedly there  
is only one God".

He had also no hesitation in calling God by the name of Allah of Islam. "By whatever name God is addressed, He is the same. In every heart He speaks. Can any one speak independently of Him?"

"I am poor, I am miserable, thy name is my support,  
Bounteous and merciful Allah, thou art generous.  
I believe that thou art present before me.  
Thou art wise, thou art far-sighted;  
What conception can I form of Thee?  
O *Nāma's* Lord, Thou art the Pardoner".

Again, he seeks neither Allah nor *Rāma*, but the formless God who dwells neither in temple nor in mosque.

"The Hindu and the Muslim are both blind;  
 a Jñānī is wiser than both of them.  
 The Hindu worships in the temple and the  
 Muslim in the mosque.  
 But Nāma offers his service to Him who  
 needs neither temple nor mosque".

With Jñāneśvara and Nāmadeva of the 13th century began a long succession of mystics and saints in Maharashtra till the end of the 18th century who struggled against caste, ritualism and Brahmin priesthood and carried a message of hope and joy to the lowly, the poor and the forlorn. The mystical movement in Maharashtra included saints who were recruited from outcastes, prostitutes, slave-girls and Muslim converts.

Rāmānanda's disciples who themselves became well-known as saints were scattered far and wide. There were Jñānadeva and Nāmadeva in Maharashtra. Three other Nāmadevas are mentioned, one in Gurdaspur, another in Bulandshar and the third in Marwar. Anantānanda, another disciple of his, had his monastery in Galta in Jaipur. Ravidās, the cobbler disciple, was in Banaras where Jhali, the Queen of Chitor and perhaps also the famous Mīrābāī (1498-1546) were his followers. Sena, the barber disciple, was associated with Bandhogarh where its ruler was his follower. Pipa, once a ruler of a small state in Rājputānā, had his monastery near Dwārakā. Dhannā the Jat lived in Tonk. Kabīr and Tulsidās who may be regarded as the greatest of his disciples, the Fathers of Hindi literature and two of the most profound mystics of India, had a tremendous hold on the population of Northern and Central India. Kings and peasants alike sought their holy contact. The Granth Sāhib, the scripture of the Sikhs, comprises many hymns composed by Rāmānanda and his disciples. The message of the Second Great Reformation of Rāmānanda was amplified and diffused among the masses of India through the sublime, mystical poetry of Kabīr, the endearing, God-intoxicated personality of Chaitanya, the practical genius and political sagacity of the Sikh gurus and the devotional ecstasy of numberless saints from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries.



## CHAPTER XXX

### FRESH BRIDGES BETWEEN HINDUISM AND ISLAM

#### **The Saint-poet Kabir and his Influence**

The Second Religious Reformation, initiated by Rāmānanda and his order that propagated Bhakti, received a great accession of strength from the discipleship of Kabir (1410-1518), a mystic of deep insight, great daring and elegant poetic expression. Kabir was born in a family of Muslim weavers in Banaras, probably converts from the Yogi caste, who did not abandon the popular Hindu faith in Gorakhnātha. He was profoundly influenced by the Rāmānandī tradition. He mentions in one of his verses that Rāmānanda illumined him. On the other hand, the master was said to have been strongly influenced by the pupil, especially in respect of the disregard of ceremonialism and caste regulations in his new religious fraternity. Kabir's own firm stand against sacerdotalism, ritualism and caste is to be attributed not only to his Muslim lineage but also to his inheritance of the Nātha and Sahaja yoga traditions. In some of his verses Kabir specifically expresses his reverence for Gorakhnātha as the most accomplished Avadhūta yogī, and his identification of the ultimate Reality with both transcendent Void (Sahaja Sunni, Nirañjana) and Supreme Bliss (Mahāsukha) closely follows the Nātha tradition. In Kabir, Nānak, Dādū, Sundardās and other medieval saints of North India we find reference to the "Sunī Sahaja" and "Sahaja Samādhi", stemming from the Buddhist Sahaja and Nātha yogas of Eastern India in the preceding centuries. In Sahaja-Samādhi, Kabir explains, "The five senses are not abandoned, but become ways of forsaking material enjoyment". "It is through the ladder of Sahaja that Kabir ascends the elephant of Supreme Knowledge". The medieval saint Sundardās, disciple of Dādū, mentions that Dādū, Raidās, Soja, Pipa, Sena and Dhanna have all been followers of the Sahaja path that must have been a live spiritual tradition associated with the abjuration of all rituals and

even yogic practices in his time. This could bring both Hindu and Muslim seekers away from scholasticism and ritualism to a common yoga approach to the ultimate reality dissociated from the social, racial and doctrinal context. "With Sahaja", says Sundar, "all religious people gather together". In the Nātha and Sahaja tradition that kept alive for several centuries in Northern India, especially among the untouchable castes, the dual yogic disciplines of Kāyā-Sādhana and Haṭha-yoga we find an instance of the lowest section of Indian humanity becoming the spring-board of a religious revival. Kabir's association with the Rāmānanda movement brings to a focus the contribution of the depressed yogis and Muslims of the Gorakhnātha order (still alive in Kanphata yogis) to an all-India religious movement. Kabir's derivation from the weaving caste, the Yogis (or Yugis), which bear the title Nātha with their name, and which spread throughout North India during the 10th to 12th centuries explains his strong affinity with Nāthism. Kabir seldom called himself a Muslim, and always a Julāhā. The songs of the Nātha-Guru Minanāth and Gorakhnātha are even now sung by the Yogi caste and the Muslim weavers of Bengal. Kabir says in a verse: "The Yogi (caste) cries Gorakh, Gorakh, the Hindu Rāma, Rāma and the Muslim Khodā." He mentions the three great Masters, Gorakh, Bhartṛhari, and Gopichand, who are held as the prominent Nātha-Siddhas in Bengali Dharma-mangala literature of the medieval period. Tradition says that both Kabir and Nānak met Gorakhnātha and held discourses with him. In one verse Kabir explains the Nātha Yoga practices derived from Gorakhnātha: "Gorakh is he who takes no time to discover that which is hidden, and controls the vital fluid and the vital air, by conjoining the Moon to the Sun." Kabir also came in contact with several Sūfis among whom are mentioned Taqi, Bhika, Akardin, Sakardin and Pir Pitāambar, held in esteem by both Hindus and Muslims. The Sūfi movement was making much headway in India in the 15th century. One result of the contact between Hinduism and Islam was no doubt the stress of the equality of all devotees before God and of simple faith and worship rather than of ritualism and sacerdotalism giving a great impetus to dissenting sects in both Hinduism and Islam. In Kabir, born in a Muslim convert family and nurtured in Hindu religious traditions and outlooks, the reform movements of both Sūfism and bhakti are harmoniously



reconciled. The Rāmānandī, the Gorakhnāthī and the Sūfī tradition mingled in the making of a tolerant, eclectic, profound spirit that held all institutional religion an empty show, strongly denounced caste, sectarianism, penance and ritual and sought the Reality by direct mystical intuition (Sahaja). "Like a winnowing basket the devotee is to retain the grain and throw away the chaff". "The beads are wood, the Gods are stone, the Ganges and the Jumna are water, Rāma and Kṛṣṇa are dead and gone and the Vedas are empty words". Caste or sect is of no relevance for the devotee; for all tread the way of God, at once the children of Allāh and of Rāma. "It is needless to ask of a saint the caste to which he belongs; for the priest, the warrior, the tradesman and all the thirty-six castes, alike are seeking God. It is but folly to ask what the caste of a saint may be; the barber, the washerwoman and the carpenter have all sought God. Even Raidās was a seeker after God. The Rṣi Svapacha was a farmer by caste. Hindus and Muslims have alike achieved that End, where remains no mark of distinction."

With the same ardency Kabir condemns every kind of formalism or dogma; for God is immanent in all things and confined neither to particular scriptures nor to specific methods of worship. "God is in every man's heart if the truth be known. Mussalmān's is one God, whereas Kabir's is all-pervading". Thus does Kabir differ from the orthodox monotheism of Islam.

"Oh servant, where dost thou seek Me?

Lo, I am beside thee.

I am neither in temple nor in mosque.

I am neither in Kāābā nor in Kailās.

Neither am I in rites and ceremonies, nor in yoga or renunciation

If thou art a true seeker, thou shalt at once seek Me:

Thou shalt meet Me in a moment of time."

Kabir says: "O Sadhu, God is the breath of all breath". Kabir was illiterate and never wielded the pen. But "my heart dances in the delight of a hundred arts", he observes. Dādū, the saint of Ahmedabad (1544-1600) who was a Kabir-panthi similarly says, "In my yearning desire for the Beloved I break into song day and night. I pour out of my woe like a singing bird". The direct vision of the mystics produced some of the finest religious

poetry in the world. Kabir plied his craft of weaving at Magahar to feed his wife and children and taught as he wove. For weaving a piece of cloth he obtained only 5 tanaks or  $2\frac{1}{2}$  annas. The cloth-dealer would sell this at  $5\frac{1}{2}$  annas, and he had to wait long in the market. Kabir could hardly maintain his family, comprising his wife Nimā, his parents and his woman disciple Loi, from the meagre income he derived from weaving. Yet he enjoyed the peace of his soul, and his craft supplied him with many ready imageries in respect of the divine life. For him God is the Weaver and the universe a vast, limitless loom. Thus does Kabir weave the familiar art of weaving into the vision of the cosmos:

“No one knew the mystery of that Weaver: Who came  
into the world and spread the warp.

The earth and sky are the two beams: the sun and  
moon are two filled shuttles.

Taking a thousand threads He spreads them lengthways:  
to-day He weaveth still, but hard to reach is the  
far-off end.

Says Kabir, joining karma with karma, woven with un-  
woven threads, splendidly the Weaver weaves.”

Hindi literature was greatly enriched by the spontaneous verses of Kabir and a whole school of the Nirguṇa saint-poets, of whom the most important are Dādū, Prāṇanātha, Malūkadās, Para, Paltu, Śivanārāyaṇa, Tulsī Sahib and Śivadayāl. These poets have been studied by K. M. Sen and P. D. Barthwal. Hindi literature owes to Kabir the popular style of writing chaupāis interspersed with dohas in which the well-known poems, the Padmāwat of Jāyasī and the Rāma-charita-mānasa of Tulsīdās are composed. Kabir's Rāmāiṇis are written in this popular style. The many Nirguṇa saint-poets composing Rāmāiṇis, Sākhis and Sabdas made a major contribution to Hindi literature and aided the religious renaissance in Hindustan. Hindi mystical poetry reached, indeed, its profound heights in Kabir, Dādū and Śivadayāl. As the drip, drip, drip of the monsoon brings to the Indian plains a strange yearning of the soul, Kabir is beside himself;

“I hear the melody of His flute, and I cannot contain myself:  
The flower blooms, though it is not spring, and already  
the bee has received its invitation.



The sky roars and the lightning flashes; the waves arise in my heart.

The rain falls, and my heart longs for my Lord.

Where the rhythm of the world rises and falls thither my heart has reached".

There the hidden banners are fluttering in the air. Kabir says: "My heart is dying, though it lives." Or his soul is in bondage, heavy with the burden of the world, and weeps as the drip, drip, drip weigh more and more heavily.

"Thick clouds hovered as the evening approached,  
The guides lost their way into the forest,  
The bride strayed apart from the spouse.  
She folded a blanket over her head—  
She who cannot lift even a flower—weeps  
She to her maid-friends,  
The more the blanket gets wet, the more heavily it weighs."

As autumn approaches and the forest is about to shed its leaves, Kabir is reminded of the mutability of life:

"The approaching month of March makes the forest weep.  
Even the leaves that are still fresh on the top branches  
grow pale day by day."

Or, again, the gardener's approach to the flowering plant symbolises the destiny of man.

"Seeing the flower-maid approach, the buds cried aloud,  
The blossoms she has picked, tomorrow is our turn."

Many of the mystics follow the Sūfis in describing the relationship to God as that of the bride to her Lord. Kabir sings in agony.

"O Lord: come to my house, my body is seething without  
Thee,  
Every one says, I am thy wife but I wonder at the relation.  
What sort of Love is this that Thou hearest me not, for  
I have never slept with Thee in perfect embrace."

Dādū also cries:

"Maiden, hearken to the tale of my agony;  
I am restless without my Beloved.

As the fish tosseth about without water, I find no response  
without my Beloved.

In my yearning desire for the Beloved, I break into song  
day and night; I pour out my woes like a singing bird,

Ah me, who will bring me to my Beloved?

Who will show me His path and console my heart?

Dādū saith, O Lord: let me see Thy face even for a moment  
and be blessed."

and Śivadayāl: "O bride: enjoy the company of the Beloved,  
Thou art in thy father's house whereas He dwells in the  
sky."

In a quieter contemplative mood Kabīr realises the all-pervasiveness of God. In the Great Silence he becomes God.

"None can find the limit or the secret of the Sustainer  
of the Earth:

He shineth in the plantain blossom and in the sunshine,

And hath taken His dwelling in the pollen of the lotus.

The great God reacheth from the lower to the upper  
regions of the firmament.

He illumineth the silent realm where there is neither sun  
nor moon,

Know that He pervadeth the body as well as the universe.

He who knoweth God in his heart and repeateth his name,  
Becometh as He."

Yet he longs to retain his finiteness:

"O Rāma, I am standing at thy door:

O Kabīr, come and meet with me,

Thou art merged in all,

But I would not utterly be merged in Thee."

Between the finite and the infinite, between Being and Becoming there is constant interplay which is the essence of creation, the supreme secret of religion. This unfolds itself in Kabīr's mystic vision.

"As the seed is in the plant, as the shade is in the tree, as the void is in the sky, as infinite forms are in the void, so from beyond the Infinite, the Infinite comes, and from the Infinite the Finite extends.

He himself is the limit and the limitless, and beyond both the



limited and the limitless is He, the Pure Being. He is the Immanent Mind in Brahma and in all creatures.

The Supreme Soul is seen within the soul,  
The Point is seen within the Supreme Soul,  
And within the Point the reflection is seen again,  
Kabīr is blest because he has this supreme vision".

Such secret is not revealed by philosophy but by love, and the revelation fills the heart, and the world, life and death with profound joy. The Supreme Spirit dances in joy and waves of form and creation arise out of the Infinite Sea of joy.

Kabīr lived and died as a poor man, an Avadhūta. "I have neither a thatched roof nor hut: Neither have I house nor a village. I have neither caste nor name. I have never been acquisitive". His mother was distressed and wept; his wife suffered from privations and borrowed salt and rice to feed the saints in whose company he spent most of his time. Kabīr had also to suffer from social opprobrium. To Sultān Sikandar Lodi complaint was made that he outraged the Muslims by going about openly in the streets of the city with his cries of Rāma, Rāma, and offended the Hindus by his illegitimate use of the sacred thread and tilak of the Brāhmins. But the Sultan convinced of his piety did not intervene. Even his association with low caste sinners and women of evil repute was made the basis of accusation. But his transparent virtue, simplicity and surrender to God won complete victory for him in the end. On his death, according to a beautiful legend, his Hindu and Muslim disciples were fighting about the disposal of his body. The spirit of the great Master appeared, and asked them to lift the shroud. Instead of his dead body they found a cluster of roses. Some were buried at Magahar, others were taken to Banaras and burnt on the Ganges Ghat.

A romantic figure in religion and literature, a contemporary of Kabīr and influenced by him, is Mīrābāī (1498-1546), the daughter-in-law of Rāṇā Sāṅgā, Mahārāṇā of Mewār. She obtained her religious inspiration from Rāmānanda's disciple, Rai dās, or from his works and, frustrated in love through widowhood at nineteen and persecuted in the Mewar palace by her brother-in-law Udekaraṇ who raised himself to the throne after putting to death Maharaṇa Kumbha, she gave her life and soul to Kṛṣṇa.





and missionary activities of most of them coincided in the same generation covering the whole of Northern and Central India, Rajputana and Maharashtra and were dominated by similar spiritual and social outlook. Of these teachers Kabīr was the most liberal and courageous, and had the greatest influence upon the blend of Hinduism and Islam. Nānak exhibited the greatest moral earnestness and zeal for practical reform of Hinduism and Islam, and hence had the greatest influence on the social and political structure. Vallabhāchārya was the most learned, the founder of the school of pure non-duality (Śuddhādvaita) and divine grace and achieved the best synthesis of the Vedānta with the doctrines of love, of the path of knowledge and the path of worship and ritualism on the lines of orthodox theology and philosophy. Chaitanya's was the sweetest and most radiant personality, divine in its God-absorption. Ekanāth was quietest in his profound reconciliation of the mystical and the practical life, alternating between hymn-singing and composition and service to the lowliest.

### **The Ethical Movement of Nanak in the Punjab**

Nānak, the founder of Sikhism in the Muslim-ridden Punjab, seemed to have met Kabīr when he was only twenty seven, and was familiar with his hymns which are even now sung daily by the Sikhs. He was farmer, shop-keeper, horse-dealer and store-keeper by turn, but no job was compatible with his unquenchable desire for God's companionship. In his birthplace at Nānkānā he saw with his own eyes the results of Muslim invasion and destruction. As he renounced the world his first solemn assertion was: "There is no Hindu and no Mussalman". All his life he valiantly sought to purge Hinduism and Islam of their bigotry, superstition and formalism. His emphasis was as much on the one-ness of God as Truth (Sat-śrī Akāl—God is True) and of the fraternity of men, as on the noble and righteous life—the social virtues of dignity of labour, charity and sharing. His indictment of form and ritual at the cost of inwardness will be clear from the following hymn addressed to a Muslim:

"Make kindness thy mosque, sincerity thy prayer-carpet,  
What is just and lawful thy Quran,  
Modesty thy circumcision, civility thy fasting,  
So shalt thou be a Musalman.

There are five prayers, five times for prayer, and five names for them :

“The first should be truth, the second what is right, the third charity in God’s name,  
The fourth good intentions, the fifth the praise and glory of God.”

In his pilgrimage through India he refused to make ritual offerings to ancestors (*śrāddha*) at the famous pool in Hardwār and appease the departed souls at the feet of Gadādhara in Gayā. At Baghdad on the call to prayer he refused to invoke the name of the Prophet. Neither pilgrimage nor asceticism nor the reading of scriptures would satisfy his ardent soul. For says he, “wherever I look there is God, no one else is seen.”

“I have consulted the four Vedas, but these writings find not God’s limits.

I have consulted the four books of the Mohammedans, but God’s worth is not described in them.

I have dwelt by rivers and streams, and bathed at the sixty-eight places of pilgrimage ;

I have lived among the forests and glades of the three worlds and eaten fruits, bitter and sweet ;

I have seen the seven nether regions and heavens upon heavens ;

And I, Nānak, say, man is true to his faith if he fears God and does good works.”

When caste code and manners demanded Nanak to eat his food in a separate enclosure segregating him and his meal from his host who belongs to the lowest caste, he fights caste exclusiveness. “The whole earth is my sacred enclosure and he who loveth Truth is pure”. “Nonsense is caste and nonsense the titled fame. What power has caste? It is reality that is tested. Nobody is without some worth. How can you call women inferior, when it is they who give birth to great men?” Again, “Those who love the Lord love everybody. There can be no love for God without active service. We should do active service within the world, if we want a place in heaven. We cannot get to heaven by mere talk; we must practise righteousness, if we want salvation.” Gurus and Pirs, Pandits and Maulvis may



“read the Purāṇas but not know the thing within them—God who is concealed within the heart.” “Touch not the feet of those who call themselves Gurus and Pirs and go a-begging. They who eat the fruit of their own labour and share it with others are the people who have found the right way.”

Living in a Muslim environment near Lahore, Nānak like Kabīr felt the call of the country for the unification of Hinduism and Islam. Perhaps he would have been more successful than Kabīr since he was more Muslim in spirit, but he failed due to Muslim persecution. He stands for a religion which does not consist in wandering to tombs or places of cremation or sitting in different postures of contemplation, nor does it consist in making religious pilgrimage or in bathing at sacred places. “Abide pure amid the impurities of the world; thus shalt thou find the way of religion”. He decried hypocrisy and sham, lip-worship and telling of beads. It is Truth that he prized above all. Truth according to him is higher than anything. “That is being true, when the true One is in the heart, when the filth of falsehood departs, and life is made clean. That is being true, when man fixes his love on Truth, and finds pleasure in hearing of the name; thus is it that he finds himself liberated. That is being true, when man knows how to love and preparing the field of life puts the seed of God into it. That is being true, when one receives true instruction, understands compassion for living things and performs acts of charity. That is being true, when man resides at the sacred fount of the spirit, where he abides in peace.”

When Nānak was fifty-seven years old, Babar invaded the Punjab. His sincere, unswerving devotion to Truth saved him from the anger of Babar who captured and sacked his city and took him as a prisoner. He was ultimately brought before Babar, declined the royal gifts and refused to embrace Islam. On the contrary, he admonished him saying, “Deliver just judgments, be merciful to the vanquished and worship God in spirit and in truth.” The Emperor spared his life. Years passed. Nānak went to Kartarpur where he settled down as a peasant and a guru of the rural folks. The profound love and devotion he inspired among the Hindus and Muslims alike are shown by their disputing among one another whether he should be cremated or buried. As in the case of Kabīr, the corpse vanished and in its place there were only fresh flowers.

Kabir, Nanak and Dādū shine in Indian religious history as the only mystics and leaders who boldly sought to fuse Hinduism and Islam and obtained a vast following from the mass of Hindu and Muslim population. All equally attempted to purge Hindu and Muslim faiths of their superstitious and external rituals. There had been conversions to Islam taking place on a large scale in Northern India but not as thoroughly and extensively, due to the strength and institutional set-up of popular Hinduism, as in many other countries subjugated by the Crescent. Many Muslims who accepted the canons of Islam indeed followed Hindu practices and ways of living. It was they that acted as bridges between Hinduism and Islam. In the teachings of Kabir, Nanak and Dādū, we find on the one hand the breaking down of the austerity and impersonality of Islamic theism and on the other hand we also come across a vehement protest against Hindu sacerdotalism, polytheism and caste encouraging the fusion between the two communities. Equally significantly both Kabir and Nanak according to traditions came in direct contact with Gorakhnath and also drank deep from the undefiled wells of the Sūfi movement. We here encounter the ancient essential spirit of tolerance and catholicity of Hinduism always seeking to establish the most unlimited extension of the religious community, and not a spirit of defeatism in the face of the foreign conqueror and his proselytization. India has been unswerving in her quest for the unity and brotherhood of man in the midst of the clashes of different faiths, theologies and philosophies of her widely dissimilar races and peoples. It was indeed the dynamic upsurge of the Hindu religious consciousness that not only renovated the universal values underlying the practices of the Hindu faith but also corrected the inflexible monotheism and uncompromising dogmas of Islam. A new moral earnestness, a simplicity of faith and worship, a wholesome reaction against both asceticism and priesthood and an equality of the faithful before God were binding the Hindus and Muslims together on the eve of the establishment of the Mughal Empire. These trends were later on greatly strengthened by the liberal policy of Akbar who under the guidance of several Sūfi and Hindu saints attempted in the political field the same kind of religious synthesis as that of Kabir and Nanak that might bring together the discordant elements of a new vast Indian empire.



## CHAPTER XXXI

### THE CHAITANYA VAISHNAVA MOVEMENT: RENAISSANCE IN RELIGION AND LITERATURE

#### The Advent of Krishna-Chaitanya

It is experienced throughout history that as a foreign power holds in subjection a civilized people the resultant political and social ferment becomes the fertile ground of a cultural revival. In Bengal the strength and sweep of the religious and literary renaissance in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were the measure of the social disorganisation that had set in along with the general uncleanness of life and addiction to meat, wine and women. Brahmanical tyranny had been oppressive. Philosophy became associated with an arid intellectual disquisition and development of a highly scholastic system of new logic or Navya Nyāya (about the middle of the fifteenth century). The social unity was sought to be preserved by the stringent regulations of Raghunanadana as it was disrupted by the debased practices of Nathism, Sahajīya and Tāntrikism. "Religion", sadly observes Vṛndāvana-dāsa, a devotee of Chaitanya, "was reduced to a mere form and there was no faith in men". In this great social and cultural crisis there sprang up a most radiant, winsome, young personality, Gauranga Kṛṣṇa-Chaitanya who utilized the contemporary doctrine of Bhakti, recently enriched by the popularisation of the Srimad Bhāgavata from the Dravida country, and the cult of Kṛṣṇa-Rādhā of Vṛndāvana for a mass religious and social awakening. The Bhāgavata refers to the Alvar bhaktas of the South and like the latter stresses complete and spontaneous surrender of the human spirit to God, and the discarding of all external attractions and associations through which it is restored to its natural and essential Dharma. This was altogether a new trend in the development of Indian thought which profoundly influenced Chaitanya Vaishnavism. The Bhāgavata-purāṇa was composed in Southern India in the eleventh or twelfth century,

the period during which the cult of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā found vivid expression in Bengal in both sculpture and Jayadeva's famous erotic-religious lyric, the *Gītā Govinda*. The Chaitanya-Vaishnava movement had its distinctive theology, metaphysics, mechanism of ecstasy, and hymns, poetry and drama. The spiritual struggles and raptures of the soul, focalised round the mystic visions and experiences of Kṛṣṇa-Chaitanya, amply compensated for the corruption, coarseness and crassness of contemporary life.

### Bengal Vaishnavism

As Sikhism was disciplining the people of the North-west for a quiet, noble, righteous life, Bengal, Mithila, Assam and Orissa seemed to be swept off their feet, reverberating with the devotional hymns delineating the nuances of the love of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa under the rapturous spell of the God-intoxicated Chaitanya. Vast adoring throngs of Chaitanya's disciples came out day after day on the streets of the cities in big Sankirtana processions, and the mass religious fervour spread from town to town, and from province to province. Their idol and leader Chaitanya, was born in a Brahman family at Navadvīpa, then one of the most important seats of Sanskrit learning in India. At the early age of twenty he was teaching in a Sanskrit Tol, and a tour in Eastern Bengal made him famous as a scholar. He wrote commentaries on Nyāya, the *Srimadbhāgavata* and the *Kalāpa* grammar, the last being widely used. A pilgrimage to Gaya where he met the Vaishnava saint Isvara Puri was associated with his religious conversion. Isvara Puri initiated him to the Bhakti cult, and Chaitanya experienced the first religious ecstasy of his life at the "lotus feet" of Gadādhara. "Leave me", he said to his companions, "I am no longer fit for the world. Let me go to the Vrinda groves to find out Kṛṣṇa, my Lord and the Lord of the Universe." This ardent utterance of the forlorn, desolate soul, Rādhā, in perennial quest for her Eternal Lover, Kṛṣṇa, gives the entire key to Chaitanya's God-illuminated life and mission. He returned quite a new man to Navadvīpa and renounced the world at the age of twenty-four. Even before that he organised singing parties in which the devotional lyrics of Lilasuka, Jayadeva, Vidyāpati and Chandidās used to inspire ardent group visions and ecstasies.



### The Gita Govinda

Jayadeva's *Gita Govinda*, a lyrical pastoral drama, was probably played with the accompaniment of music and dance in Bengal in the pre-Chaitanya period in the form of a *Yātrā* (folk dramatic performance) and was a fitting religious and literary inspiration of the Chaitanya movement. In its marvellous, passionate and musical word-pictures and rich and charming imageries dealing with the varied nuances of love—awakening, expectancy, disappointment, dejection and resentment, remorse, reconciliation and bliss—in the gorgeous setting of the beauty of nature, of tamala trees, *mādhavi* creepers, *kimsuka* flowers and buzzing bees through the procession of the hours and seasons, and its exquisite harmony of music and feeling, the *Gita Govinda* is at once an original, complete and perfect lyrical drama unsurpassed in world literature. Its beauty and life-giving power spring from the use, with virgin passion and joy and yet with superb symmetry and comprehensiveness, of the most refined sensuous symbols of life, desire and communion for a dramatic expression of Divine Love and Beauty in the Paradise of Creation. In this poem classical Sanskrit poetry in its decline indeed manifested a sudden warm glow like a lamp before it is extinguished. On the other hand, the poem is a harbinger of vernacular song and lyric, including as it does for the first time in Sanskrit literature the lyrical and melodious *Padavalis* intended to be sung in a popular festival. It certainly bears the impress of the song, passion and melodrama of the folk religious *yātrā* and wonderfully assimilates the characteristics of the *Apabhramsa* or vernacular literature coming into prominence at the time. The vernal-bodied *Rādhā*, whose limbs are made of the beauty of the flowers of the *Mādhavi* creeper, waits in the dark, trackless forest for *Kṛṣṇa*, burning with the glory of His love. Her *sakhi* (attendant) speaks to her :

“*Rādhā!* why sittest thou here, when He has gone to yonder bamboo forests? Follow Him, whose speech is music. Go and melt into Glory that is He. O woman of ample thighs and love-filled breasts! Go to Him, whose feet tread the ground visibly, invisibly. Rise! Haste, haste and hie to him! There! Dost thou not see His beckoning hand in the crowd of creepers whose leaves are dancing with breeze? O Devotee! the dark night is alive, its colour is bluer than

that of the Tamala leaves. And on the face of the night is the halo of flying light-shafts that dart from the jewel garlands hanging like creepers of burning flowers in the necks of seekers that roam in search of his Tryst. How these strings of gems, shining in the night declare his presence as the streak on the touchstone proclaims gold”.

(Free rendering by Puran Singh).

Jayadeva's work is saturated with bhakti. Kṛṣṇa, though Bhagavān, infinite and inscrutable, is yet finite and is the quintessence of the desires, frustrations and fulfilments of the restless, forlorn creature, man. The finite soul is Rādhā, whose loving self-surrender to Kṛṣṇa was the fascinating theme of medieval India. In an incredibly bold passage, God implores the finite creature, holding his feet in his hand: For man is as indispensable for God, as is God for man.

“O Rādhā! Come unto me! As I have spread flowers for thee in my heart to be blessed by thy touch, touch me with thy feet that are red with all thy all-pervading passion for me. O my beloved! let me hold thy feet in my hand. Thou hast got tired, having travelled such great distances for my sake. And let me cool my ears with the music that thy anklets chime so deep!”

Some resemblances are no doubt to be found between Jayadeva's treatment of the Kṛṣṇa-Rādhā theme and that in the Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa. But Jayadeva is essentially a poet, and on the whole subordinates the religious inspiration to poetic feeling in the rich sensuous background of nature in spring time. Nor is the Srimad-Bhāgavata the source of the Gīta Govinda; for the former does not show the pre-eminence of Rādhā among the Gopis, and depicts the autumnal and not the vernal rāsa-sport of Kṛṣṇa with the milk-maids. Yet the Gīta Govinda, though truly a song poem is accepted by the Chaitanya-Vaishṇava and the Sahajīya movements of Bengal as well as the Vallabhachari sect of Northern India as an authoritative religious work that illustrates the nuances of divine rather than human love. Chaitanya himself went into spiritual ecstasy in listening to the Gīta Govinda sung in congregational melody. S. K. De considers that there must have been other wide-spread erotico-religious tendencies of a similar kind from which Jayadeva, like Vidyāpati of later times, derived his inspiration. Even in Chaitanya's time when Srimad Bhāgavata



emotionalism was fully established (the work being the almost exclusive scripture of the Chaitanya sect) he finds evidence of other currents of Vaishnava devotionalism.

During his early years of asceticism Chaitanya made several tours of pilgrimage. He went to Orissa and to the South as far as Rāmeśvaram staying at Śrīrangam, the chief centre of the Rāmānuja school, at Udupi, the chief centre of the Madhva school and at Sringeri, a major centre of the Śaṅkara school. He went up to Pandharpur, the centre of Marāṭha Vaishnavism where he must have met the disciples of Nāmadeva, and then to Sārnāth, Dvārkā and Prabhāsa. He also visited Mathura, Br̥ndāvana, Benaras and Prayāg. Chaitanya's religious catholicism is evident from his pilgrimage to various religious centres irrespective of their sectarian complexion.

It is difficult to fix the sources of Chaitanya Vaishnavism. For some centuries the Rādhā legend seems to have been growing in Bengal. In Paharpur we have an image of the couple, Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, that belongs to the late Gupta period, while an inscription of Bhojavarman (c. 1100 A.D.) refers to Kṛṣṇa as sporting with a hundred Gopis (Gopi-sata-kelikara). The Gītā Govinda of Jayadeva, who flourished about 1170 A.D. as well as the passionate Maithili lyrics of Vidyāpati and the Sri Kṛṣṇa Kīrtana of Badu Chandidās, both of which belonged to the end of the fourteenth century, developed the mystico-erotic aspects of the Rādhā theme. In Sanātana Gosvāmi's Laghutoshinī, a commentary on the Śrīmad-bhāgavat, there is a reference to the delineation of the episodes (Rādhā's) of gift, river boat etc. of Chandidās and others. The reference obviously here is to Badu Chandidās's Sri Kṛṣṇa-kīrtan (1450-1525) and Chaturbhūja's Hari Charita (1494). A dozen years before Chaitanya was born the Bengali poet Mālādhara Basu, who received the title of Gunaraj Khan from the Moslem ruler of Bengal, and who is one of the fathers of Bengali literature, published the Sri Kṛṣṇa Vijaya (1481 A.D.). This is a translation of the 10th and 11th skandhas of the Śrīmad-bhāgavat and introduced also the Rādhā episodes. In this occurs the apostrophe to Kṛṣṇa, "the son of Nanda, Lord of my Heart" (Prāṇanāth), that deeply stirred Chaitanya. The influence of the school of Nimbārka (about the beginning of the 12th century) which established itself in the Mathura environs and developed the Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa cult—giving promi-

nence to Rādhā meditation and worship—upon the Chaitanya cult cannot be belied, although positive proof is wanting. The Sena kings of Bengal who replaced Buddhism by Purāṇic Hinduism are described in their inscriptions as Karnāṭaka-Kshatriyas. Hailing as they did from Karnataka, they must have been influenced in their Vaishnava leanings by the Alvars and later on by Nimbārka, who belonged to Nimbapura in Bellary district, preached the cult of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā with her thousand attendants, and died, according to Bhandarkar, about 1162 A.D. Now Jayadeva's Gīta Govinda, therefore probably derived its emotionalism from the contemporary teaching of Nimbārka in Karnataka, backed by the Vaishnava tradition of his royal patrons. The Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa and the Brahma-samhitā, which Chaitanya seemed to have brought from the South—whose dates, however are uncertain—and which are both accepted as canonical by the Chaitanya school, had been also decisive influences.

But mostly the Vaishnava theologians and philosophers developed the Bhakti-rasa-shastra in their own way on the basis of the Rasa-pañchadhīyā of the Śrīmad-bhāgavat, taking their cue from the variegated and ardent practices and experiences of Bhakti of Chaitanya himself. Bengal is the original home of Tantrikism and Chaitanya's great contemporary was a famous Tantrika scholar and exponent, Kṛṣṇānanda Āgamvāgīśa, author of the Tantra-sāra. The Tantrika philosophy certainly strengthened the bi-sexual emphasis of the Vaishnava doctrines focussed round Rādhā as the hlādinī sakti of Kṛṣṇa, and the Bhagavatta or Lordship of Kṛṣṇa as the full display of the divine śaktis.

### The Divine Conjugality in Bengal Vaishnavism

An entire psychology, metaphysics and aesthetics of bhakti (Rasa sāstra) have been developed and integrated into a system by Rūpa, Sanātana and Jīva with life-long labour and profound scholarship. The Absolute or Kṛṣṇa is the blissful Lord and his sports (līlā) in creation and manifestation constitute his bliss-potentiality. Conjugality comprises the supreme stage of God's love-making and enjoyment in the association of his own bliss-manifestations. But this divine conjugality is something very different from human; since it is based on the vicarious desire (prema) of contributing to the enjoyment of the Divine,



and not on self-regarding desire (kāma). Such God-projected impulse (prema) has its definite stages of evolution typified by the fourfold "ideal types" of human relationships: loving service (dāsyā), comradeship (sākhyā), parental relationship (vātsalyā) and man-woman relationship (mādhuryā). The last is typified by the youthful maidens, beloved of Kṛṣṇa, the gopis of Braja, the chief of whom is Rādhā. In Rādhā love finds its consummation (mahābhāva). There is in madhura-rasa a strange admixture of delight of union and pain of separation, making the devotee (kānta bhakta) realise the ever-sweetening, ever-intensified interplay of the sentiment of conjugality. Obviously the process of development is entirely in the ideal, transcendental plane. The scene of enjoyment is the eternal transcendental Vrindāvana—the highest heaven (dharma) or state of ecstatic consciousness where the Love-deity eternally relishes the ideal sentiment (mahābhāva) through the self-manifested Divinities of His own bliss-potentiality. Rādhā and her associates stand for the different stages or attitudes of the love-sick soul in the infinite quest of the Lord Kṛṣṇa, the One Eternal Male in the Universe. Such is the subtle, refined symbolism focussing towards the realisation of supersensuous joy (brahmānanda) as the highest attribute of the Absolute. There are three attributes of the Absolute in qualitative gradation: God's immanence (Sandhīnī), consciousness (samvit) and bliss (hlādinī). God as Bliss that comprehends existence and consciousness, enjoys his own intrinsic nature and makes all creatures enjoy the same. This basic notion of the three-fold śakti of God is derived by Bengal Vaishnavism from an important text of the Viṣṇupurāṇa. The supreme goal of the religious life, according to Bengal Vaishnavism, is the inherent appropriation, even in infinitesimal proportion, of the Divine svarūpa-śakti of bliss (hlādinī).

Never in the history of any religion or cult have the familiar and authentic human relations and sentiments as the servant, parent, comrade and companion, or as the beloved been canalised as ways of approach to the deity. The stabilisation, enrichment and perfection of the major familistic attachments and attitudes are here symbols or means of attainment of religious ecstasy and insight of various degrees and categories that are treated in great elaboration in Bengal Vaishnava lore. On the one hand, sex and love are educated, sublimated and directed into a conjugality that

extends beyond the finite lives of man and woman and transforms the familiar, unstable sentiment into something creative and eternal. This introjects ultimate meanings and values to love, marriage and society, to the empirical life. On the other hand, religion becomes far less of a penance and austerity or an external form and ceremony, and more of an ever-unfolding joy and insight of the mystic vision. That is the permanent contribution of Bengal Vaishnavism to religious thought.

### **The Social Influences of Bengal Vaishnavism**

More directly in dharma ridden and caste-riven India, Chaitanyaism abolished the barriers of caste in matters of worship by the free and unritualistic recitation of the name of Hari that is divine from the lips of either a Brāhman, Mlecchha or Chandāl, a man or a woman. The group sankirtan comprising all castes, high and low, brought together to a pitch of ecstatic communion, was also a step towards a new democratic brotherhood in the land. Chaitanya chose Rūpa and Sanātana, former converts to Islam according to tradition, and Raghunātha-dāsa, a Kāyastha, for the propagation of the faith. His companion and disciple, Nityānanda, also took the unprecedented step of admitting men of all castes into the religious order. Further, the emphasis of Chaitanyaism was on a universal religion of man. "The Lord's highest sport is the human sport (in the earthly scene of Vrindāvana) and his human form is his essential manifestation (swarūpa)." Along with this humanism which is given lyrical expression by Chandidās ("Man is the supreme Reality, there is nothing above Him") the Chaitanya-cult also strikes a modern note in asserting the supremacy of the present age over the past—"Adore the Kaliyuga, pre-eminent among all epochs." This won for Chaitanya the well-deserved title of the "Saviour of the fallen." He abolished many social restrictions, permitted widow re-marriage and took into his fold thousands of degraded Buddhist monks and nuns. The gospel of prema, which arises spontaneously through complete surrender to the Divine, touched the least and the lowliest in society, whose very ignorance, sinfulness or perversity make them vehicles of God's grace, inscrutable in its sportiveness (līlā). The redeeming power of the holy name of Hari, disseminated by lusty collective chant continuously through day and night, had a profound socially levelling consequence. Through the chanting



of God's name, which is identical with God himself, Chaitanya converted five leading Muslims, including the Kazi of Navadvipa. The latter was sometimes called 'Pathan Vaishnava'. The Chaitanya charitāmṛta (1542) which is Chaitanya's biography written by Krishnadas Kaviraj quotes many sayings in which Chaitanya decries caste and stresses that the divine grace disregards caste or status.

### The Metaphysical Flight of Chaitanya Vaishnavism

If Bengal Vaishnavism has developed its technical rasa-śāstra, the psychology and aesthetics of devout sentiments, it has also produced profound metaphysics. Jīva Gosvāmi's famous doctrine of the relation between the self and the universal as one of identity as well as of difference in an incomprehensible manner (*achintya bhedābheda*) is recognised by many as one of the supreme flights in metaphysics. The qualification incomprehensible (*achintya*) which brings in the mystical attitude, differentiates Bengal Vaishnavism from other schools of Vaishnavism in India. The self (*jīva*) is a part (*amśa*) of the Supreme Being (*Bhāgavat*) and is hence identical, even it be an infinitesimal part (*aṇu*), but the superlativeness of such attributes as Consciousness and Bliss belongs to the Supreme Being alone and not to the self which is accordingly eternally separate and subordinate to Him, due to Being's *Māyā-śakti* that creates and sustains the phenomenal world. The self is limited, screened and controlled by the latter. But Being is not affected by this *Śakti*, which though it proceeds from him, is external to Him (*bahiraṅga*) and not intrinsic (*para*, *antaraṅga*, or *svarūpa Śakti*). The self, however, by the power of service, surrender and *bhakti* which is itself the manifestation of the blissful (*hlāḍini*) aspect of Being's *Svarūpa-śakti*, pure and transcendental (*prakṛtātita*), can overcome its limitations and imperfections. Thus the self through the divine grace (*prasāda*, *anugraha*) can be restored its affinity or contiguity to the Supreme Being. *Mukti*, in Bengal Vaishnavism is not the merging of the self in Being, but the self becoming a part of Being, and contributing to His Divine bliss and sharing in His beatific sports as his attendant (*parikara*) or servant (*sevaka*) in His highest Heaven that can be attained neither by knowledge nor by works but only by devotion (*bhakti*). The beatitude of eternal worship (*bhajānanda*) is greater than the bliss or merger in the divine self (*svarūpānanda*).

The tolerance and modernism of Jīva Gosvāmī's metaphysical system are fully evident from his statement in the Bhagavat Sandharva that the apprehension of Brāhmaṇ Bhāgavat differs due to the differential capacity (darśana yogyatā), background and viewpoint of men. No view is untrue or unreal, although there is preference of the rich, variegated, intrinsic character of the Bhāgavat (Svarūpabhūtanāma-vaichitri viśeshavat) to the undifferentiated (nirviśeṣa) Brahman that is regarded as incomplete (asampūrṇa) perception. The difference of vision (darśana-bheda) is due to the difference in the mode of worship (upāsana-bheda). Bhakti is the only road to the full or complete vision (samyag-darśana) of the deity in which the perception of the unconditioned Brahman is included and becomes indiscrete (aspaṣṭa) or superfluous. Thus is bhakti added as the fifth goal of human life (purushārtha) to the traditional four goals of righteousness (dharma), desire (kāma), wealth (artha) and release (moksha).

### The Myth of the Chaitanya Lila

It is unusual that an entirely new and influential religious order grows up without much of the leader's own definite teachings and expositions. Chaitanya wrote nothing with the exception of perhaps eight Sanskrit verses given as the Śikshāṣṭaka in Chaitanya Charitāmṛta. This is due to the fact that Bengal Vaishnavism is above everything a vital and practical system of mystical-emotional ideology in which metaphysical notions are less significant than the stages and states of mystical experience. It was Chaitanya's overwhelmingly inspiring and resplendent personality, experiencing and revealing to his inner band of disciples the entire gamut of bhakti attitudes and experiences that determined the doctrinal trend of Bengal Vaishnavism, especially in the hands of the six pious Gosvāmīs of Vṛndāvana, Sanātana, Rūpa, Jīva, Gopāla Bhatta, Raghunātha Bhatta and Raghunātha-dāsa, his biographers, such as Paramānanda, Kṛṣṇa-dāsa Kavirāja, Lochandāsa and Govindadāsa and the innumerable Vaishnava poets who sang about the sports (līlā) of Kṛṣṇa and Gaurāṅga. The Bengal Vaishnavas soon came to believe in the divinity of Chaitanya although Jīva Gosvāmī does not at all dwell on the point. The metaphysical systems of Sanātana, Rūpa and Jīvā are not concerned with the myth of the Chaitanya Līlā at all. But in the biographies and poems Chaitanya appears as the



dual person, Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā in one, the incarnate of the Divine wishing to enjoy his own hlādinī-śakti or the love-sentiment of Rādhā in a human body. The situation was poignant, providing a devotional inflatus in Bengal, which lasted for the next three centuries and produced a vast literature of impassioned lyrics (estimated at over three thousands from 170 poets), dramas, stories, chaupais, biographies and narratives in the vernacular as well as profound metaphysical and theological discourses, dramas and kāvyas in Sanskrit. Sanātana's Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta and his brother Rūpa's Laghu-bhāgavatāmṛta and Jīva's six Samdhar-bhas, viz. Tattva-Bhāgavat, Paramātima, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Bhakti and Priti, developed the entire philosophy as well as the theology of Chaitanyaism. Kavi Karṇapura's Chaitanya-Chandrodaya, Ramananda Roy's Jagannātha, Vallabha and Rūpa's Vidagdha-Mādhava and Dana-Keli-Kaumudi are dramatic compositions. There were also devotional kāvyas, poems and written in Sanskrit such as Kavikarṇapura's Kṛṣṇāhānika Kaumudi, Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāja's Govinda-līlāmṛta, Viśvanātha Chakravarti's Kṛṣṇa-bhāvanāmṛta and Jīva Goswāmi's Mādhava Mahotsava and Gopala Campu. The above were Sanskrit works. The vernacular literature comprised biographies and karchas (notes) as well as padavalis. The most authoritative biographies of Chaitanya were Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja's (born 1517) Chaitanya Charitāmṛta and Bṛndāvandāsa's (born 1607) Chaitanya Bhāgavata. Other Biographies were Lochandāsa's and Jayānanda's (born 1513) Chaitanya Mangal, Narahari Chakravarti's Bhaktiratnākara, and Isana Nagara's Advaita-prakāśa (1568), Govinda-dāsa's Karcha also deserves mention. Of the vernacular poets the most important are Vṛndābandās and Balarāmadās, Kaviśekhara Roy, Narottamdāsa, Govindadāsa and Jñānadāsa.

### The Mystical Anguish and Ecstasy of the Vaishnava Lyrics

For the first time in Indian literature, new literary genres emerged and were disseminated among the people, viz. lyric and biography. The Vaishnava lyrics are as poignant as these are delicate and profound, full of symbolisms derived from the events of the life of Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa and the varied nuances of their loves, delineated and dramatised by a most ardent imagination. There is the familiar figure of Rādhā, sleepless and weeping in her anguish of abandonment, but mustering all her courage to

meet the Beloved One in the darkness of the rainy night. The picture vividly brought home to the mind with the help of elegant language, vivid imagery and sweet melody, full of sensuous passion, cannot fail to arouse poignant religious moods—Govindadās sings of the tryst of Rādhā. Rādhā has to traverse the thorny untrodden forest path slippery after the rains to meet her Lord. She learns to be sure-footed for this difficult journey by covering the courtyard with thorns and making it slippery with household water. She practises steady nightly walking and silences the tinkling of her anklets with cloth. Rādhā prepares herself for her tryst, sleepless throughout the night. She closes her eyes with her hands in order to accustom herself to walking in the pitch dark night. She learns from the snake-charmer the antidote to snake bite, offering him her bracelets, protecting herself against snakes in the jungle. She turns a deaf ear to the remonstrations of her elders, answers irrelevantly or laughs as one distraught.

Chandīdās sings of another adventure of Rādhā. She cannot stay indoors and seeks Kṛṣṇa on the banks of the Jamuna as twilight darkens. In the dusky twilight Rādhā goes alone to the bathing ghat of the Jamuna and finds the beautiful Kṛṣṇa decked in flowers on the dark waters of the river. Kṛṣṇa now plays, now dances, now hides in the waves and Rādhā in full passion and expectancy dips in the river, in pursuit of Him. But Kṛṣṇa is nowhere. When the water becomes still, Kṛṣṇa reappears but yet eludes her. Rādhā ultimately comes back home crying. The poet Chandīdās says to Rādhā: The dark Lord was there all the while on the river bank under the Kadumba tree, but you could not unravel his sport and saw the mere reflection.

Again, in the poem of Vidyāpati, Rādhā complains: My friend, there is no end to my grief. In this full rainy season in the month of Bhādra, my house is empty. The clouds are thick, there is incessant thunder, and it is raining all over the world. My lover is gone abroad, and cruel cupid is shooting his keen shafts at my heart. Thunderbolts are falling by the hundred, the glad peacock is dancing passionately, the impassioned frogs and the wood fowl are lifting their voices and my heart is bursting with grief. Darkness has spread in all directions, the night is fearful, and the lines of lightning are flashing. Says Vidyāpati, how wilt thou pass the days and the nights without the Lord?

The song of Kṛṣṇa Kamal Goswāmi delineates Rādhā's



ecstatic joy of union. In her mystical vision and beatitude Rādhā sees Kṛṣṇa everywhere (Divyānanda). She cannot distinguish between the dark blue rain-clouds and Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa is dark and blue as the first cloud of the rainy season. Is it the rainbow in the cloud or the peacock feather in Kṛṣṇa's head-dress? Is it the row of white herons crossing the dark cloud or the garland of pearls hanging on Kṛṣṇa's neck? Does lightning line the cloud? Is this not the yellow apparel of Kṛṣṇa? Is it the rumbling of the cloud that she hears, or the deep notes of Kṛṣṇa's flute? Kṛṣṇa has come to meet her beloved, still she has her misgiving, and trembles in the apprehension that it may not be Kṛṣṇa after all but only the blue cloud of the rains.

God does not leave her beloved alone. He comes surely and silently as we surround ourselves in the impenetrable darkness of sin. Chandidās sings that Rādhā grieves that the Lord has come for her in such a fearful night with clouds thickening and the village alley leading to her cottage, invisible in the darkness. The Beloved One has come to the very courtyard and is completely drenched in the rain. God's suffering for the sinner is heart-breaking. Rādhā has made the Lord wait for her too long, mindful as she had been to the warnings and admonitions of her elders—the voice of caution and worldliness. She has sent word to her Lord to come and now repents how much suffering she has caused. Realising God's love and travail for man, Rādhā resolves that she will patiently endure all the ignominy and humiliation of the world and set fire to the house and samsāra. God in his profound sympathy for man does not brook his own travail for His sake, but completely identifies Himself with his happiness and misery. This is heartening for humanity. In the flight of Vaishnava poetic imagination the desire for union with God blends with the anguish of the soul for God's misery in coming down to release it from sin and bondage.

Thus have the Vaishnava padāvalis composed in thousands for four centuries dramatised and sung of the loneliness and suffering of the human soul separated from God, God's supreme grace, the soul's expectancy, surrender and bewilderment as well as joy of the divine union. Proceeding from episode to episode and song to song the poet-mystics rehabilitate in their imagination the refined and ideal types of religious experience and concentrate upon and communicate particular religious emotions and atti-

tudes, which in the case of Sankīrtans spread easily from group to group and from city to city.

Before the advent of Chaitanya there were several Kāvya and poems concerned with the Rādhā Kṛṣṇa līlā, stemming from Jayadeva, Vidyāpathi and Badu Chandīdās. But Chaitanya's teachings completely revolutionalised literary taste and invested the lyric with rich spiritual import. On the one hand, Chaitanya himself used to enjoy the songs of devotional sentiments composed by old as well as contemporary poets often throughout the night in the house of Śrīvāsa and others within closed doors. On the other hand, the passionate appeals of poetry and religion went together and contributed towards the abridgement of distance between the high and the low, the saint and the sinner and the rapid spread of his movement both during his life time and for over a century after his death. Social life was also profoundly transformed by the egalitarian movements led by his disciples, Advaita and Nityānanda, both of whom were later on considered on a par with Chaitanya (Mahāprabhu). There were also several egalitarian religious orders or groups defying caste and social conventions, which arose such as Spāṣṭa-dāyaka, Kartabhaja (under Auleychand), Ramavallabhi, Sahebhdhani, Aul, Baul, Nera, Darvesh, Sain, Sahaji, Khusivisvasi, Goubadi and Balarami. All these sprang up in Bengal under the impulsion of Chaitanyaism and worked among the masses irrespective of caste and creed. Their general emphasis was on the reliance upon direct intuition, the spiritual importance of the Guru, yoga discipline and transformation of sexuality. It should be mentioned that schools of decadent Buddhism were retaken into the Hindu fold through some of these sects, regaining the caste status as the nava sakh (new branches).

### **The Vallabhacharya Movement in the Uttara Pradesh**

When under the inspiration of Chaitanya the Gosvamis of Vṛndāvana were identifying and reclaiming the sacred sites of Braja and rehabilitating sanctity of Vṛndāvana and of its groves and river banks as the scene of Kṛṣṇa līlā, another contemporary saint, Vallabhāchārya (1470-1530) founded the temple of Śrīnātha at the legendary Govardhana hill. Vallabhāchārya was a disciple of Vishnusvāmin of the South and author of Siddhānta Rahasya and a commentary on the Srimad-bhāgavat and other learned works.



His doctrines were very similar to those of Chaitanyaism, emphasizing on the basis of the Bhāgavata the eternal character of the sports of Kṛṣṇa in both Vaikuntha or heaven and Gokula or the earth. Like Chaitanyaism the religious quest ends here not in union (Sāyujya) with Hari, but eternal service and worship. Love then spills on sides and the jiva or the individual soul is admitted to Vaikuntha where he participates in the eternal sports (līlā) of Kṛṣṇa with those who love him. Vallabhāchārya lived most of his time and died in Banares. But his order has its followers in Northern India, especially Gujarat, Rajputana and the Mathura Region. It emphasises rituals and observances, connected with the worship of Kṛṣṇa from childhood to youth at all hours of the day, punctuated according to the routine of Kṛṣṇa's daily life. It celebrates with much devotion such festivals as the Ratha Yātrā, Rāsa Yātrā and Janmāṣṭami. The Vallabhāchārya movement led also to a literary outburst in Hindi literature. The most important compositions are the Viṣṇupāda, the Brajavilās and the Vārtā. The last comprises stories and the miracles of devotees. Finally, the Ashtachhapa gives anecdotes of eight leading poet-disciples of Vallabhāchārya, written in the local Braja dialect.

Most important of these Ashtachhapa poets was the blind Sūr Dās (1483-1513) who composed exquisite religious lyrics that are still sung throughout Hindusthan. He also translated the Bhāgavata Purāṇa into verse in the Braja dialect. This blind poet is credited to have composed a lakh and a quarter verses, sweet, sparkling and mellifluous and giving poignant expression to the feelings of union with and separation from Kṛṣṇa. Nearest to man, God is farthest, yet Kṛṣṇa's Divinity consists in His succour to forlorn man.

“Knowing me weak, thou wrenchest thyself from my hand  
and departest;

When thou shalt depart from my heart, then will I allow that  
thou art (only) man.”

Through God's love and Grace the impossible becomes possible:

“At the feet of Viṣṇu, giver of Bliss, I bow :

By his favour the lame can leap over the mountains,

The blind all things can see.

The deaf can hear, the dumb can speak,

The poor to great state are raised.

Sūr Dās takes refuge with thee, O Lord;  
Again and again he bows at thy feet.

(Translation by Edwin Greaves)

The other poets of this group were Nandadās, author of *Raspanchādhyāyī*, Vithal Nath, author of a prose work entitled *Chaurāsī Vaishnava Kī Vārtā*, Parmānanda dās, and Khumbhan dās. The School included also a Muslim, Ras Khān, author of *Prema-Vārtikā*. Another important poet was Behari who followed the lines of Sūr Dās. The *Aṣṭachhāpa* group of poets made an important contribution to the development of Hindi literature, though not on a scale comparable with that of the Vaishnava Lyricists (*Mahājanas*) to Bengali.

### The Inter-penetration of Religious and Literary Movements in India

In Maharashtra both the Gorakhnāthī and Rāmānandī tradition flowered into the mystical movement or Nivrattināth (1273-1297). Jhānadeva (1275-1296), Jhānēsvara (about 1290). Nāmadeva (1400-1430) and other saint poets. Nivrattināth was a disciple of Gahinināth who inherited the spiritual legacy of Gorakhnāth and Matsyendranāth. Jhānadeva's father is said to have been a disciple of Rāmānanda himself. Jhānēsvara in his commentary on the *Bhagavad Gītā* viz. the *Jhānēsvari* definitely traces his spiritual ancestry from Śankara, Matsyendranāth and Gorakhnāth through Gahinināth and his disciple Nivrattināth. We thus see that the broad currents of the Nāth-Siddha and Rāmānandikabīr traditions flowed into Maratha mystical thought. There is a continuity of tradition in Maharashtra from Jhānēsvara, Nivratti and Sopāna deva and Muktabai (sister of Jhānēsvara) who were also contemporaries flourishing at the end of the 13th century, to Nāmadeva, and from Nāmadeva to Ekanāth. As in Bengal so in Maharashtra the Bhakti movement touched the lowest castes. Two women mystics, Janabāi, a foundling who became a servant-woman of the mystic, Nāmadeva, and the Mahar Chokhamela's wife (about 1338 A. D.), came into prominence, being the sweet, spiritual offspring of this mystical movement.

We give below a fine hymn by Chokhamela's wife.

"The flesh is defiled,—so they all declare;  
But the spirit is pure, clearly discerning.



Without defilement is no flesh created,  
 Anywhere in all the world.  
 The defilement of flesh is in the flesh itself, of a surety.  
 So says the wife of Chokha, the Mahar."

(Translated by Macniol and Laddu)

Janābai sings with delight about God's love for the lowest and the least in society.

"As God danced on mud with the potter Gora, as He talked with the Kabir while the latter was weaving cloth, as He drove away the cows and buffaloes of the untouchable Chokha, similarly He now began to grind in the company of Janābai seeing which, even the Gods were pleased."

(Translated by R. D. Ranade).

Some of the lyrical verses of Nāmadeva are incorporated in the Granth Sahib of the Sikhs. Ekanāth (1548-1598) belonged to the same mystical tradition that repudiated formalism and idolatry as well as distinction of caste and creed and leaned on God-realization through love and suffering. In his many abhangas he described his identity with Brahman or ātman that fills the entire universe; yet he was fond of performing kirtans every day, and observed this practice till the day of his death. His writings were voluminous, including a commentary on four verses of the Bhāgavata and an edition of the Jñānesvari, besides a large number of hymns.

God's omnipresence makes the Bhakta's enjoyment of the senses a way of remembrance. The senses, the objects and the enjoyment all merge in God. Such is the manner in which Ekanāth expounds the supremacy of Bhāgavata-Dharma. Life, nor the things of desire nor the desires are shunned, for by his shunning them he suffers in the flesh. By making the desires and the things of desire offerings to God, he can spontaneously and without effort attain knowledge and emancipation. "Whenever the eye sees the visible, (the bhakta) sees there God Himself. Thus by the means of worship he offers up his vision, namely, the objects that he sees. In like manner when he hears with his ear, it is an offering to Brahman. Without deliberate intent, know this, spontaneously and naturally Bhāgavat is worshipped. He who brings together scent and the thing that has scent, he becomes (to the bhakta) the very sense of smell by reason of love. When the sweets of taste are tasted, then its flavour is God

Himself. He abides in the delight of taste and (the bhakta) perceives that the enjoyment of taste is an offering to Brahman. When by our body we touch, then in the body the unembodied Self is manifested. Whatever he (the bhakta) touches and whatever he enjoys, lo, it is an offering to Brahman. Wherever he (the bhakta) sets his foot, that path is God's. Then in every step he takes, lo, his worship is an offering to Brahman," (translated by Macniol). As in Bengal, Mithila, Assam and Orissa, Kirtana, under the influence of the Maharāshtra Saints, came to be regarded in the Deccan as the sacred confluence of the devotee, God's name and God and swayed the hearts of hundreds of men.

It was in south India that the vernaculars were used for hymn composition and singing for the first time from at least the seventh century A.D. Rāmānanda was the first great teacher to authorise and encourage the use of Hindi for similar purpose in the North in the 14th century. This gave a tremendous impetus to the development of popular literature through the chaupais and dohas of Kabir, the Nirguṇa and Aṣṭachhap a group of poets in Hindi, the resplendent padavalis of Narottamadās, Jananadās, Govindadās and their innumerable successors in Bengali and the abhangas of Nāma deva, Ekanātha and others in Marathi in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. A great stream of religious lyrics, kāvyas, narratives and biographies poured forth throughout India in these centuries. The religious and literary outbursts helped and interpenetrated one another, and in some regions the succession of mystics and poet-saints continued right up to the 18th century. Tulsidās (1532-1623) and Kesavadās in Northern and Central India, Dāsu (1544-1600) and Malūkadās (1574-1682) in Western India, Tukārāma (1608-1649) and Ramadās (1608- ) in Maharāshtra and Narottam, Govindadās Kavirāj and Yadunandan in the 17th and Chandraśekhara, Sashisekhara, Viśvanāth and Narahari Chakravarti in the 18th century in Bengal continued the same impulsion in different regions of India.

The bhakti movement came from the Tamil Land to the north through the Second Great Reformation of Rāmānanda and gradually extended itself through the 14th century during his life-time and the 15th and 16th centuries in its original home. In the south devotional mysticism did not become anything like a mass movement of social and religious freedom and equality and dignity of action without any distinction of caste and status,



bringing in its wake the rise and phenomenal development of the popular literatures as in the North. This was because under the glorious aegis of the Vijayanagara Empire, the South was more or less immune from Muslim aggression and the disintegrating influence of Islam. Bhaktism in the North, however, was not an expression of national defeatism or escapism but a great democratic adventure, an inspiration of dynamic religious life, freedom and equality among the masses, which not only could meet effectively the religious and social challenge of Islam, but also strengthened the dissenting creed of Sufism within the bosom of Islam through the modification of its uncompromising monotheism and racialism.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### TOWARDS A NATIONAL PADSHAHI UNDER THE MUGHALS

#### **The Mongol Heritage of a Secular State**

The Mughal empire in India was something very different from the Turko-Afghan kingdoms of the preceding centuries. In Asia the Mongol Empire under Chenghiz Khan and his successors developed a political and administrative policy towards the subjugated peoples and kingdoms which was largely political rather than religious. The Mongol empire-building was only possible through the recognition of the principles of grandeeship and suzerainty similar to those underlying Seleucid, Maurya and Gupta Empires. An empire can only be stable on the basis of religious tolerance, recognition of customary laws and institutions of the subject populations, and delegation of responsibility of administration to semi independent kings, chiefs and viceroys under Imperial overlordship. After many centuries of Muslim military adventure, Jihad and religious iconoclasm, descendants of Timur and Chenghiz brought to India new political conceptions derived not from the Saracenic but from the Mongol empires. The Mughal Padshahs (Emperors) tried to build up a national state in India. In fact founder of the Mughal Empire in India assumed title of "Padshah-i-Hind" and clearly understood the mission of the Timurids in Hindustan.

#### **Akbar's Progress towards a National Monarchy**

Into this mission Babar and his successors, who considered themselves Padshahs by birth and profession, brought the refinement and finish of Iranian civilisation. For the Mongols who conquered Iran were themselves conquered by Iranian culture. From Babar (1526-1530) to Akbar (1556-1605) we find the gradual expansion and consolidation of Mughal authority from Delhi based on alliance and matrimonial connection with the Rajputs, the



implacable enemies of foreign rule and lovers of freedom, the appointment of Hindu rulers of States as *grandeess*, the employment of Hindus in the highest offices of the state and the general conciliation of Hindus. The building up of new loyalties immediately bore fruit for the infant national state in Hindustan. For Akbar's half-brother who ruled over Kabul, invaded India. He could be defeated only through the help of Akbar's new allies, the Rajputs. After the conquest of Kabul, Kashmir, Baluchistan, and Qandahar were annexed. It was definitely realised in Akbar's Court that, as a matter of strategy and defence, the Mughal Emperor "must hold Qandahar or his dominion is unsafe." In an age when Kabul was a part of Delhi Empire Qandahar was our indispensable first line of defence." But Qandahar was also important for another reason. It lay on the major trade-route to China and the Mediterranean world, and since the Portuguese were then dominating the Red Sea and had hostile relations with Iran, Indian goods could not go to Europe and to other countries in Asia, except through Qandahar, the most important emporium of trade in this region. As important as Qandahar for the access of India's merchandise to Europe through the Indo-Levantine route was Kabul which was a large and flourishing city under the Mughal empire. From Kabul the trade route proceeded to Kashgar and Yarkhand and thence to China. William Finch (1608-1611) points out that the caravan route from Kabul to Kashgar took two or three months' journey. The entire kingdom was under the Tartars but Chinese merchandise such as large quantities of silk, porcelain, musk and rhubarb, as mentioned by Finch, came to India from China through the Chinese gateway of Chia-yu-Kuan. At the beginning of the 17th century we came across the same ancient marts and towns in Finch's account as we meet with in the descriptions of the routes of Fa-Hien and Hiuen-Tsang: Yarkhand, Kashgar, Badakhshan, Ghoiband, Kabul, Jalalabad, Peshawar, Attock, Rawalpindi and Gujarat. From Kashmir to India the trade route is also the same as in the past. But Lahore was a new and most important town: "the Chief city of trade in all India, very large, populous and rich," as Edward Terry (1616-1619) describes it. Akbar's empire which extended from the frontiers of Persia and Central Asia to Assam, and to the Vindhya in the south, gave peace to Hindustan until the invasion of Nadir Shah in 1738 and restored India's commercial

and cultural intercourse with the rest of Asia and with Europe, through Afghanistan by land and the ports of Gujarat and Bengal by sea. From Aleppo or Damascus to Ispahan, the Metropolis of the Persian Empire, the caravan route reached Multan and Lahore via Qandahar. The volumes of the traffic could be imagined from the description of the caravan in which Coryat (1612-1617) travelled from Ispahan to India comprising 2000 camels, 1500 horses, 1000 and odd mules, 800 asses and 6000 people. In a year 14000 camel loads of merchandise passed by way of Qandahar to India at the beginning of the 17th century.

The ports of Cambay and Surat in the West and Saptagram and Chittagong in the East were within Akbar's empire that enormously enriched itself through its trade with Europe, Indonesia and the Far East, Africa and Central and Western Asia. The system of communications both by roads and waterways was perfected under the Mughal regime, and twenty one subas of the Empire were economically welded together. Though Imperial authority sometimes failed to check monopolies established by the Provincial Viceroys, trade, industry and commerce were regulated by similar Imperial edicts everywhere and protected by the might of the Imperial army and navy. Under Aurangzeb, the Imperial fleet put down Portuguese and Magh piracy that endangered maritime trade across the Bay of Bengal, and stimulated both coastal and oceanic traffic; while the Emperor's successful campaign in Afghanistan opened the Khyber and Bolan passes for trade with Central and Western Asia. There was a continuous movement of traders from Saptagram to Lahore and Qandahar via Delhi and from Surat and Cambay to Banares and Patna via Burhanpur and Agra. Such movement was safe and relatively cheap in the vast country.

The court language was Persian throughout the Empire, and the systems of judiciary, finance and administration, including the coinage and methods of accounting and record-keeping, the assessment of land, the hierarchy of officials, the dress, manners and ceremonials of the upper classes, and even the games and recreations were much the same in the different subas. The Rajput and Hindu Malwa States also adopted Mughal patterns in civil administration, court life and military organisation. Indian art and architecture due to a happy blending of Muslim and Hindu art traditions since the later Turko-Afghan period showed in the empire a distinct "Mughal" style. A considerable part of India,



especially Hindusthan, was indeed approaching a common culture under the national monarchy of the Great Moghuls. Hindusthani became the *lingua franca* of Hindusthan making it possible for traders, officials and travellers from Gujerat or the Punjab to feel quite at home in Bengal or Bijapur. The vernacular literatures, thanks to the bhakti movement that waxed stronger and stronger, also showed common attitudes of spiritual inwardness and social and religious equality. The Hindu mystics of Bengal, Rajputana, Gujerat and Maharashtra were speaking with the same accents, while the Sufis of Sind and North-west found their compeers or devotees among the Muslims of Bihar and Bengal.

Akbar's greatness was realised by Śivaji, the inveterate enemy of the Mughals, in a famous letter which he addressed to Aurangzeb, protesting against the levy of *jazia*. "The architect of the fabric of the Empire, Akbar Padshah, reigned with full power for fifty-two lunar years. He adopted the admirable policy of perfect harmony in relation to all the various sects. The aim of his liberal heart was to cherish all the people. The state and power of these emperors (Akbar, Jahangir and Shah Jahan) can be easily understood from the fact that Alamgir Padshah has failed and become bewildered in the attempt merely to follow their political system. They too had the power of levying *jazia*, but they did not give place to bigotry in their hearts as they considered all men high and low created by God. If you imagine piety to consist in oppressing the people and terrorizing the Hindus, you ought first to levy *jazia* from Rana Raj Singh who is the head of the Hindus. Then it will not be very difficult to collect it from me, as I am at your service. But to oppress ants and flies is far from displaying valour and spirit. I wonder at the strange fidelity of your officers that they neglect to tell you the true state of things but cover a blazing fire with straw".

Within five years of his coming to the throne, Akbar married the daughter of the Rajput Prince of Amber (1562). The alliance with Amber brought to the Mughal Court the rulers of Marwar, Bikanir and Bundi. Only Rana Pratap of Mewar refused to be entangled in the imperial net and kept the torch of freedom alive in the Aravalli hills and jungles, after Akbar had invaded Mewar and left Chitor in complete ruin, cruelly massacring its 30,000 people irrespective of age and sex. The eighth year of Akbar's reign saw the abolition of the pilgrim tax which the Hindus had

to pay on their visits to Mathura, Prayag, Benares, Hardwar, Gaya, Pushkar and various other pilgrim centres. In the ninth year of his reign the *jazia* was abolished. All this meant a considerable loss of revenue for the state, but Akbar preferred to build up a new national state on the allegiance of the Hindus, representing the over-whelming majority of the population. His Hindu Wazir, Todar Mall, was entrusted with the financial and economic administration of the Empire. His work was of outstanding merit and served as the basis of the British fiscal and revenue system.

### **Aurangzeb's Policy of a Muslim State:**

Aurangzeb completely reversed this national policy, seeking to build a purely Muslim state ruled by the Quran. He could never forget that he had come to the throne as the exponent of Sunni orthodoxy against the religious catholicity of Dara, and tried to carry on even as a king a *jihad* against all his non-Muslim subjects. It is noteworthy that Aurangzeb added to his titles of Padshah (Emperor) and Alamgir (conqueror of the world) the title of Ghazi (Holy warrior) when he ascended the throne. 1669 saw the first formulation of his general policy "to demolish the schools and temples of the infidels and put down their teaching and religious practices strongly with object of spreading Islam and overthrowing infidel practices." We read in the *Massir-i-Alamgiri*, 'It reached the ears of His Majesty, the Protector of the Faith, that in the province of Thatha, Multan and Banares, but especially in the latter, foolish Brāhmans were in the habit of expounding frivolous books in their schools, and that students, learned Musalmans as well as Hindus, went there even from long distances, led by a desire to become acquainted with the wicked sciences there taught. The Director of the faith, consequently issued orders to all the governors of provinces to destroy with willing hands the temples and schools of the infidels, and to put an entire stop to the teaching and practice of idolatrous forms of worship. It was subsequently reported to His Religious Majesty, teacher of the Unitarians that in obedience to his orders, the Government officers had destroyed the temple of Vishvanāth at Banaras.' In the thirteenth year of Aurangzeb's reign this justice-loving monarch, the constant enemy of tyrants, commanded the destruction of the Hindu temples of Mathura, and soon that stronghold of falsehood and den of iniquity was levelled with the



ground. On its site was laid at great expense the foundation of a vast mosque. Ten years later the *jazia* was imposed on the "unbelievers" and vigorously collected by "pious" tax-gatherers exactly a century after Akbar had abolished it. The object of the levy of the *jazia* was "to spread the law of Islam and to overthrow the practices of the infidels." (Massir-i-Alamgiri). The incidence of the *jazia* burden was too heavy for the Hindus. According to Manucci "many Hindus who were unable to pay turned Muhammadans to obtain relief from the insults of the collectors ..... Aurangzeb rejoiced". Jadunath Sarkar points out that while the land revenue in Gujarat yielded Rs. 11 million, Rs. 5 lakhs were obtained from *jazia* alone. In Burhanpur city alone the assessment was over Rs. 8½ lakhs. Various kinds of differential taxation were also introduced such as transit and customs duties, payable exclusively by non-Muslims. Many important temples were demolished, and in several cases mosques built on their foundations. The famous temples of Banaras, Mathura and Somanath were destroyed. Hindu fairs were prohibited and seats of Sanskrit learning abolished and broken up. The Hindus were deliberately encouraged to embrace Islam through the grant of stipends and gifts as well as posts in public service, liberation from prison in the case of convicts and rebels and succession to disputed states and principalities. The highest offices ceased to be held by the Hindus. In the lower bureaucracy, Hindu and Muslim Qanungos were appointed half and half. The climax was reached when in 1695, Aurangzeb forbade all Hindus except the Rajputs to carry arms, ride on elephants or good horses and use palanquins. All this provoked great discontent among the Hindus, who felt that there was a definite reversal of the old policy. No race in Northern India felt the indignity and humiliation so much as the martial Rajputs. The Sikhs, the Jats of Mathura and Agra, the Satnamis of Nanol were in open rebellion. Aurangzeb himself in complete and callous disregard of Rajput loyalty, attacked the Rajputs in order to take possession of the kingdom of Jaswant Singh on his death in the Emperor's service. At this treachery the whole of Rajputana flared up in indignation and vehement resistance under the leadership of the Rathors who fought Aurangzeb till his death. Prince Akbar joined the Rajputs against his perfidious father. Never after this did the Rajput clans enlist themselves under the banner of the

Mughal Empire. In the well known letter full of biting satire which Prince Muhammad Akbar wrote to his father from exile in Khorasan we read—"former emperors like Akbar had contracted alliance and kinship with this (Rajput) race and conquered the realm of Hindustan with their help. This is the case with whose aid and support Mahabat Khan made the Emperor Jahangir his captive and meted out due punishment to the tricksters and deceivers. Blessings be on this race's fidelity to salt, who, without hesitation in giving up their lives for their master's sons, have done such deeds of heroism that for three years the Emperor of India, his mighty sons, famous ministers and high grandees have been moving in distraction (against them), though this is only the beginning of the contest. On the Hindu tribes two calamities have descended, (first) the exaction of *jazia* in the towns, and (second) the oppression of the enemy in the country. When such sufferings have come down upon the heads of the people from all sides, why should not they fail to pray for or thank their ruler?"

In the reign of King Alamgir, the Holy Warrior,  
 Soap-vendors have become Sadar and Qazi  
 Weavers and Jolahas are boasting  
 That at this banquet the king is their confidant  
 Low people, have gained so much power,  
 That cultured persons have to seek shelter at their doors ;  
 Such ranks have been acquired by fools  
 As scholars can never attain to :  
 God protect us from this calamitous age,  
 In which the ass kicks at the Arab steed :  
 The supreme magistrate is (vanity) treading on the wind,  
 While justice has become (as rare) as the phoenix itself.

The clerks and officers of state have taken to the practice of traders and are buying posts with gold and selling them for shameful considerations. Everyone who eats salt destroys the salt-cellar. The day seemed near when the palace of the State would be cracked. "

### **The Sources and Significance of the Din-i-Ilahi**

The new ideal of a national state of Akbar could be implemented only for a century. Even before Aurangzeb's accession to the throne both Jahangir and Shah Jahan were neither sincere nor consistent in maintaining the national character of Mughal king-



dom as envisaged by Akbar. They, of course, firmly adhered to the alliance with the Rajput princes and contributed to appoint talented Hindus to high and responsible positions in the State. But Shah Jahan's order for demolition of Hindu temples (1633) and the prohibition of the erection of new ones, his prohibition of inter-marriage between Hindus and Muslims which had been common in the Punjab and Kashmir and encouragement of mass conversion of Hindus to Islam clearly indicate that he departed fundamentally from Akbar's policy of Hindu conciliation though he did not adopt the course of iconoclasm followed by Aurangzeb. Yet a century of peace, prosperity, religious tolerance and social amity and two centuries of imperial administration, covering the whole of North India and much of the Deccan, coupled with the permeation of Iranian culture in Delhi and the provincial capitals, witnessed magnificent efforts of cultural synthesis and revival in India.

The ground was, of course, prepared by two centuries of the second Great Reformation and the religious and literary renaissance associated with Kabir, Nānak, Chaitanya and Vallabhāchārya in Northern India. Within the bosom of Islam three important reform movements were also producing a climate of mystical devotion and tolerance in the 16th century viz., Sufism, Mahdism and Roshnism. Many Sufis were expelled from Iran due to the persecution of the Safavi kings and sought refuge in Afghanistan and Hindustan. Abdul Latif, who was appointed Akbar's teacher by Bairam Khan, was a Sufi. Akbar's mother, who was the daughter of a well-known Persian scholar, probably had leanings towards Sufism. Both Mahdism and Roshnism believed in the advent of a Messiah or Saviour of Mankind, and stressed mystical devotion and communion. The founder of Mahdism was Mahamad of Jaunpur (born 1443 A. D.) who declared himself the Mahdi. In the 16th century Roshnism had its ardent exponents in Sulaiman of Kalinjar and his disciple Bayazid, the Pir-i-Raushan. Akbar's ardent inquisitive mind must have responded to the spiritual ferment in the Islamic world, spreading through Arabia, Persia and Hindustan in the 15th and 16th centuries. In Hinduism as well the dominant note of the century was Bhakti or ecstatic communion with the deity. Akbar's transformation from a Mongol into an Indian was largely due to the large movements of mystical devotionism and religious eclecticism sweeping through the country when he came to the throne.

With a sense of the numinous and "tempests of feeling now and then breaking over his soul," he early came in contact with the Sufi leader Sheikh Mubarak who was at various times a Sunni, a Shiah, a Mahdist and a Sufi, always "the king's Jonathan" as the Jesuits described him, and with Mir Abdul Latif "a paragon of learning", acquainted him with the Sufi poet Hafiz and was his teacher and boon companion for many years. The Emperor is also said to have visited the famous Mirābāi and the Sikh Guru Amara-dās. The poet Faizi, brother of Abul Fazal, had leanings towards Sufism and was his constant associate. Akbar also looked upon with much reverence not only all eminent Muslim Sufis but also Jain, Pārsi and Hindu saints, Brahmans and Sramanas with whom he could come in contact; for he had unflagging interest in the spiritual quest. His intimacies with the three eminent Jain teachers Harivijaya Sūri, Vijaya Sen Sūri and Bhānu Chandra Upādhyāya, the Pārsi teachers Dastur and Kaivan, the Jesuit Fathers Aquaviva and Monserrate from Goa, and the well-known Muslim saint Selim Chisthi show the catholicity of his religious temperament and outlook. He went so far as to grant Harivijaya Sūri the title of Jagadguru. From such Hindu religious leaders and Purshottama and Devi, invited by him, Akbar imbibed the secrets of yoga and devotion and the doctrine of transmigration of souls. From the Jain teachers he learnt the sacredness of the doctrine of non-violence, and released prisoners and caged animals and prohibited the slaughter of animals on certain days. From the Pārsi teachers he learnt the symbolism of fire-worship and ordered that the sacred fire be kept burning at his court at all times of the day. From the Christian Fathers, who heaped abuse upon Islam, he learnt by contrast the lesson of religious toleration. In the royal harem his Rajput wives, coming from a region where Hinduism was a living and ardent faith under the spell of Kabīr, Mirābāi and Dādū, must have transmitted to him something of the Hindu devotion to the Unapproachable and the Inscrutable and an all-inclusive code of religion and morality. Out of all or some of these influences emerged the new religion, the Dīn-i-Ilāhī or the "Divine Faith," of Akbar who became impatient with the narrowness of orthodox Islam. He said to himself: "Although I am master of so vast a kingdom, yet, since true greatness consists in doing the will of God, my mind is not at ease in this diversity of sects and creeds, and apart from the outward pomp of circum-



tances, with what satisfaction in my despondency can I undertake the sway of Empire?" He repented of his own over-weaning presumption that led him to persecute men of different faiths and gradually became estranged from Islam. "Formerly, I persecuted men into conformity with my faith and deemed it Islam. As I grew in knowledge, I was overwhelmed with shame. Not being a Muslim myself, it was unmeet to force others to become such. What constancy is to be expected from proselytes on compulsion?" More and more he turned towards social and moral reforms and complete religious equality for all.

Akbar's regulations included the prohibition of child marriage and Sati, permission of widow-remarriage, limitation of sale of drinks and enforcement of chastity. His decree for religious equality was strongly worded. "If any of the infidels chose to build a church or synagogue or idol temple or Fire-temple, no one was to hinder him." In 1579 Akbar invested himself with the power to make religious reforms "for the benefit of the nation, and as a political expedient", and ascended the pulpit of the mosque at Fatehpur Sikri. The essential feature of the *Dīn-i-Ilāhī* which was an order rather than an independent church was to "prescribe for the whole empire gods, ceremonies, sacrifices, mysteries, rules, solemnities and whatever else was required to constitute one perfect and universal religion". Such a formulation of the Imperial creed was entirely in accord with the eclecticism and synthesis, characteristic of the Hindu Bhakti and Muslim Sufi movement of the age.

### **The Religious Synthesis of the Age**

Akbar the mystic, imbibing the spirit of the Upanishads, the *Mahābhārata* and the *Bhagavad Gītā*, (now translated under his order under the title of *Razm-Namah*), and the mystical poetry of Kabir, Mirābāī, Sūrdās and Tulsīdās and frequently meeting Hindu saints and Muslim faquirs in the tender, quiet religious atmosphere of their cottages and āśramas, reiterated from Fatehpur Sikri the universal religious lesson of India of his time. His religious quest can best be represented by the following verses of his friends, the famous brothers, Faizi and Abul Fazal, his constant associates who encouraged him in his religious aims, one stressing the transcendence and the other the immanence of God, the warp and woof of the Indian Bhakti movement of the time.

"O Thou who existest from eternity and abidest for ever,  
Sight cannot bear Thy light, praise cannot express Thy  
  perfection  
Thy light melts the understanding, and Thy glory baffles  
  wisdom ;  
To think of Thee destroys reason, Thy essence confounds  
  thought  
Human knowledge and thought combined  
Can only spell the first letter of the alphabet of Thy love  
Each brain is full of the thought of grasping Thee,  
The brow of Plato even burned with the fever of this hopeless  
  thought "

" O God, in every temple I see those who seek Thee.  
And in every tongue that is spoken, Thou art praised.  
Polytheism and Islam grope after Thee.  
Each religion says, 'Thou art one, without equal'.  
Be it mosque, men murmur holy prayers ; or church,  
The bells ring for the love of Thee.  
Awhile I frequent the Christian cloister, anon the mosque,  
But Thee only I seek from fane to fane.  
Thine elect know naught of heresy or orthodoxy, whereof  
Neither stands behind the screen of Thy truth  
Heresy to the Heretic, dogma to the orthodox ;  
But the dust of the rose-petal belongs to the heart of the  
perfume seller "

While Akbar peremptorily asked the Christian missionaries to refrain from attacks on Mohammad's life and teachings, he permitted them to build a chapel, attended their Mass, got the Gospel translated into Persian and on the great gateway at Fatehpur Sikri inscribed Christ's words:

“Jesus saith : The world is a bridge; pass over it, but build not  
on it;  
The world passeth as a hour: spend it in prayer, for the  
unseen is at hand ”

To his own muslim brethren he said

"To repeat the words of the creed, to perform circumcision, or to lie prostrate on the ground from dread of kingly power is not seeking God: Obedience is not in prostration on the dust; Practice truth, for sincerity is not borne on the brow".



This is an echo of the teaching of Kabīr, Dādū and Nānak. Akbar's Dīn-i-Ilāhī was in fact a sincere attempt towards state recognition of universal religious freedom, equality and toleration as well as synthesis, "not losing", in the words of Abul Fazal, "what is good in one religion, while gaining whatever is better in the other" that the freer spirits in both Hinduism and Islam were demanding in North India for about a century. There was obviously an admixture of political and religious motives. "In that way honour would be rendered to God; peace would be given to the peoples and security to the Empire". No doubt the Dīn-i-Ilāhī built up out of the essential elements of all religions, known in India at the time, promoted the unity of the Mughal Empire, although the Orthodox Muslims cavilled at it. Abul Fazal who saw the resentment of the orthodox section attributed it to the following: "An impure faction reproached the caravan leader of God-knowers with being of the Hindu (Brāhman) religion. The ground for this improper notion was that the prince out of his wide tolerance received Hindu sages into his intimacy, and increased for administrative reasons the rank of Hindus, and for the good of the country showed them kindness. Three things supported the evil minded gossips. Firstly, the sages of different religions assembled at court, and as every religion has some good in it, each received some praise. From a spirit of justice; the badness of any sect could not weave a veil over its merits. Second, the reason of Peace with all (Sulh-i-kul) was honoured at the court of the Caliphate, and various tribes of mankind of various natures obtained spiritual and material success".

Jehangir, his successor, also showed the same spirit of religious eclecticism and synthesis characteristic of the age. Like his illustrious father, he took great interest in Christianity and arranged religious discussion between the Christian Fathers and Muslim theologians. He also loved to discuss theology and religion with Hindu saints, such as Jadrup, observed several Hindu festivals and customs but rejected idolatry and regarded popular Hinduism as a "worthless religion". His religious preference seemed on the whole to lean towards Sufism in accord with the contemporary upper class attitude as well as with his own father's religious outlook.

### Mughal Literature and Fine Arts

Akbar's cosmopolitan court in Delhi that attracted philosophers and scholars from other countries in Asia emulated after many centuries the glory of the court of Harsha in Kanauj. The reign of Akbar recorded an impressive and appreciable volume of work. The Atharva Veda, the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata were translated either in whole or in parts. Hindu mathematical and astronomical works were also translated. Faizi undertook the translation of *Lilāvati*. The shining literary lights in Akbar's court were, Abdur Rahmān Khān-i-Khānān who is one of the fathers of Hindi literature, Faizi, the famous poet, Sayyid Jamalauddin Urfi, a famous composer of Quasidas, Prithvi Singh Rathore, author of *Veli Kṛishṇa Rugminire*, Abul Fazal, the author of *Ain-i-Akbari* and *Akbarnamah* and the Hindi poets Birbal (Kavi-priya), Raja Man Singh and Raja Bhagwān Dās. It is significant that the three languages, Persian, Sanskrit and Hindi, obtained equal support at the imperial court. Akbar was also keenly interested in painting and obtained a few Persian artists to work for him in Delhi. But the Hindu artists in the imperial court far outnumbered them. Among the painters whose names have come down to us are Sayyad Ali, Abdus Samad, Farrukh Beg, Jamshed, Mukund Basawan and Daswanta, the last being a *kahār* by caste. Abul Fazal made the following observation about their craftsmanship: "More than a hundred painters have become famous masters of the art, while the number of those who attain perfection or of those who are middling is very large. This is specially true of the Hindus, their pictures surpass our conception of things. Few indeed in the whole world are found equal to them". Portrait painting and book illustration are characteristic features of the Akbari school of painting. Such works as the Rāmāyaṇa, the Mahābhārata, the *Shahnāmāh*, the *Khamsa-e-Nizami* and the *Diwan* of Hafiz as well as the *Babarnamah* and the *Akbarnamah* were profusely illustrated by the artists of Akbar who effected a happy blend between the Iranian and Indian traditions. The economy and finesse of lines, the delicacy and subtlety of colours and the clarity and elegance of the decorative pattern of the Persian masters and the stress of tree, rock and cloud motifs of the Chinese painters now harmoniously mingled with the abstraction, rhythm and elusiveness of the



Indian style. There was also some interchange of ideas and techniques in respect of painting between India and Europe. To Akbar's court came pictures of the Madonna and Plantyn's Bible with works of the Flemish artists in 1580. On the other hand, the Dutch factors took to Holland many Indian paintings that attracted the attention of Europe's greatest painter, Rembrandt who is known to have sketched from the album pages belonging to the President of the Dutch East India Company and from his own precious collection. In music, Tansen was the most outstanding figure in Akbar's court. "A singer like him has not been in India for the last thousand years", remarks Abul Fazal, who enumerates thirty-six musicians enjoying the patronage of the court.

Jehangir's court was equally distinguished for his patronage to scholars and artists. The scholars who were celebrated at the time of Jehangir included Ghiyas Beg, Naquib Khan, Abdul Haqq Dihlawi and Nasir. In his reign many Madrasahs that had been deserted for thirty years were renovated and filled with students and professors. It was in his court that the school of Mughul painting reached its perfection. The chief painters who adorned it were Ustad Mansur and Abul Hasan. The Mughul Emperors, and imitating them the nobles of the court, sat for the painters and had their own albums as well as illuminated manuscripts. Miniature painting in which the Indian genius excelled, darbar painting, frescoe painting, animal painting, book illustration and illumination and calligraphy, all developed essentially Indian styles that have won the admiration of art connoisseurs. Jahangir himself was a connoisseur of the first rank. He observes in his Memoirs: "As regards myself, my liking for painting and my practice in judging it have arrived at such a point that when any work is brought before me, either of deceased artists or of the present day, without the names being told to me, I say on the spur of the moment that it is the work of such and such a man. And if there be a picture containing many portraits, and each face be the work of a different master, I can discover which face is the work of each. If any other person has put in the eye and eye-brows of a face, I can perceive whose work the original face is, and who has painted the eye and eye-brows".

Many distinguished writers in Persian and the vernacular adorned the court of Shah Jahān, the Emperor himself being familiar with languages. The shining lights were Abul Talib

(Kalim), Haji Muhammad Jān and Chandrabhān, a Brāhman, who wrote Persian poetry. The poets who wrote in the vernacular were Sundardās (Mahākavi Rai) who produced a great work on rhetorics, Chintāmaṇi who produced a version of the Rāmāyana and Devdatt who composed religious poetry. But the art of painting was neglected by Shāh Jāhān during whose reign the majority of the painters were thrown out of employment and did shoddy work for the bazaars of Agra or were exploited by the nobles who offered inadequate prices for their handiworks. Portraits tended to become stereotyped and there was also a profuse production of scenes of harems, drinking and playing. Yet in spite of the decadence setting in, many superb portraits of kings, princes and noblemen and of saints in meditation were executed that do honour to any school of painting in the world.

The architectural glories of the Mughul rule were no less noteworthy. Fatehpur Sikri, built by Akbar, is a marvellous reflection of the synoptic mind of a builder who aimed at conciliation, harmony and synthesis in every field. The Jami Masjid is described as a romance in stone, while the Buland Darwājā is a wonder. In the reign of Jāhangīr the most outstanding buildings are the mausoleum of Akbar at Sikandra and the tomb of Itimad-ud-daulah. Both these are marvels of architectural composition, the latter built wholly of dazzling white marble, combines grace and dignity with matchless subtlety and refinement of decoration. The golden age of Indian architecture was however reached at the time of Shāh Jāhān. The Taj Mahal which has won universal love and admiration is the symbol of the combination of purity and romance, grace and dignity, tenderness and elusiveness of Indian womanhood. A living lyric, expressive of both the physical charm and spiritual depth of perfect womanhood in India, it has outshone any other building of this kind in the world. The Moti Masjid within the Agra Fort is also superb, described as "a fervent stone"—a peaceful sanctuary—in which "a mysterious soul throbs in bliss and ecstasy". It was at the time of Shāh Jāhān that Mughul gardening and landscape art providing recreation and tranquillity for thousands of city-dwellers also reached their perfection. Aurangzeb turned back the hands of the clock in every field. In architecture he demolished more than he built. Only one important literary work received his support—the *Fatwah-i-Alamgiri*—a digest of Muslim



law in the country. He withdrew his patronage from painting and literature. He issued edicts against music and dancing. One day he saw a flower-decked bier being carried on the street of Delhi followed by a crowd of singers. On enquiry he learnt that it was "the funeral of music, killed by the imperial edicts". He only replied: "I approve their piety. Let music be buried deep and never heard again". He went to the extent even of defacing certain paintings and figures at Sikandra and Bijapur.

### **The Mystic Prince Dara Shikoh's Majmua-ul-Bahrain (Mingling of the Two Oceans)**

Away from the pomp and magnificence of the imperial courts of Agra, Fatehpur Sikri and Delhi, the real life of India went on tranquilly in her huts and fields. Mughul peace and toleration for a century greatly accelerated the religious ferment in India, finding concord between militant Islam and idolatrous Hinduism in the catholic egalitarian movements in which Sūfism and Bhakti are indistinguishably intermingled. It was as a result of a series of accidents in the course of the fratricidal war that Dara Shikoh, tolerant, deeply religious and urbane, did not ascend the Peacock Throne in place of the bigoted, cruel and austere Aurangzeb. The history of India would then have been very different. Dara, certainly the most learned man of his age and one of India's greatest scholars, had in him the making of an Asoka, Harsha and Akbar. With his profound learning he went wholeheartedly into the contemporary spiritual movements in India, learning at once Yogic practice and Sūfi method of meditation, the doctrine of bhakti and the mystical philosophy of Islam. He acquired proficiency in Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit and Hindi, studied in translations Hebrew, Christian and Brahmanical scriptures as well as the bhakti literature in the vernacular and won celebrity by his voluminous writings that included works on Sūfi philosophy, a calendar of Muslim saints, and Persian translations of the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gītā and the Yoga Vāsishṭha Rāmāyaṇa. Although Dara obtained his spiritual training from several saints, his principal teacher was Maulana Shah Badakhshi, a disciple of Mian Mir who is said to have assisted the Sikh Guru Har Govind several times. Thus Dara belonged to the Qadriya sect, founded by Abdul Qadir Gilani, which was a liberal creed promising illumination for the faithful as well as the infidels, and followed a

whole host of practices of spiritual contemplation. In his *Risala-i-Haqnuma*, Dara gives an account of these Sūfi meditative practices and the various stages of mystical development. It appears that the murida of Maulana Shah experienced the well-known Sūfi phase of "sobriety of communion" (*Sahwa-i-Jam*). In a letter written by him to Shah Dil-ruba and translated by K. R. Qanungo, the opening lines are as follows: "In the name of Him who is incomparable and unrivalled, in the unity of His existence, whose absolute Oneness no plurality (*kasrat*) can conceal, and whose unity, in spite of all the plurality, exists like the unit I among members". Dara seems to have reached the summit of Sūfi mystical experience, which leads to the complete freedom and perfection of man and which, in the words of his *Risala*, "makes thee (*murida*) universal from partial, an ocean from a drop, a sun from a shining particle of sand, and existence from non-existence". Contemporary saints used to call Dara al-Kamil (the perfect man). Among Dara's religious works should be mentioned the *Safinat-ul-Auliya*, a biography of the mystics of Islam, the *Sakinat-ul-Auliya*, a biography of Mian Mir and his disciples, and *Majmua-ul-Bahrain* which seeks to demonstrate the similarity of the theory of creation as embodied in the Quran and in the Hindu scriptures. Incidentally Dara uses the phraseology of Sūfism and of Hindu Yoga. Among all his works, however, the *Risala* is most significant as giving a most profound and ardent exposition of Sūfism from the viewpoint of a spiritual adept. It is noteworthy that Dara also translated the various Upanishads, preferring to render into Persian the commentary of Śankara, and under his direction the *Bhagavad Gītā*, *Yoga Vāsishṭha* and *Prabodha Chandrodaya* were also translated. There is some evidence that Dara was a follower of the Hindu Vaishnava Saint, Babu Lal of Sirhind. In a dialogue between the saint and pupil, which has been fortunately preserved, though in mutilated form, we find Dara endeavouring sincerely to understand such features of Hinduism that are usually unacceptable for a Moslem, viz. idolatry, the identity between the *Jivātman* and *Paramātman*, the revelation of Sri Krishna in *Brajbhūmi* and the doctrine of immanence. The saint's direct, unsophisticated exposition reveals the depth and universality of his spiritual experience. Dara elsewhere describes him as a *mundiya* or shaven-headed *sannyāsi*, belonging to the *Kabīr-panthis*. Dara seemed to have been greatly



influenced in his religious quest also by one of the great Hindu mystics of his time, Charan dās (born 1703) of Alwar. One of the latter's fine utterances is as follows: "The Universe is permeated with Brahman, so symbols like the tulasi plant or the salagrāma are futile. A good and pure life is the first word in religious life; love and devotion are its soul. But these are ineffective unless they are expressed through service, for the emotions of the heart are substantiated by works."

It is clear that the Bhakti movement proceeding from Rāmānanda and Kabīr had its authentic, eloquent echo in the mind and heart of the Mughul Prince. Several hymns in Hindi, after the style of the nirguna poets, were, indeed, composed by Dara who in his *Sāra-sangraha* mentions that he employed several persons for making an anthology of Hindu poetry and translating the same into Persian. Dara was a god-intoxicated personality that strikes a deeper and more sincere note than the personality of Akbar, the rationalist and reformer who wanted to build up a national Padshahi in Hindusthan on the basis of the essential unity of all religions. But Dara had no political aims; and while reaching the acme of realisation of unrevealed Truth—an experience he found the same for the Sūfi Arif as for the Hindu Bhakta—he naturally and spontaneously laid aside fasting, prayer and other external rites and disciplines of Islam. Yet Bernier testifies that Dara never neglected outward obedience to Islam, "born a Mohometan, he continued to join in the exercise of that religion". Akbar not only went against the conventions of Islam, but declared himself as the prophet of a new faith. Dara profusely used quotations from the Quran and the Hadith, as he also used the Vedas, as proofs of the word of God and only claimed that he aspired to be, *Insan-i-kamil* or the perfect man. In his private religious life he, of course, went far beyond the discipline and injunction of the Shariyat. This explains why he used to wear a ring with the word "Prabhu" inscribed in Hindi characters, enjoyed the company of Hindu yogis and sannyāsīs, and made the gift of a stone railing to the temple of Keshav Rai at Mathura. He wrote an interesting letter in Sanskrit to Kavīndrāchārya Saraswatī, the most famous scholar of Benares of the period whom Shāh Jāhān honoured at his court. Kavīndra was one of his spiritual preceptors and he compared him with Śankarāchārya and the ancient Rishis. It was at the instance of Kavīndrāchārya

and the Hindu deputation he led to Shāh Jāhān that the Emperor remitted the pilgrim tax on Hindus that had been revived by Jahangir. Kavindrāchārya also wrote a compendium of the Yoga Vāsishtha in Hindi for his pupil Dara Shikoh. The title of Dara Shikoh's work, the Majmua-ul-Bahrain or the Mingling of the Two Oceans, is symbolical of the reconciliation and synthesis of the broad cultural currents of Islam and India which cruel fate prevented him from fostering by imperial edicts. In his Tariqat-ul-Haqiqat, Dara reaches profound conceptions of both the unity of the God-head and his immanence. He says:

“Thou art in the Kaaba as well as in the Somanath temple;  
In the convent as well as in the tavern.  
Thou art at the same time the light and the moth;  
The wine and the cup, the sage and the fool, the friend  
and the stranger  
Thou art thyself the rose and amorous nightingale.  
Thou art thyself the moth around the light of thine  
own beauty”

It is one of the mockeries of history that the political destiny of India passed into the hands of the bigoted Aurangzeb, for a futile, unhappy and war-worn century instead of into those of the mystic prince and legitimate heir Dara, whose regime might have continued the legacy of Akbar, consolidated the union between Hinduism and Islam on the basis of a religious give-and-take, and brought about lasting peace between the two communities of Hindustan. Indian history, instead of entering into blind, dark and sanguinary alleys, would have traversed the broad highways of progress and national greatness on the basis of a cultural co-operation and solidarity between the component groups of the Indian people, breathing the true spirit of humanism and broad-minded wisdom.



## CHAPTER XXXIII

### THE SPIRITUAL INTIMACY BETWEEN BHAKTI AND SŪFISM

#### **Syncretic Trends in Hinduism and Islam**

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw the decline of the age-old Brahmanical religion and Sanskrit culture and the decay of Hindu society in Northern India under the impact of Islam and foreign domination. But the gap was filled by the Nātha and Sahaja traditions and by the Bhakti movements inspired by Rāmānanda, Kabir, Dādū, Chaitanya and other mystics which kept alive the creative religious experience of the humble folk. Rajputana outside the sphere of direct Mughul rule and the pernicious influence of the luxurious and debauch Mughul nobility, was the favoured home of the second Religious Reformation powerfully begun by Rāmānanda; while Bengal, Assam, Orissa and Sind on the fringes of the Mughul empire were profoundly stirred by the teachings of Chaitanya, Vaishnava, Sūfi and other syncretist fraternities that bridged Hindu and Muslim faiths and ways of living, and attracted followers of both the religions.

Two significant religious revolutions were afoot, first, the rapprochement between Muslim Sūfism and Hindu Bhakti using sometimes common yogic techniques and methods and leading towards a complete disregard of rituals and observances, Muslim and Hindu, and an incredible freedom of religious thought and practice; and, second, the movement of synthesis and moral re-interpretation of Hindu faiths and beliefs. Akbar's liberalism and toleration (*Sulhi-i-kul*) that ultimately led to the bold formulation of the *Din-ilahi* were the direct outcome of the contemporary ferment in the spirit of both Hindus and Muslims alike. For centuries there were persistent religious and literary efforts in the country from Sind to Bengal, bringing about a concord between Hinduism and Islam which Aurangzeb's bigotry and iconoclasm could not quell. In the field of Islam, the Indian Sūfi movement

exhibited a striking departure from the rigid monotheism and Semiticism of Islam and hence was suspect and even suffered persecution at the hands of bigoted rulers and Moulanas. It represented a remarkable creative phase of Islam's assimilation of the fundamental Hindu metaphysical notions of unity of life and immanence of the deity as well as of the Hindu yogic experiences, and a wholesome return to the core of Islamic mysticism, abounding the encrustation of orthodox canons and dogmas. In the field of Hinduism, the broad religious philosophical ideas of the age liberalised upper class orthodoxy, while the heresies of the Natha, Sahaja and Vaishnava movements came to be sponsored even by the Brahmanical community. The latter mitigated caste distance and renewed Hindu culture from the naiveté and creative experience of the common people. Both the dissentient movements of Bhakti and Sūfism coming into intimate contact with each other obtained their devotees from both communities and from castes, high and low. These brought the true message of the mystical experience from the levels of metaphysics and poetry into the life of the common people. Gradually, Muslim orthodoxy, supported by Muslim royal patronage in India, accepted the catholic interpretations of the Islamic scriptures from the numerous Sūfi schools, characterised by an amazing liberty of profession and expression of religious doctrines and practices. The way was being gradually prepared for a new religious experiment of amity and concord between two vast communities inhabiting the sub-continent. And Islam's sword was being fashioned into the mystic's implement and symbol of meditation.

### **The Religious Synthesis and Moral Fervour in Tulsidas's Ramayana**

The movement of reconciliation in the field of the Hindu faiths found a most redoubtable popular champion in Tulsidās (1532-1523) the author of the Rāma-charita-mānasa. In this epic which is read by a hundred million in Hindustan, we once again meet with a remarkable synthesis, now established in popular Hinduism, of knowledge and devotionism, worship and meditation that has saved India and Hinduism from many schisms and sects. Tulsidās is a most happy combination of profound bhakti with moral fervour, conservatism with humaneness, sweet tranquillity and joy with courage and fortitude and thus is still a





soul subject to error and delusion could become identical with the deity, and by his curse turns him into a crow. It is no fault of the sage who sees God everywhere. But the compassionate Saguna Rāma made him change his mind. He granted the crow the blessing of unfailing devotion, and the crow remains a dispeller of illusion, and an inspirer of faith by his mere presence. There is great emphasis in Tulsīdās of the code of moral duties and obligations extremely relevant in a period of social unsettlement and moral decay. With him, Rāmachandra is the very acme of moral perfection (Māyādā Purushottama). In the final great fight with Rāvana, Rāmachandra has neither his coat of mail nor horses nor chariot, nor even his shoes. His war-chariot is of a different kind. "Manliness and courage are his wheels; unflinching truthfulness and morality his banners; strength, discretion, self-control and benevolence his horses, with grace, mercy and equanimity for their harness; prayer to Mahādeva his charioteer; reverence to Brahmans and his preceptor, his coat of mail. There is no equipment for victory that can be compared to this, nor is there any enemy who can conquer the man who takes his stand on the chariot of religion." On the other hand, illusion or Māyā has her own big army and equipment. Wealth, Power, Beauty, these are Māyā's weapons; Love and Passions are the generals of her army; Fraud, Deceit and Heresy are her champions. The greatest God and sages are blinded by her wiles so that Brahmā and Śiva stand in awe of her. But Māyā, the very power of delusion, is set dancing with her troupe, like actors on the world stage, by the play of the Supreme Lord's eyebrows. Māyā is dispelled at an instant by the Lord's love and compassion.

The burden of sin is infinite and grievous; neither penance nor worship, neither knowledge nor works can avail against it; only by the water of faith and love can the interior stain be erased. Consider thy body as worthy of honour, for the Lord himself once took the human form, reiterates Tulsīdās. The saint-poet was socially conservative. Himself a Brāhman, he had a profound reverence for the Brāhman race and supported many ancient beliefs and superstitions. The whole of India under the spell of the popular Bhakti movement was then strongly anti-Brahmanical, protesting against priesthood, formalism and ritual. But Tulsīdās yet believed in priesthood and pilgrimage, self-mortification and ritual and in the impossible claims of the Brāhman, characterised



by him as "the very root of the tree of piety, the full moon of the sea of intelligence, the sun of the lotus of asceticism, the destroyer of sin, the healer of distress". Yet he was tender and humane. "Show love to all creatures", runs his precept, "and thou shalt be happy, for when thou lovest all things, thou lovest the Lord, for he is all in all". Has not Rāma himself clasped a poor wild man of the woods to his bosom and deigned to take the Rākshasa's own brother in his arms? A tender streak of humanism and compassion, born of bhakti, runs through the pages of Rāma-charita-mānasa. In the conservative holy city of Benares, where Tulsidas became the head of a Vaishnava monastery of the Rāmānandi order, he had his trouble with the Brāhmans off and on. Once he took a repentant murderer to his house and gave him food and the word of Rāma. The Brāhmans protested against showing the path of salvation to a criminal. Only a miracle could save Tulsī's honour. "The name of the Lord is a sure refuge and he who taketh it is saved". This was Tulsī's watchword, bringing about thousands of conversions in the city. A fine legend, fully expressive of the same humanistic spirit, is told, how a wretched scavenger, in the grip of a loathsome disease, lay in foul filth crying "Ah, Rāma, Rāma". Hanūmān, flying by, angrily kicked the sufferer on the breast. That night, as he shampooed the God's body, he was horrified to find a dreadful wound in the same place. How had it happened? "You kicked a poor man on the breast", explained Rāma, "as he called upon my name, and what you did to the vilest of my children, you did to me".

There is another most important contemporary work Nābhā-dāsa's, the Bhakta-māl (about 1600), with an important commentary by Priya Dās (1712) which is replete with such legends and gives account of the lives and miracles of many bhaktas or men and women of God. About 200 bhaktas and poets find their places here. The book has remained a perennial source of inspiration of thousands in Northern India who are sick and weary with the temptation and sorrow of the world. Tradition says that Nābhā-dāsa belonged to the Dom caste.

### **The Cultural and Religious Renaissance in 15th and 16th Century Bengal:**

The movement of syncretism and humanism represented by the Rāma-charita-mānasa and the Bhakta-māl of North India

found its powerful and radical exponents in Eastern India in two great contemporaries of Tulsidās and Nābhādās viz. Mukundarām and Kāsirām Dās. In Bengal in the sixteenth century a kind of literature known as the Mangala-Kāvya or Pāñchālī emerged out of the older ballads and folk-songs, characterised by the delienation of gods or of men as gods and of the relations of their activities to human destiny, the description of the joys and sorrows of the common people through the different seasons of the year (Bārāmāsia) and of certain episodes introducing elements of the tragic and comic for the purpose of folk singing. The Gīta Govinda (12th century) and the Sṛī Krishna Kīrtana (about the 15th century) were the earliest creations of this form of literature. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the decadence of Buddhism and rise of Islam introduced new social aims and outlooks to the Mangala-Kāvyas. The Dharma Mangal, the Śivayāna, the Chandī-Mangal, the Mānasa-Mangal, the Kālikā-Mangal and the Shashṭī-Mangal-Kāvyas are all characterised by an effort to reconcile different sects and cults, abolish the barriers between high and low castes and preach a robust sense of dignity of manhood. Vast numbers of Hindus of the lower social orders were after the Muslim conquest being converted to Islam in Bengal. The movement of Chaitanyaism, the rehabilitation of Tāntrikism as represented by the compilation of Tantrasāra by the famous Krishṇānanda Āgamavāgisha, the rise of the new logic and metaphysics in the hands of Vāsudeva Sārvabhauma and Raghunāth Śīromani that attracted scholars from other parts of India, and the regulation of the daily routine of life, rituals and observances by the celebrated Smārtakāra, Raghunandan, went *pari passu* with the strong trend in contemporary vernacular literature towards religious synthesis and social equality in a caste and sect-ridden society so that it could more successfully encounter the social and religious challenge of Islam.

From the 10th to the 12th centuries the common people of Bengal came under the spell of the Vajra, Nātha and Sahaja cults, and in the lowest orders there was going on an assimilation of Buddhist and folk cults of magic and futility. Out of this process emerged such deities of popular Hinduism in Bengal such as Dharma, Mangala-Chandī and Manasā and the worship of such deified Nātha-Yogis as Matsyendra Nāth, or Lui-pāda and Gorakshanāth. At the beginning these new-fangled deities and saints



were despised not only by the Brāhmans but also by the rich mercantile community of Bengal, as is evident from early Bengali literature. The regime of the Sena kings saw a movement of suppression and even persecution of Buddhism, and this perhaps accounted for the tendency towards disguised identification of Dharma or Buddha with Śiva on the one hand and the non-acceptance of the deities and rituals of Buddhist origin by the Brāhman pundits and priests on the other. Gradually, however, Dharma, Chandī, Mānasa, Kālikā and Shashṭī,—all metamorphoses of the Mahāyāna deities—obtained recognition in Brāhmanical society. The insidious entry of decadent and popular Buddhism into the portals of Hinduism, was associated with two important social consequences. First, the folk-cults stimulated the development of vernacular literature in Bengal. Bengali as a new literature owed its rise to the Siddha-Nātha and Sahaja movements, and Dharma, Chandī and Mānasa worship. This was, no doubt, facilitated by the eclipse of orthodox Brāhmanical culture and Sanskrit learning before and specially after the Muslim conquest. Secondly, both the new cults and the new literature were saturated with the democratic spirit of the Mahāyāna Buddhism, and the Nātha and Sahaja repudiation of caste. The Vaishnava and Tāntrika movements also came in line with the dominant social egalitarian trend in a period of disintegrating Hindu culture. The lingering traces of Mahāyāna Buddhism, the emergent folk-cults rooted in the worship of earth and nature-spirits and fertility-goddesses, the Sahajiya and Vaishnava cults and the trends of folk-literature, all contributed towards building up a new democratic society, out of the debris of the old, and to initiate a socio-religious renaissance towards the close of the fifteenth century.

The Bengali renaissance of the 15th and 16th centuries was one of the greatest mass movements of India, unifying not merely the upper and the lower caste Hindus but also the Hindus and the Muslims. The various Mangala-Kāvya propagating the new cults of Dharma, Chandī, Śiva, Mānasa, Kālikā and Shashṭī on a democratic non-caste, non-race basis were associated with this renaissance that indeed sprang from the bosom of the masses but obtained the support of the upper classes. These were centuries of social unsettlement and upheaval and the upper classes were not found wanting, encouraged by the regime of peace, toleration and liberalism under Muslim rulers from Sultan Elias Khan to

Alauddin Phiruz Shah. Many saints, teachers and writers, such as Chaitanya and Nityānanda took the leadership of the revival movement from the upper castes, that had formerly dissociated themselves from the masses and their culture. The democratic religious movement represented by Vaishnavism, that swept through Bengal from the 15th to the 17th centuries accordingly saw its ground prepared as early as the 10th and the 11th centuries by the Nātha, Sahajīya and Dharma movements, that rising from the bosom of Buddhism integrated the lower orders of society and effectively filled the gap left by the disintegration of the orthodox Brāhmanical culture.

### **The Syncretic and Egalitarian Notes in the Bengali Mangal Kavyas**

From probably the eleventh century the worship of Dharma Thakur, the Teacher of Truth (Satya-Swarūp) was greatly prevalent in Bengal. The Dharma Mangal Kāvya had its beginnings in Ramai Pandit's (Āgama-purāṇa, probably 13th century) that embodies the remarkable adventure at once to give a place and status to derelict Buddhism and the degraded Buddhists, and to bring about amity between the Hindus and Muslims through the common worship of Dharma Thākur. The founder as well as the majority of the Dharma priests came from the lowest castes of Bengal among whom there was spontaneous tendency towards solidarity and uniformity. The cult of the Dharma Thakur, we gather from the 13th and 14th century pāṇchālīs, assimilates primitive stock, and stone and sun-worship with the worship of ape (Hanumān), owl (ulluka) and garuda, and of tortoise and omniform—the symbol of the Sthūpa or Buddha, describes him as "Yātra-siddhi" and "Anukul-kola", indicating that he is partially the war-god of the Dom or similar autoethonous military race and also later on identifies him with the might of the Muslim invader, conqueror and ruler "on the white horse" who "disseminates among the Hindus the Worship of Dharma-avatāra and among the Muslims that of Khodaya-Khonkar". This is significant as the first notable attempt to bring about a Hindu-Muslim unity of worship anticipating the Satya-nārāyana cult and pāṇchālī by some centuries. Besides Ramai Pandit, Khelaram, Mayūrabhatta (1528), Rūparāma (middle of the 17th century) and Manikram



Gangul, are early poets of the Dharma-mangal Kāvya group. That the worship of the Dharma Thakur still belonged to the casteless is well indicated by Manikram's apprehension, on being enjoined by Dharma Thakur to write his Kāvya: "I shall lose caste, Lord, if I sing your song".

The most popular poet of this branch of literature is, however, Ghanarām Chakravartī (who completed his big poem in 1711) whose delienation of the sacrifice of Kalu Dom, the courage of the women, Kanara, Dhumshi and Lakhai Domni, belonging to the lowest caste, along with the supreme devotion of Lausena to Dharma, the piety of Ranjavati and Harihar and the deceitfulness of Karpura anticipates the trend in modern literature.

The most important section of the Maṅgala-Kāvya literature deals however with the Chandī cult which according to the Chaitanya-bhāgavata, was exceedingly popular towards the end of the 15th century in Bengal. "The priests (of Chandī and Mānasa) dwell in houses which they have bought, they are well fed and well clad", mentions Vrindāvan Dās, author of the Chaitanya Bhāgavata. Yet only a few decades back Chaitanya's father due to his orthodoxy refused to become a priest of Chandī, the goddess of the Buddhist and Hindu masses. The most brilliant poet of this group of Kāvya is Mukundarām Chakravarty who composed his work in the decade, 1593-1603. Just as Buddha or Dharma was assimilated to Śiva or Viṣṇu of popular Hinduism by the cult of Dharma Thākur propagated by the Dharma Mangal Kāvya, similarly it was a Buddhist Mahāyāna goddess Ekajata, Vajra Tara or Mangala Chandī, who was incorporated into Hinduism as Śiva's wife and is worshipped today in innumerable homes of Bengal through the stories and songs of the Chandī-Mangal. In Mukundarāma's work, both the story of creation and the picture of the Maiden of the Lotus (Kamale-Kāmini) (the White Lotus, like the White Horse, is often used in the Dharma-Mangala Kāvya as the symbol of Dharma or Buddha) swallowing and disgorging the elephant, the symbol of Buddha, obviously represent Buddhist influence. The deity in the poem is at once the goddess of the lowest caste hunter Kālaketu and his wife Phullara as well as of the rich merchant Dhanapati Sadagar, of his two wives Lahana and Khullana and later on of his son, Śrīmanta. Both cult and literature have here linked the high caste with the low. But Mukundarām who himself had to suffer much from the oppression

of the Mughul revenue-official (dihidar) and abandon his ancestral homestead at Damunya near Burdwan, was a real poet, who had deep sympathy for the poor folk as well as scorn for the cunning of the middle class adventurers and the pride and ostentatiousness of the rich. He does not even spare the Brāhman priest: "the bee sips honey from one flower and then flies to the next, even as does the village priest receiving gifts from one house immediately turns to visit another". The misery and exploitation which were the lot of the common people in medieval Bengal were disguisedly but poignantly expressed in the cry of the animals of the forest that "graze in the fields and are neither Neogis nor Chaudhries who own estates" and complain bitterly to the goddess Chandi in Mukundarām's story of Kālaketu. In Mukundarām Indian popular literature first clearly sounds its modern egalitarian note. The great poet chooses his heroes and heroines from the lowest social orders or men and women, who are in chronic privation or hunger such as Kālaketu, Phullara and Khullana and is best in dealing with folks such as hunters, fishers and goat-herds, the lowest and the least in society. He shows also a fine sense of humour in the midst of poignant and dramatic scenes. For generations Kavi Kankan's Chandi Mangala has given deep joy and solace to the common man and woman of Bengal.

Of even greater influence on the popular mind is Kāsīrāmdās's version of the Mahābhārata. Mukundarām and Kāsīrām are recognised together with Kṛttivāsa, the author of the Bengali version of the Rāmāyana, as the fathers of Bengali literature. Kṛttivāsa's Rāmāyana goes back to the end of the 13th century (1280 A. D.) and seems to have changed in its form and dialect as it was recited from mouth to mouth in cottages, shops and chandī-mandaps in Bengal. Kāsīrāmdās's Pāṇḍava-Vijaya or Bhārata-pāñchālī, completed in 1603, combines ardent devotionism with poetic imagery and dramatic insight and like Tulsīdās's work is a source of perennial delight and inspiration. The virtues of Bengal homes and cottages eclipse those of the princes and warriors of Ajodhya and Hastināpur, and the result is that no Bengal home and cottage fails to obtain its joy, strength and inspiration from Kāsīrām's Mahābhārata and Kṛttivāsa's Rāmāyana. These works have been bibles of the people of Eastern India moulding their character, morals and aspirations.



### The Spiritual intimacy between Hindus and Muslims in 17th century Bengal

Akbar's policy of national state and culture to whose development both the Muslims and Hindus were asked to contribute on terms of complete freedom and equality was entirely reversed by Aurangzeb. At the end of the 17th century Aurangzeb's bigotry and persecution raised the mighty organised opposition of the Marathas in the South, the Rajputs in the Centre and the Sikhs in the North, and the state of things in the Mughul Empire which Śivāji compared with "a blazing fire under the cover of straw" in his memorable protest against the *jazia* (1680) now resembled a continental conflagration. Aurangzeb completely dissipated the heritage of the 15th and 16th century cultural and religious movements of India and of the nation-building policy of Akbar and was bringing about the disintegration of his mighty Empire. At its extremities, in the provinces of Bengal and Sind and even in the Punjab, there sprang up fresh religious and literary efforts to bring about unity between the Hindus and the Muslims. By the 17th century the Muslims of Bengal were completely absorbed into the life, religion and culture of Bengal. The flood tide of Vaishnava religion, poetry and humanism was in the 17th century spreading deep and wide in Bengal, Assam and Orissa. Śrīnivāsa, Narottamdas, the originator of *rāsa-kirtān* or *padāvalī kirtān* with the assistance of the *mṛidanga* instrument, and *syamānanda*, a *sad-gopa* by caste, played the most significant role in propagating Vaishnava culture among the high and low Hindu and Muslim penetrating into the remote jungles and outlying settlements of Assam, Chotanagpur and Orissa. The luxury, demoralisation and concubinage associated with the courts of Muslim rulers and Hindu *grandees* and *zamindars*, were by this movement largely combated in Bengal. Vaishnavism not merely had a social levelling influence but also brought Hindus and Muslims into fruitful spiritual intimacy. Many Muslim poets composed elegant *Rādhā-Krishna* lyrics in Brajbolī and Bengali. The most important of these poets were Nasir Mahmud, Syed Sultan, Syed Martuza, Ali Raja and Alaol. Syed Alaol of Roshang was one of the leading poets in the 17th century. He belonged to Arakan where he enjoyed the patronage of the Chief Minister, Magan Thakur but was later on imprisoned for some

time by the King due to his friendship with Shah Shuja, brother of Aurangzeb who sought refuge in the court of Arakan. Alaol's various poems, written between 1645 and 1671, include Lorchand-rani or Maynamati, Padmāvati, Saif-ul-Mulk, Badiu-z-zamal, HaptPaykar and Dara Sikandarnamah besides many fine Vaishnava lyrics. He had a thorough knowledge of both Sanskrit and Persian, and his spiritual depth and insight gave a new turn to his treatment of the theme of love. He was a Sūfi disciple of Syed Masud Sah, the leader of the Sūfi Qaderi sect. Another minister of the Kingdom of Arakan, Suleiman, befriended him like his previous patron. In Syed Alaol we have the commingling of Hindu and Muslim cultures blossoming forth into elegant and deep poetry capturing the heart of both Hindu and Muslim population.

### The Common Cults and Legends of Hindus and Muslims in Bengal

17th century Bengal saw also the rise of certain interesting widespread faiths and literatures in respect of Satya-Nārāyaṇa or Satya-Pir, Dakshina Ray and Kalu Ray as common gods of both Hindus and Muslims. In the Satya-Pir group of Kāvya, the earliest of which was composed by Bhairav Chandra Ghatak (1700) and Ghanarām Chakravarti (about 1711) we see the Muslim saint or Pir blended with the Hindu God (Satya-Nārāyaṇa Viṣṇu), leading to the emergence of a hybrid deity, Satya-Pir who is still worshipped in many homes of the higher and lower castes of Bengal. As a matter of fact, among all the ballads and kāvyas related to the gods, it is only the Satya-Pir legend which is still read and listened to in the homes of modern Bengal. Such is the reverence paid to this hybrid god of popular Islam and Hinduism, who gives wealth to the Brāhman, safety and prosperity to the merchant (Saudāgar) and removes barrenness for the woman, and is devoutly given the offering of Sinni (Persian sirini) on the full moon night for distribution among all kinsmen and friends. The Satya-Pir cult seems to have originated like the Dharma cult in Rarh, and similarly spread throughout Bengal. It is noteworthy that in the eighteenth century the famous Dharma poet Ghananātha also wrote a Vrata poem on Satya-Pir, an evidence of the remarkable integration of Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam that has been going on for centuries. The popularity of the Satya-Pir cult is



evidenced by the fact that the most famous eighteenth century poet of Bengal, Bharat Chandra Rai, contributed two poems relating to the cult. In the Satya-Pir poem composed by the Vaishnava Kṛishna-hari-dās, we read Satya-Pir's remonstrance that there is no difference between the Koran and the Purāṇa, and that the religions of the Hindus and Muslims are not at variance. The Satya-Pir cult and literature have spread beyond the borders of Bengal to Assam, Bihar and the U. P. Similar cults and legends of Hindu-Muslim worship are those of Trailokya-Pira in Chittagong, Ghazi Saheb in Mymensingh and Twenty-four Purganas and Manik Pir in Western and Central Bengal. In the forested districts of the seaboard of Bengal, infested with tigers and alligators, the Hindu and Muslim peasantry worship together Dakshina Ray and Kalu Ray that saves them from the depredations of the beasts of the jungle, and hear the ballads that sing of the quarrels between Dakshina Ray and Bara Khan Ghazi and their resolution through the intervention of the Lord, who is half Kṛishna and half Paygambar! In literature, story-telling, worship and ritual we see successful attempts in 17th and 18th century Bengal to bring about a practical common sense unity of social and religious interests, attitudes and ideas of the two communities.

### **The Common Battle of the Sufis and Bhaktas against Orthodoxy**

While Syed Alaol was bridging, in his Sati-Mainamati Kāvya and charming Vaishnava padas, the differences between the Hindus and Muslims in far-off Arakan coast in the east, in the Punjab, the stronghold of Orthodox Islam, Bullhe Shah (1680-1758), the greatest of the Punjab Sūfis and poets, and in the extreme west his younger contemporary Sah Latif, the greatest poet of Sind, who also lived towards the close of the 17th century, were composing their superb and ardent Sūfi songs. The Sūfi order had to encounter some persecution from the Mughul Emperors in Northern India. The distinguished Sūfi saint and reformer, Sheikh Ahmad of Sirhind (1563-1624) who belonged to Naqshabandi school but had his own order, wrote against the Rafidi and Shia creeds and was imprisoned by Jehangir for some time. He became an important figure in Islamic reform. Another important reformer was Abdul Haq of Delhi (died 1641) who dealt with the Sunni tradition like Ahmad and Abu Hanifa. The

entire trend of Sūfi thought was no doubt a departure from the rigid canons of Islam and an adaptation not merely to the geographical and social circumstances of India but also to Hindu devotionism and yoga practice. It was but natural that Aurangzeb sought to put down ruthlessly the Moslem heresies and enforce the Puritanic religious law rigidly for all Muslims. He was responsible for the compilation of the comprehensive *Fatwa-i-Alamgiri*. The Suhrawardy saint Sarmad was executed by Aurangzeb for his heresy. The following poem of Sarmad is reminiscent of Kabir's *dohas*: "O Sarmad, thou hast acquired much fame in this world: from the creed of infidelity thou hast passed over to Islam. At last what defect didst thou detect, of Allah and His Prophet by rebelling against the disciple of Lakshmana and Rāma?" Aurangzeb humiliated the famous Sūfi Mulla Shah, the spiritual preceptor of Dara Shikoh. He was compelled by the Emperor to come from Kashmir to Lahore, where he died in privation and misery. Dara Shikoh's execution was also defended by Aurangzeb on the basis of his heretical beliefs and practices as a Sūfi of the Qadiri order of the Punjab.

Yet it was the Sūfi spiritual ferment and love-divine (*ishk-i-haqiqi*) and not islamic orthodoxy as interpreted by the Hanafi doctors that won. As a matter of fact, Aurangzeb's persecution led to even more vehement Sūfi protest against the unbending monotheism of Islam and their predilection for Hindu devotionism and yogic contemplation than ever before. Two eminent Sufis of the Qader order, Shah Inayet and his disciple Bulhe Shah showed in the Punjab a greater catholicism and sincere adoption of Hindu methods of attainment of *moksha* than in the past. For both Hindu and Muslim India was now prepared for broad ideas and unlimited vistas of freedom of thought. And Hinduism and Islam met on the common ground of mystical contemplation and stress of the immanence of the deity and of the worth and dignity of the common man. The doctrinal beliefs, practices and ways of living of the Sūfis and Hindu Bhaktas came closer. Many Sūfi fraternities accepted the Hindu doctrines of transmigration and karma that were so foreign to Islam and ceased to condemn Hindu idolatry. They adopted the Hindu practice of *Ahimsā* and abjured animal foods. They looked upon the Koran, the Vedas and the Purāṇas with equal reverence. Their spiritual practices were also shaped by Hindu religious attitudes and techniques.



The famous Sufi Sahib Jari who flourished in the 17th century actually performed the pūjā in the house of idols. It is also noteworthy that one of the sub-orders of the Suhrawardy Sūfis called Sada-Sohagan, founded by Shah Musa of Ahmedabad (died 1449), adopted in full Vaishnava fashion (Sakhi-Sampradāya) the method of approach to the deity on the basis of conjugal relationship and accepted women's dress and demeanour in utter devotion and fidelity to God as the eternal beloved. Man is eternally wedded to the Deity and enjoys His love and grace. The formula of the Sada-Sohagan order is "There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is vouchsafed light by his grace". Many of the Sūfi orders indeed followed the method of Hindu Yogic meditation (including the arousal of the psycho-physical centres, lataif) leading up to complete identification of self with deity (al-haqq) or union-in-separateness (Shuhudiyya) and profound bliss and absorption (fana wa baqua). They went not only against external worship but also against all revelation, stressing like Hinduism the devotion of the murid to the shaykh. Like the Hindu Bhaktas many Sūfis were ascetics but many also were householders turning away, however, from the things of enjoyment to Reality (Haqiqat). Equally did the Sūfis and Bhaktas proclaim a battle against orthodoxy and institutional religion and emphasise that all faiths are concerned with the heart and not with the shell of rituals and observances and are of equal significance to man, Allāh, Rāma and Kṛishṇa being one and the same. The lovers of God, Muslim and Hindu, have shown great courage and freedom of religious beliefs, practices and modes of living that orthodox society has always tolerated, even justified.

### **The Poetry of the poet-saint Bullhe-Shah**

Shah Inayat (died in 1735) was one of the most influential, progressive Sūfis of Northern India during the reign of Aurangzeb; to his College in Lahore Muslims from various parts came and read. In his *Dashir-ulmal* Inayat Shah classifies the various Hindu yogic practices and points out that these were carried by the Greek soldiers after Alexander's campaign in India to Greece whence these were borrowed by the mystics of Islam. Shah Inayat's professions and practices were saturated with Hindu thought. His most famous disciple was Bullhe Shah who in his mystic life reached a profound unitive conception of Godhead transcending

all barriers of religion, sect and creed. He was so outspoken in his emphasis of the unity of all religions and disregard of orthodox Islamic injunctions such as the daily prayers and the fast of Ramzan that he incurred the displeasure of Inayat. After separation for some time he returned, dressed as a dancing girl and singing songs of devotion and was forgiven by Inayat. Bullhe Shah's poetry is some of the sublimest reached by the Sūfis of India. At the same time, it is an unmitigated challenge of Muslim bigotry and ritualism. He sees God as the cowherd of Vrindāban, the conqueror of Rāvaṇa and the pilgrim of the Kābā.

"In Vrindāban you grazed the cattle, invading Lankā you made the sound (of victory), you (again) come as the pilgrim of Mekka, you have made wonderful changes of form, what are you hiding yourself from now?

O friends, now I have found the Beloved, into each and everyone He has entered."

The following ardent verses (translated by L. Rāmakṛishṇa) are an abundant testimony to Bullhe Shah's experience of the immanence of the Deity everywhere.

"I have found, I have found something. My true Guru has made manifest the Unmanifest. Somewhere, It is an enemy, somewhere It is a friend, somewhere It is Majnu, somewhere It is Laila, somewhere It is the preceptor, somewhere It is the disciple, in all It has manifested Its own path. Somewhere It is a thief, somewhere a bestower of gifts, somewhere sitting in the pulpit It is a Qazi, somewhere It is Tegh Bahadur. Somewhere It is a mosque, somewhere It has become a temple. Somewhere It is a Vairagi in meditation absorbed, somewhere It becomes clad as Shaikh. Somewhere you are engaged in digging graves in each path, You (god) are fondly handled. Bullhe says, of the Master (God) I become desirous, the great king (Inayat) met (me) and my work (wish) was done (realized)."

Again

"Neither Hindu nor Mussulman, let us sit to spin, abandoning pride (of religion). Neither a Sunni nor a Shia, I have taken the path of complete peace and unity. Neither am I hungry (poor) nor satisfied (rich), nor naked I nor covered. Neither am I weeping nor laughing nor deserted nor settled. Neither a sinner. I, nor a pure one, I am not walking in the way of either sin or



virtue. Bullhe, in all hearts I feel the Lord, (therefore) Hindu and Mussulmans both Have I abandoned."

Yet Bullhe can experience the bliss of mystical love-ecstasy.

"Repeating Rajha Rajha, friends, myself I have become Rajha. Call me (now) Cowherd Rajha, none should call me Hir. Rajha is in me and I am in Rajha, no other thought there is, I do not exist, He Himself exists, He amuses Himself. Repeating Rajah Rajah etc.

In my hand the staff, before me the wealth, and round my shoulders the rough blanket, Bullhe, behold Hir of Sial, where she has gone and stood. Repeating Rajha Rajha, friends etc.

One of his poems finds Silence as the Highest.

Here, according to him, is the secret of the resolution of all religious feuds and cessation of the suffering of the human soul.

"The speech that has come into the mouth cannot be withheld. If I state an untruth something remains, by telling the truth the fire spreads; of both (truth and untruth) the heart is disgusted and in disgust the tongue speaks—One necessary thing concerns religion, but to me all things are known, everything is the image of God, somewhere it is visible, somewhere hidden . . . Here on earth is darkness, and the courtyard (path) is slippery; look within, who is there? Outside the crowd is searching (for God) . . . Somewhere He (God) shows coquetry, somewhere He brings Muhammad, somewhere as a lover He comes, somewhere His soul suffers separation . . . I have studied the science of search (divine) and therein only one word is genuine. All other arguing is additional (and unnecessary) and useless noise is made." Thus has Bullhe with his sublime vision of God in the millions of men undertaking the meanest of human toil, in thieves as well as priests, in path-diggers as well as kings and yet One who is "himself as the first and the last", has captivated the soul of the Punjab.

Sūfism is time-honoured, and perhaps strongest in Sind among the provinces in India. According to legend, four great "friends" and Sūfis came to preach the faith in Sind and reached Sewan. Only one Sūfi, Kalandar Lal Sabaz Sarhand, remained to propagate the religion; the others left for north-west India. The most important Sūfis of Sind include Shah Karim, who flourished at the beginning of the 17th century and obtained his spiritual guidance from a Vaishnava saint of Ahmedabad, Shah Inayat or







## CHAPTER XXXIV

### THE RISE OF SIKH RELIGIOUS NATIONALISM

#### **The Sources of Strength of Sikhism as a Popular Movement**

The Mausoleum of Aurangzeb Padshah and Ghazi at Daulatabad is the grave of the conception of the Muslim state in India. The year of the death of this "crowned saint of Islam" saw the ministry of the last Sikh Guru, Govind Singh, the "Sachi Padshah" or "True King" of the Sikhs, who were by this time completely transformed due to the Mughul persecution from a small oppressed sect into a powerful nationality in the Punjab, the vital home-province of the Mughuls. Sikhism is an offshoot of the bhakti movement led by Rāmānanda, Kabīr, Chaitanya and Vallava. The hymns of Jayadeva, Nāmadeva, Trilochana, Kabīr, Paramānand, Sadhna, Beni, Dhanna, Pipa, Sain, Rav Dās, Sūrdās and of two Muslim saints, Farid and Bhikan find a place in the Ādi-granth of the Sikhs. The indebtedness of the Sikh religion to Kabīr, whom Nānak might have perhaps met, and with whose hymns he was very familiar is amply indicated by the volume of the Kabīr portion in the Granth Sāheb. Nānak also owes a good deal to the Gorakhnāth-Rāmānandi tradition. He refers to the sahaja-yoga practice as an aid to eradication of lust and wrath and release from the entanglements of the world. Guru Govind also refers appreciatively to Gorakh as the prince among the yogis. But in the social and political situation of the Punjab, Nānak's faith and mission dealt constructively with the moral issues at stake. Gorakh's sahaja-yoga, Rāmānanda's social equalization and Kabīr's and the Sūfi's rapprochement of Hinduism and Islam were fulfilled and amplified in a positive approach to the values of life and society, the emphasis shifting from other-worldliness to an ethical endeavour that fashioned a nation. The repudiation of idolatry, ceremonialism, casts and polytheism all served the main purpose of building up sane, gentle and courageous



characters. At the same time, Nānak drank deep in the wells of the Bhakti movement of contemporary India. The strength of this popular movement which was most deeply entrenched in Bengal, the Punjab and Maharashtra, although widespread throughout the land from the 14th century onward, lay not in the support of the Brahmanical priests and scholars or the courts of kings and nobles, but in the devotion of the common people. Aurangzeb's religious persecution drove a mass socio-religious awakening along political channels, led to the formation of a church nation and made of the Sikhs the finest soldiers of India, nay of Asia. There was no greater challenge to the authority of Aurangzeb Padshah than Guru Govind's assumption of the title of Sachi Padshah in the Punjab.

### **The Stress of the Divine Transcendence in Nanak's Hymns**

Nānak (1469-1503), the founder of the Sikh community, was asked to embrace Islam by Babar Padshah when he sacked the city of Sayidpur. Thanks to Babar's liberalism, Nānak was spared the death of a martyr. In Nānak as in Kabir, the higher elements of Hinduism and Islam have mingled. A magnificent hymn of Nānak showing God's transcendence which has been translated by Tagore and used frequently in Brahmo Sāmaj prayers, is given below:—

“The sun and moon, O Lord, are thy lamps, the firmament,  
Thy salver, the orbs of the stars, the pearls encased in it  
The perfume of the Sandal is thine incense; the wind  
Thy fan; all the forests are Thy flowers, O Lord of light.  
What worship is this, O Thou Destroyer of birth?

Unbeaten strains of ecstasy are the trumpets of Thy worship.  
Thou hast a thousand eyes and yet not one eye;  
Thou hast a thousand forms and yet not one form;  
Thou hast a thousand pure feet and yet not one foot;  
Thou hast a thousand organs of smell and yet not one organ  
I am fascinated by this play of Thine.

The light which is in everything is Thine, O Lord of light.  
From its brilliancy every thing is brilliant;

By the Guru's teaching the light becometh manifest,  
What pleaseth Thee is the real ārati”.

From the very beginning there was in Sikhism an uncompromising

stress of the transcendence and ineffableness for the godhead rising above the gods of Hinduism, such as Vishṇu and Śiva, Rāma and Kṛishṇa and over-reaching image and image-worship. God is formless, fathomless and incomprehensible. He is distinct from His creation, and is accessible only to devotion, truth and goodness. "They speak of Him according to what they have heard, but know not His limit. He to whom the Unseen hath manifested Himself knoweth the story of the Ineffable". "The idol giveth thee not when hungry, nor preserveth thee from Death". It is like a foolish quarrel among the blind.

From the daily tasks of the farmer's life Nānak obtains his metaphors and allegories. Like the Christian conception of the Good Shepherd who giveth his life for and tendeth his sheep, we have in Nānak the notion of God as the Eternal Herdsman.

"As a herdsman guardeth and keepeth watch over his cattle  
So God day and night cherisheth and guardeth man and  
keepeth him in happiness.  
O Thou compassionate to the poor, I seek Thy protection;  
look on me with favour".

In another hymn Nānak uses the imagery of the grinding of the corn in the hand-mill,—that corn, that soul, which attaches itself to the axle, the Godhead, escapes the grinding of Death.

"When the field is ripe, it is cut; only the chaff and the hedge  
remain.

The corn is threshed with the husk, and the chaff is winnoed  
away.

Men then put together the two mill-stones and sit down to  
grind corn.

That which attacheth to the axle escapeth. Nānak has seen  
a wonderful thing."

In the spring tide of life when the forest is aglow with flowers, the kokil sings and the bumble-bee flits from flower to flower, Nānak feels the intense yearning of the woman for her Beloved.

"In Chet agreeable is the spring; the bumble-bee is pleasing.

In the Bar the forests are flowering; may my Beloved return to me!

When her Beloved returneth not home, how can a wife obtain comfort? Her body wasteth away with the pain of separation.

The Kokil singeth sweetly on the mango-tree; why should I endure pain of body?



The bumble-bee is flitting on the flowering branches, how shall I survive? I am dying, O mother.

Nānak in Chet comfort is easily obtained if woman obtain God in her home as her Spouse."

### Nanak's Ethical Movement

Like all the leaders of the Bhakti movement, Nānak was an uncompromising opponent of caste, ritualism and priesthood.

"To give a feast, make a burnt offering, offer alms, perform penance and worship, and endure bodily pain for ever are all of no avail.

Without God's name salvation is not obtained; the holy man obtaineth it by the Name.

Even though man weave his hair into a crown, apply ashes to his body, doff his clothes, and wander naked,

Yet shall he be not satisfied without God's name".

Again "what power hath caste? it is the reality that is tested". "High or low caste influenceth not God when He maketh any one great".

"According to the Hindus foul is the ablution of the Chandāls and vain are his religious ceremonies and decorations.

False is the wisdom of the perverse; their acts produce strife."

In an age when "true religion had taken wings and flown," Nānak redefines Brāhmanhood and Kshatriyahood:

"He is a Brāhmaṇ who knoweth God,

Who performeth works of devotion, penance and self-restraint;

And who observeth the religion of mildness and patience.

Such a Brāhmaṇ shall burst his bonds, obtain salvation,

And be worthy of worship.

He is khatri who is brave in good deeds

And who employeth his body in charity."

The founder of Sikhism through his life and many wanderings preaches the unity of God, sincere love and devotion to God's name as the only means of salvation, and pure, gracious, fearless and rational living. But in the crucible of persecution, suffering and martyrdom, the character, morality and destiny of the Sikhs underwent profound change. Already in Nānak we find a protest against the social degradation of the Hindus of the Punjab under more than six centuries of continuous Muslim rule. Nānak bemoans:

"You wear a loin cloth, sacrificial mark and a rosary,  
 And yet you earn your living from those whom you call  
 Mlechhas;  
 You perform the Hindu worship in private  
 Yet, Oh my brothers, you read the books of Moham-  
 madans and adopt their manners."

From the very beginning the emphasis in Sikhism, as contrasted with the movements initiated by Rāmānanda, Kabīr, Chaitanya and Vallabhāchārya, was towards righteous social action, charity, sharing and sacrifice. "Good acts are the tree, God's name its branches, religion its flowers, divine knowledge its fruit." Again,

"The way of karma has its peculiar value.  
 Might seem to be religion's total way:  
 Great heroes of military fame have used it.  
 Amongst them pre-eminent stands lordly Rām,  
 With whom majestic Sītā keeps her calm,  
 A twain whose glory may not be described—  
 In whose hearts the holy Rām abides,  
 Life cannot cheat them and they do not die  
 Bhagats in goodly number tread the way,  
 But with a special joy from truth within the mind."

Abjure falsehood and deceit, follow truth; abandon indulgence in all forms, slander and wrath, be pure, righteous and charitable. "All men's accounts shall be taken in God's Court and no one shall be saved without good works". Such were in a nutshell Nānak's ethical demands.

### The Martyrdom of the Sikh Gurus

Nānak is called by the Sikhs "Nānak Nirāṅkāri" or Nānak the disembodied or formless. The replacement of the historical Gautama by the metaphysical Buddha in Mahāyāna theology was associated with the spread of Buddhism to Asia. Similarly the metaphysical conception of Nānak Nirāṅkāri marks a similar universal process of transformation of a sect into a faith and theosophy that pulsates in the hearts of millions, untrammelled by dogmas. In one of his shabds he says that Nirāṅkāri the formless commends the way of Truth, which is higher than Karma and knowledge, the realization of this takes man beyond the temporal worlds, so that he finds excellence quite beyond destruction.



Nānak's successors Aṅgad, Amardās and Rāmdās were all men of the highest character who were disciplining the people in practical ethics of righteous and humane social action. To Guru Aṅgad must be given the credit of inventing the Gurmukhī characters that could easily be learnt by the masses and greatly facilitated the spread of Sikhism. The institution of langar or communal kitchen, where prince and peasant, rich and poor, high and low-born could mess together without any social distinction, and which fostered the spirit of charity on a large scale became a powerful binder. To Amardās, Akbar granted the plot of land at Amritsar on which was constructed later on the famous Golden Temple as the central place of worship, communion and assembly of the Sikhs.

The fifth Guru Arjun was a leader of great organising ability under whom the Sikhs considerably increased in numbers, wealth, prestige and power. But his heart was full of love for the Beloved One and he was steeped in the Bhāgavata and the Vaiṣṇava tradition. "The longing of the Chatrik for the rain drops, of the bumble-bee for the lotus, of the sheldrake for the sun, of the bride for her husband, these are but the faint images of the love which man should bear to God, and worship without love is valueless". Guru Arjun was a poet of no mean order. We reproduce three of his beautiful hymns.—

"Thy red jacket becometh thee;  
 Thou art pleasing to the Lord, and thou winnest His heart,  
 Who hath given this bloom to thy face?  
 What dye hath given thee thy bright complexion?  
 Thou art beautiful, thou art a happy wedded wife.  
 In thy house is thy Beloved, in thy house is good fortune,  
 Thou art chaste, thou art disintegrated,  
 Thou art pleasing to thy Beloved, thou possessest superior  
 Knowledge."

"If thou enter my courtyard, the whole land shall become  
 beautiful,  
 When I am without my Spouse, the One God, nobody careth  
 for me.  
 Everything shall be beautiful if the Bridegroom come and  
 make my courtyard His own;  
 Then the wayfarer who cometh to my house shall never  
 depart empty."

"The lowly man whom nobody knoweth  
 Shall be honoured by everywhere repeating God's name.  
 I crave for a sight of Thee, grant it, O my Beloved:  
 Who hath not been saved by sowing Thee?  
 The whole world washeth the dirt of his feet  
 Whom nobody would approach  
 The man who is useless to everybody  
 Is invoked as a saint by the Guru's favour."

On the pretext of his friendship with the rebel Prince Khusru, Jahangir put him to death on the charge of treason. The seed of militarism is found in the message, which the martyred Arjun sent to his successor just before his death: "Let him sit fully armed on his throne and maintain an army to the best of his ability."

Har Govind began first to gather arms and horses from his followers. Similarly, the ninth Guru Tegh Bahadur, who took up the cause of some persecuted Kashmiri Brāhman was executed by Aurangzeb. Tegh Bahadur gave his head but not his faith (*Sir dia sar na dia*). The series of martyrdom contributed to develop a militant nationalism in the Punjab, where the Hindus also turned to the Sikhs, now transformed into a full-fledged martial race, for help and support against Mughul persecution.

### The Khalsa of the Sword and Kitchen

Religious and militant nationalism was the reply of the people to the challenge of the Ghazi seated on the imperial throne in Delhi. The leader of this new militancy was the tenth Guru Govind Singh, one of the great kings and heroes in Indian history. Unlike all the gurus after Nanak, Govind Singh was a deep student of the Brahmanical scriptures, especially the Purāṇas. From the exploits of Rāmachandra, Kṛishṇa, and other ancient heroes and of the Goddess Chandi, he drew inspiration immensely for organising the fight of the people against evil and unrighteousness. The Chandi-ki-Charitar and Chandi-ki-Var which have been incorporated in the Book of the Tenth King (*Daswin Pādshah kā Granth*) that were Govind's contributions to the Granth are specially significant for the realistic manner in which the legends of the Goddess' fight with the Asuras have been delineated, symbolic of the struggle against the untruth and injustice of foreign domination. The hymn to the holy Bhagavati became the paean of the sword, and the sword and deity became one and the same. At the end of both the Chandi



Charitar and the Kṛishṇa Avatār, written in vigorous epic form, unique in Hindi literature, Govind specifically mentions that his aim is to instil courage in the battle-field and joy and elation in warfare. He sings in the Kṛishṇa Avatār:

"Great death, be thou my protector;  
All-steel I am thy slave.  
May both my kitchen  
and my sword prevail in the world."

Govind thoroughly understood the mission of the Sikhs in the liberation of the people of India. In order to create a profound impression upon the general body of the Hindus, he introduced the rite of Pahul or Samskāra of the Sword by which the Sikhs entered into a second birth irrespective of differences in caste and become Dvijas by drinking water together, stirred by a dagger and partaking of a sacramental meal prepared from consecrated flour. The scavenger and the leather-dresser could now partake of the meals side by side with the Brāhmaṇs in the villages of the Punjab. The lowest in society were now rulers of the land sharing a common brotherhood—the Khalsa or the Elect—with the Guru himself and bearing the surname of Singh or Lion. It was a kind of neo-Brahmanical samskāra or ceremonial observance, which symbolised the complete abolition of caste and the unification of the people, welded together for a holy crusade to meet the jihad declared by Aurangzeb. The ceremonial for the establishment of the Khalsa (pure or liberated) was backed up by other symbolisms. Every true follower must not only take the Pahul but also wear the five K's—Kes or the uncut hair, symbolic of dedication to the cause, Kangha, the comb which keeps the hair clean and protects the consecrated from defilement, Kṛipān or sword which stands for the martial purpose of the collective, and the honour and dignity of the individual, Katch or short drawers which stand for constant readiness and Kara or the iron bangle which symbolises the eschewing of all luxuries. It is suggested that Guru Govind obtained this uniform from Bhima's army as described in Trivikram Bhatt's work 'Nala Champu'. All Sikhs were asked to add the suffix Singh or Lion to their names and be prepared for Kirtināsa (eschewing of worldly fame), Dharmanāsa (eschewing of sectarianism and orthodoxy) and Karmanāsa (eschewing of ceremonialism) and Kulanaśa (eschewing of caste and family pride) in their supreme consecration to the deal, the collective or the Khālsā and its Sachi Pādshāh or its True

King, who is the representative on the earth of the King of Kings. Such were the ideals and the rituals by which the religious sect founded by Nānak was converted into a militant nationality with a compact organisation, discipline and ideology dedicated to the service of God and the people. In Guru Govind's Strange Drama (*Vichitra Nātak*), the supreme Lord is said to assure him and the people in much the same manner as Sri Kṛishṇa in the *Bhagavad Gitā* and the Goddess Chandi in the *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* give a Messianic hope of deliverance of the world from a regime of wickedness:

"I extol and cherish thee as my own son. I send thee to form a separate new faith. Go and spread it, the light of righteousness, and refrain people from senseless acts.

For this was I born,  
And to spread this religion the Lord appointed me;  
'Go and spread righteousness everywhere  
And seize and destroy the wicked and the tyrannical'.

For this purpose was I born,  
And this let all the virtuous understand:  
To advance righteousness, to emancipate the good,  
And to destroy all evil-doers, root and branch."

Thus was the Khalsa established (1699) as the spearhead of resistance not merely of the Sikhs but also of the entire Hindu nation against Mughul tyranny. It is told that the first Kṛipān was consecrated by the touch of Chandi after certain Tāntrika ceremonies were undertaken by a saint from Benares. The symbolic interpretation of the heroic deeds of Rāmachandra, Kṛishṇa and other Avatāras and heroes and of the Goddess Chandi was pitched in a key not heard in the earlier Sikh Granth and intended to foster a militant nationalism among the Hindus as a people, while the Sikh community placed at the vanguard of the military resistance would follow the sturdy religious doctrine of the Granth and the rigorous discipline imposed by Govind.

### The Poetry of Guru Govind

It is remarkable how an intrepid warrior and general like Guru Govind Singh could also be an accomplished poet and scholar. As a matter of fact the sturdy, militant character of Sikhism rested not only on Sikh valour and martyrdom, but also on Guru Govind's poetic treatment of heroism and valour, whether of gods and god-



desses or of legendary heroes that he wanted his saint-soldiers to emulate in modern field of battle. But the Guru's religious hymns were equally characterised by deep poetic fervour. Here are two hymns which deprecate ritualism and external yogic practice, and extol faith and wisdom.

"The peacocks dance, the frogs croak, and the clouds ever thunder

The tree ever standeth on one leg in the forest, as for those who take not life, the Saravagi bloweth on the ground before putting his feet on it.

The stones through several ages remain in one place; the raven and the kites travel from country to country.

How can the wretch who is without divine knowledge and who is never absorbed in the great Benefactor, be saved without faith in Him?"

"O Jogi, Jog consisteth not in matted air.

Why wear thyself out and kill thyself wandering? Consider this in thy mind.

The man who knoweth the supreme divine knowledge shall obtain the great reward;

He shall then restrain his mind in one place, and not run wandering from door to door.

What availeth it to leave one's home, run away, and dwell in a forest, When one's heart ever remaineth at home? Such a person is not an Udāsi.

Boasting of thy religious fervour, thou deceivest the world by the exercise of great deceptions.

Thou thinkest in thy heart that thou hast abandoned worldly love, but worldly love hath not abandoned thee".

"Were I to make all the islands my Paper, and the seven seas my ink;

Were I to cut down all trees, and turn them into pens for writing;

Were I to make Saraswati dictate millions of pages;

Were I to write with the hands of Gaṇesh.

O Thou who holdest the destroying sword. I could not Please Thee even a little without offering

Thee Homage."

### **The Khalsa Conquest of the Punjab**

Within a few years of the formation of the Khālsā, Guru Govind defeated some neighbouring hill Princes and Mughul generals and

asserted his complete authority over the whole of the Punjab. Even Bahadur Shah sought his assistance for coming to the Delhi throne and Guru Govind later on proceeded with him to the Deccan where he was suddenly murdered by an Afghan in 1708. Guru Govind's independence, courage and dignity are illustrated in the remarkable Epistle of Victory (Zafarnama) that he wrote to Aurangzeb similar to the celebrated letter of Shivaji to the Emperor: "I have no faith in thine oath to which thou lookest the one God as witness. I have not a particle of confidence in thee. What though my four sons were killed, I remained behind like a twisted snake; What bravery is it to quench a few sparks of life. Thou art merely exciting a raging fire the more. What can an enemy do when God the Friend is kind? When thou lookest to thine army and wealth, I look to God's praises. Thou art proud of thine empire, while I am proud of the kingdom of the immortal God. Be not heedless; this caravansary is only for a few days. People leave it at all times. Behold the revolution which passeth over every denizen and house in this faithless world. Even though thou art strong, annoy not the weak. Lay not the axe on thy kingdom." Both the leaders of the national resistance movement forecast the fall of the Mughul Empire and adduced the same cause. For a century and a half that followed the death of Guru Govind, the Sikh nation dominated the Punjab and erased the memory of ignominy, persecution and degradation of the preceding seven centuries of Muslim domination.

### The Humanism of the Sikh Hymns

And yet the inspiration of the Divine Love in Sikhism spilled mystical sweetness, compassion and joy all round, and the people of the Punjab found the Guru Grantha a perennial source of their poetry. One of the best poets of modern Punjabi is Bhai Nand Lal, a beloved disciple of Guru Govind Singh, who sings

"My eyes !

No ! They are the shrine of the Beloved

My Body

No ! It is the throne of the King."

"There is none else besides Him

He is concealed below these veils of palaces and shrines,

How can fire Divine be two?

Strike any pair of stones you may

The glint of fire is but one and the same."



Again

"Tonight he hath not come  
The assembled guests waited for  
Him the whole night,  
There was nothing, but the sparks that fell from the eyes  
of the oil-lamp;  
A rain of live glances! and there was nothing.

Here is his song of the plucked flower :

"Thou didst deign to pluck us,  
And we were fain to let ourselves be torn from the twigs;  
Thou didst but catch the scent of our perfume, and we but  
touch of the sweetness of Thy breast; then Thou  
didst throw us off!

We were lost both to thee and ourselves, to our past and our  
future,

Mingled with the dust we lay,  
And the passers by trampled us down,  
And the tyranny tore us petal by petal;  
We lay as little birds with our wings plucked and scattered.  
Our soul is but an immortal memory now of the fatal relish of  
thy caress;

And we sing still in this ruin the hymns of that thankfulness,  
O love! O Love!"

In the poetry of Bhāi Nand Lāl we go back to the tender piety, the  
deep certitude and the great humanism of the ancient Sikh hymns.

The poet addresses these lines on the ruins of the Hindu temple  
of Martanda, Kashmir :

"When they beat down mercilessly the Temple of Martand,  
The very stones cried to the Idol-breaker!  
Thinkest thou art breaking but lifeless stones?  
Ah! Many hearts are breaking here!  
The human heart is the true Ka'aba.  
Who is thy God? O, Idol-breaker!  
Thy hammer is falling on us, but it wounds God,  
who lives in every heart;  
Ah! many hearts are breaking!  
Who is thy God? O, Idol-breaker!

(Translation by Pūran Singh)

The solidarity and sacrifice of the Khālsā produced another most remarkable man among the Sikhs, the Lion of the Punjab, Ranjit Singh (1780-1839). He was not only one of the greatest statesmen of the age, but was also an able and astonishingly successful military genius, a "Bonaparte in miniature" calling himself and the Sikhs collectively the Khālsā. Within about three decades he carved out a kingdom covering Kangra, Kashmir and the major part of the Indus valley. He would have been able to include in it the cis-Sutlej states, but for the defection of certain jealous Sikh chieftains encouraged by the British. That the entire Sikh nation could not be brought under the Khalsa had its tragic repercussions later on the history of the Sikhs. Though an intrepid and courageous fighter and conqueror he was genial and humane. "Never perhaps was so large an empire founded by one man with so little criminality", said a German, Baron Carl von Hugel. Though he had little education, he had a discerning and liberal mind and his court attracted some of the best talents, irrespective of religion and nationality. His chief minister was a Muslim — Fakir Aziuddin, and his finance minister was a Rājput — Rājā Dinā nath. He also appointed Europeans of various nationalities as high army officers. Art and learning flourished in his court. The chief minister, who was a Sufi, saw no difference between Hinduism and Islam: "I am a man floating in the midst of a mighty river; I turn my eyes towards the land, but can distinguish no difference in either bank". A distinct school of Sikh painting developed in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, showing filiations with the fluent, realistic folk-style of the hills rather than with the formal academic Mughul art. Portraiture of the Gurus and chieftains and representation of durbars and hunting scenes were common, largely determined by the fact that Sikhism has neither icons nor has it developed any mythology of its own.



## CHAPTER XXXV

### THE RESTORATION OF THE HINDU EMPIRE :

#### THE MARATHA HINDU-PAD-PADSHAH

##### **The National Awakening in Maharashtra**

Sikhism as it rose in the fifteenth century in the Punjab was not only non-violent, but was actually finding a common bond between Hinduism and Islam. Mughul oppression transformed a church into a militant nation with its religious head in Northern India claiming the dignity and majesty of the insignia of Padshah that could be assumed only by the Padshah of Delhi in that age. Similar reasons and circumstances converted the Marathas into a nation in the Deccan whence they set out to establish a Hindu-Pad-Padshahi challenging the Mughul Padshahi. The Bhakti movement in Maharashtra led by Jnanadeva, Namadeva, Ekanatha, Tukaram and Ramdas was a mass awakening that was considerably aided by the development of a forceful Marathi literature in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The preaching of social and religious equality and denial of supremacy of the Brahmans through the centuries built up a solidarity which under the menace of Mughul invasion and conquest took the form of a national-political awakening under the leadership of Shivaji (1627-1680). Just a year before Guru Govind in the Punjab took up the challenge on behalf of the Hindus as Sachi Padshah against Aurangzeb (1675), the Maratha hero crowned himself king at Raigarh in right ancient Hindu imperial fashion, and assumed the time-honoured titles of Simhāsanādhisvara and Sri Siva Chhatrapati or king of kings. The slogan in Maharashtra was Hindu Dharma and culture, "the gods of the faith, cows and Brāhmans". In the famous letter which Rāmdās addressed to Shivaji we read, "Thou, who by thy vigilance, didst spurn kings. The holy places were broken. The abodes of Brāhmans were polluted. All earth was shaken. Religion had fled. Nārāyan (the Sun-god) resolved to protect the gods of the faith, the cows, the Brāhmans and inspired thee to do so." Shivaji combined indomitable courage and military genius with a profound love of the folk culture, songs and

legends of Mahārāshtra that led him more than once to risk capture, when going to Poona in disguise to hear a religious recitation. He reverentially approached Tukārām for spiritual guidance. But Tukaram advised him to become a disciple of Rāmdās Samarth. No two contemporary saints in the same land show greater contrasts.

### The Saints of Pandharpur

Tukārām belongs to the ancient tradition of Bhakti and is steeped in the love of Vithoba, caring for nothing else in the world. He says that God pursues him wherever he goes. Such a mystic vision at once gives him ineffable joy and Swarga and withdraws him completely from the life of the world:

“God is ours, yea, ours is He,  
Soul of all souls that be.  
God is nigh without a doubt,  
Nigh to all, within, without.  
God is gracious, gracious still;  
Every longing he'll fulfil.  
God protects, protects His own;  
Strife and death He casteth down.  
Kind is God, ah, kind indeed:  
Tuka he will guide and lead.”

“Holding my hand thou ledest me,  
My comrade everywhere.  
As I go on and lean on thee  
My burden thou dost bear.

“If as I go, in my distress  
I frantic words should say,  
Thou settest right my foolishness  
And takest my shame away.  
Thus thou to me new hope dost send,  
A new world bringest in,  
Now know every man a friend,  
And all I meet my kin.  
So like a happy child I play  
In thy clean world, O God,  
Any anywhere, I, Tuka, say  
Thy bliss is spread abroad.”



“As the bride looks back to her mother’s house  
 And goes, but with dragging feet,  
 So my soul looks up unto Thee and longs  
 That Thou and I may meet.  
 As a child cries out and is sore distressed  
 When its mother it cannot see :  
 As a fish that is taken from out of the wave  
 So ’tis, says Tuka, with me.”

Tukārām insists that it is impossible to combine both spiritual joy and the activity of the world. “Worldly life and life with the Highest — he who acts both parts together in the end achieves neither. If a man seeks to lay his hands on two grain-pits at once, he will end by destroying himself,” says he. Yet the world is meaningful for him. “Through God the whole world is related to us ; when a rope is stretched every fibre is tense. The world is not worthless or an object of scorn ; see how each life is blended with the life of all. The joy and grief of others affect us, as our joy and griefs affect them in the same manner. Tuka says, when this pure principle dwells within the heart, the outward man is radiant with delight.” In many of his abhangas Tukārām sets forth a high and noble ideal of moral life. Sincerity, tolerance, forgiveness, humility, purity, compassion and service are the virtues which are stressed as aids to the divine life. Tukārām was a grocer by caste and his influence contributed a great deal towards the social recognition of both men of the lower castes and women in general. The saints of Pandharpur promoted both a national-religious revival and an egalitarian social movement that prepared the ground for the pan-Hindu movement of which Shivāji took up the militant leadership.

### The Political Message of the Dasabodha

But Shivāji found his Guru not in Tukārām but in Rāmdās. Rāmdās who unlike Tukārām does not extol other-worldliness, seeks reconciliation between the material and the spiritual quest. With him success in Samsāra alone can assure success in Paramārtha. The former is a necessary condition of the latter. The emphasis of Rāmdās (1608-1681), therefore, is towards social action but in complete detachment and freedom from egoism. He is the supporter

of the principle of the golden mean. Neither indulgence nor withdrawal but moderation gives the key to man's ethical life. Rāmdās stands somewhat apart from the school of devotees of Vithoba at Pandharpur and his monumental work "Dāsabodha" integrates the various sciences and arts of life with the religious quest. Something like 800 maths were established by Rāmdās throughout the Deccan with images of Rāma and Hanūmān and gymnasiums or akhādās attached to them that became foci of national-religious revival and physical training and resistance. Rāmdās's programme was essentially practical and many-sided, intended to make every Hindu citizen a samartha or 'valiant' like himself. Such a guru was exceedingly helpful for the leader of a puissant nation who inherited the great traditions of the Sātavahana and Vijayanagara Empires and undertook the task of the protection and revival of the Hindu Dharma. In this he was supported not only by the Kshatriya princes of the South but also of the North such as Jay Singh and Chhatrasāl; while many bards of the North came to his court and sang of the glory of "Sārva-bhauma-rājya". In the Dasabodha there is a significant prophecy in the form of Rāmdās's dream that the "outlandish titan" (Mlechcha daitya) will be vanquished by the Hero (Suresha) who will then establish the kingdom of Dharma and bliss (ānanda-vanbhavana) and thus the age of unrighteousness will be brought to a close (kalpānta). In fact the fall of the wicked Aurangzeb (Aurangia) was definitely discerned (Budala Aurangya papi). It is said that Shivāji surrendered his kingdom to Rāmdās from whom he received it back in trust from God. "Take back your kingdom," said the saint, "it is for Kings to rule and for Brāhman to pray." It is for this reason that the Maratha flag (Bhagwa jhenda) was the saffron banner which the varkaris (pilgrims) bear as they go on pilgrimage to Pandharpur.

### The Foundation of the Maratha Nation

With the mission of protection of the Dharma, Shivāji could weld together the scattered Maratha peoples into one nation against the mighty opposition of the Mughul Empire and the kingdom of Bijāpur and of the Portuguese and the Abyssinians. His religious zeal did not make him a bigot. Much of the Maratha army was recruited from the low castes, and Shivāji himself had to be designated a Kshatriya before his own coronation. The Maratha revival gave a great opportunity for rise to many inferior social groups such as



the Manes, Savants, Jādavs and the Movres. In respect of the various Kshatriya families in the Deccan, Shivāji's marriage of eight wives had the object of cementing alliances, while his formulation of a pan-Hindu socio-religious ideal, strengthened by the impositions of the sar-deshmukhi and the chowthai were intended to bring all Hindu princes and chiefs under the ambit of one empire (*sarva bhuma rajya*). While the Mughuls plundered and destroyed Hindu temples, Shivaji, as even his hostile critic, Kafi Khan observes, was careful to maintain the honour of women and children of the Mohammedans, when they fell into his hands and did no harm to mosques nor insulted the Quran. Within thirty years of Aurangzeb's death, the Maratha nation which he built up could march to the vicinity of Delhi, secured the alliance of Jaysingh II, Sawai of Amber and Chhatrasal Bundela and only kept away from the capital lest the Emperor's sentiments be hurt. Shivāji's own capital attracted poets and litterateurs from far and near. One of the most distinguished Hindi poets of the age, Bhushan who belonged to Bundelkhand, went to Shivāji and addressed to him a laudatory poem: "Shame to thee (Aurangzeb)! Send all the sayids, shaikhs, and pathans and give battle to Shivāji. You have here (in the Deccan) lost numberless forts and towns to Shivāji. Why is it that you break the temples there (in the north)? Having failed to cause any harm to the Lord of the Hindus (Shivāji), you oppress the helpless and poor Hindus. O Lord of Delhi! Do not put on the crown of ignominy on this earth by calling yourself Alamgir." A grateful nation later on elevated Shivāji to an Avatāra, as we find in the Sanskrit epic, Kavindra Paramananda's *Siva Bhārata* that is composed as a blend of Purāna and Niti-Sāstra.

### The Ideal of Hindu-Pad-Padshahi

The Marathas became the dominant power in India during the eighteenth century and produced a series of great statesmen and warriors with whom the British had to contend for their final conquest of India. It is significant that the imperialist expansion of the Marathas to the North which was undertaken by Baji Rao I, set forth the ideal of Hindu-Pad-Padshahi or the Hindu Empire which easily won the support of Hindu princes, chiefs and zamindars of Malwa, Gujarat, Rājputana and Bundelkhand.

The period of Maratha imperialism led to a literary outburst. One of the fathers of Maratha literature was Shridhar (1670-1728)

who wrote the *Triumph of Rāma* (*Rāma Vijaya*) and the *Exploits of the Pāṇdavas*. Thus the myths and legends of the epics were made accessible to the common people of Mahārāshtra. Shridhar's *Pothi* still remains today as popular in Maharashtra as *Tulsidās's Rāma Charita Mānasa* in North India and *Kirtivāsa's Rāmāyaṇa* in eastern India. Another important writer is Mahipati whose *Triumphs of the Devotees and Saints* (*Bhakta Vijay* and *Sānta Vijay*) resemble *Nābha-das's Bhaktamāla* of North India. Moro Pant was also a poet of considerable reputation.

The eighteenth century produced a number of Hindu statesmen of the first rank. These include Tara Bai, Baji Rao I, Jai Singh II, Sawai of Amber, Chhatrasāl Bundelā, Ahalya Bai, Nana Fadnavis, Mahādāji Scindia and Ranjit Singh. It is remarkable how in a period of disintegration and anarchy Hindu India could produce such a galaxy of sagacious rulers and statesmen. We give here the tribute of Sir John Malcolm to the saint Ahalyā Bāi Holkar: "The success of Ahalyā Bāi in the internal administration of her dominions was altogether wonderful . . . The undisturbed internal tranquillity of the country was even more remarkable than its exemption from foreign attack . . . . Indore, which she has raised from a village to a wealthy city, was always regarded by her with particular consideration . . . The fond object of her life was to promote the prosperity of all around her . . . . She has become, by general suffrage, the model of good government in Malwa. . . Her munificence was not limited to her own territories. . . the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the river shared in her compassion. . . . She died at the age of sixty, worn out by care and fatigue . . . She could read and understand the *Purāṇas* or sacred books, which were her favourite study. . . . It is not common with the Hindus. . . to confine females, or to compel them to wear veils. The Marathas of rank (even the Brahmins) have, with few exceptions, rejected the custom (of seclusion), which is not prescribed by any of their religious institutions. Ahalyā Bāi therefore offended no prejudice, when she took upon herself the direct management of affairs, and sat everyday for a considerable period, in open Durbar, transacting business . . . The facts that have been stated of Ahalyā Bāi rest on grounds that admit of no scepticism. It is, however, an extraordinary picture—a female without vanity, a bigot without intolerance. . . . her name is sainted and she is styled an *Avatār* or incarnation of the Divinity. In the most sober



view that can be taken of her character, she certainly appears, within her limited sphere, to have been one of the purest and most exemplary rulers that ever existed."

Another distinguished statesman of the age, Jai Singh (1686-1743), was a scientist rather than a saint, who had a profound knowledge of and interest in mathematics and especially in astronomy, on which subjects he was familiar with both Arab and European developments. He installed a number of observatories in India viz., Jaipur, Ujjain, Benares and Delhi and induced the king of Portugal to send out to India a Portuguese astronomer with whose assistance he undertook a comparison of astronomical tables, and of Indian and European instruments. Jai Singh may also be considered as one of the world's first town-planners. His design of the Jaipur City plan and development has extorted admiration from many modern city-planners and some of the best Rajput frescoes were executed in his time. He was also a great patron of scholars and painters. It is remarkable that a time of disorder, confusion and chronic war could produce such a saint-ruler like Jai Singh. Such saintly and scientific dispositions would have been praiseworthy for normal times in any country in the world.

### The Causes of Failure of the Sikhs

The causes of the failure of the Sikhs and the Marathas are not far to seek. While the Sikhs were transformed from a sect to a nationality by Govind and from a nationality to a kingdom by Ranjit Singh, their militant nationalism was adapted to safeguard the Sikh state against Muslim designs both in Delhi and Kabul. Thus the organisation of misls into which the Sikhs integrated themselves evolved into a "theocratic confederate feudalism" owing an undefined allegiance to the takht and often rent asunder by military factions and strifes that brought misery and suffering to the people. The genius of Ranjit Singh who was called by a French traveller "a Bonaparte in miniature" achieved peace and conditions of prosperity in the Punjab for well nigh three decades. The "lion of the Punjab" styled himself and the people collectively as the Khalsa or commonwealth of Guru Govind. Its dominions extended under his political and military leadership from the banks of the Sutlej to the North-western gateways of the Punjab and from Ladakh to the frontiers of the territories of the Sind ruling chiefs. The Khalsa

misl were integrated and consolidated into a compact empire with natural defensible political boundaries. Beyond the banks of the Sutlej the British gradually won over the Sikh States and established a Protectorate over them. But Ranjit Singh's political sagacity forbade him to intervene on behalf of his co-religionists, lest he might be embroiled in a trial of strength with the superior British power. Within the Khalsa empire a whole host of industries were developed under his direct management for the manufacture of swords, guns, saddlery and other military equipment. Trade and commerce were encouraged and there was all-round prosperity. Ranjit Singh was extremely careful and just in the selection of his important civil and military officers. His revenue system was fair and equitable and peace and contentment reigned in the land. For above everything else the "Lion of the Punjab" by his control over Kashmir and the mountain passes connected with the Hindukush and Suleiman Ranges completely eliminated the threat from the North-West. The Pathans in their discomfiture admitted that "God himself has become Khalsa". Ranjit Singh's policy was no doubt checkmated by the jealousy of the various Sikh chiefs in the Cis-Sutlej territory, who looked less to him and more to the British for protection. No wonder that out of disgust he once exclaimed as he was being shown a map of India; "Sab lal ho jayega" (Soon it will all be red).

### The Causes of Failure of the Marathas

Living in a barren, mountainous country that could hardly yield surpluses for the luxuries and amenities of life and hemmed in by enemies on all sides — the Mughul Viceroy, the king of Bijapur, the Portuguese and the Abyssinians — the Marathas developed a loosely-knit feudal type of imperialism on the fall of the Mughul Empire. Born in an inhospitable hilly territory and moulded in the crucible of national resistance against the Mughul Empire, Maratha imperial policy had to compromise a great deal with the autonomy and aspirations of congeries of Hindu kings, chieftains and military adventurers. The system of providing troops and rendering military service in lieu of Saranjāms or fiefs held by rajas, chiefs and estate-holders indeed constituted the foundation of the Maratha imperial system. The evils were three-fold. The various Maratha chiefs took advantage of the weakening of the central authority and internal dissension in Poona to carve out semi-autonomous kingdoms of their own. Just as the Peshwa encroached upon the power of the Rāj Mandal of



Shivāji's administration and gradually extended his authority over the whole Mahratta kingdom, the various military commanders established themselves as equals of the Peshwa in Baroda, Indore, Gwalior, Nagpur and Dhar. The bonds of union of the Maratha Confederacy were snapped by the action of the Peshwa himself. Once the solidarity of the ancient Rāj-mandal which played such an important role in the times of Rājā Rām and Sahu was disrupted, centrifugal forces, aggravated by racial and caste jealousies, became ascendant. The apportionment of the chauth (one-fourth) and sar-deshmukhi (one tenth) between the centre and the dominions came to be characterised by a multiplicity of claims as between the Pant Sachiv, the Rājā or ruler and the Maratha Sardārs and Chiefs leading to constant friction. An imperial system grounded on such uncertainty, balance of power and strife cannot be expected to confer such genuine and lasting benefits to the people as may accrue under conditions of peace and tranquillity. Secondly, continued incursions into the remaining subahs of the Mughul Empire led to the development of a characteristic system of revenue based on subsidies, chauth and sar-deshmukhi that represented a compromise between effective Maratha sovereignty and deference to the strong public sentiment regarding the de jure sovereignty of the Mughul Emperor. In a highly fluent political situation the chauth in so far as it safeguarded a country in some measure against the invasion of other powers can well be justified, being the counterpart of the contemporary British device of the subsidiary system and sphere of influence. In fact, imposed as it was for the gradual establishment of national-political unity the chauth certainly deserves a better appreciation than the British Governor-General's subsidiary system. Thirdly, the Maratha army ceased to be imperial and became feudal. The cavalry was represented by the Marathas owning their plots of land and serving the state, but the infantry consisted mostly of the Rajputs, the Rohillas and other Muslim mercenaries, with a sprinkling of European officers. The resistance of a self-reliant hill-folk in the upland of the Deccan against the overwhelmingly superior numbers and equipment of Aurangzeb fostered guerilla tactics in which the Maratha cavalry showed pre-eminence. But with the supersession of guerilla tactics, by the use of artillery and organised infantry regiments, the infantry assumed greater weight than the cavalry. The army recruited from various sources could not however be given the adequate training in gunnery as the British battalions received. For a successful

fight with the British the Marathas should have also built a powerful navy. The Peshwas had the Subah Amar at Vijayadrug and Bassein, but the fleet was not developed as an important arm of the state, but utilised mainly for the protection of mercantile vessels and suppression of coastal piracy. Especially by the assistance rendered to the British for curbing the naval power of the Angrias, the Marathas laid the axe at the roots of their own naval supremacy. From the Portuguese the Marathas captured the port-town of Bassein with its dockyard and foundries, but these were neglected. Two great naval feats of the Marathas are recorded, first the defeat of the Sidi and the English by Shivaji's Admiral, Mainaik, when he captured Khanderi in 1679 and second the supremacy of Kanoji Angria and his son, Sekhoji over the Portuguese and the English in the Arabian Sea for about three decades, 1703-1733. The weakness of the Maratha navy arose from the fact that it was recruited largely from the coastal Konkan fishermen and Moslem and Portuguese mercenaries, for whom the Maratha hill-folk had little sympathy. One land-power in the grips of life and death struggle with another land-power naturally gave the highest posts to the feudal leaders and captains of the land army who were temperamentally incapable of envisaging the importance of naval power or any naval threat to their independence. Further the Maratha navy was more or less semi-independent and never formed a limb of the Maratha fighting forces. The jealousies between the Peshwa and the naval commander ultimately led to the former's alliance with the English against the recalcitrant Angrias, that ultimately led to the crippling of the Maratha Navy, which alone could provide the bastion of defence on the long western coast-line against the sea-faring Europeans. Even for artillery and gunpowder the Marathas had to depend upon the European merchants. G. S. Sardesai points out that even such a great statesman as Nana Fadnavis used maps that were inaccurate and fantastic.

### **The Progressive Civil Administration of the Marathas**

Within the Maratha kingdom in the Deccan, divided into twelve Subahs and to a lesser extent in the territories extending from Dwarka to Jagannath which was in occupation of the principal chiefs, the administration was just, efficient and progressive. The revenue system was not at all oppressive. The land assessment was liberal, the government of the Peshwas, after deduction for seeds and other necessary charges, leaving half or one-third of the produce to the



cultivators. In case of cash payments the rent rates varied according to the quality of the soil and were moderate. In times of famines and droughts liberal rent remissions were sanctioned. Grant Duff has observed that the Maratha country was more thriving than any other part of India in proportion to its fertility. Village self-government was not interfered with, the Patil and Kulkarni being held responsible for collection of rent and receiving their dues independently of the government. The government also constructed dams, roads, landing ghats on river banks and tanks. The administration of justice was progressive. Capital punishment or mutilation was as a rule avoided, and the usual punishment for robbery was fine or imprisonment in the fort. Cow slaughter and drunkenness especially among the Brāhman, Prabhus and Government Officers were punished severely. Adultery in the case of both men and women was punished by penal servitude in the forts or state kothis. Certain marriage reforms were also introduced such as the remarriage of widows, intercaste marriage and the abolition of dowry and marriage between second cousins. In caste matters the Peshwas regarded themselves as custodians of the ancient faith and concentrated all social and religious authority in their own hands through both direct intervention and use of the weapon of social ostracism. The Brāhman became, however, a privileged caste and exempted from capital punishment, except for treason and were let off with lighter punishments as compared with other castes in case of all offences, such punishments being the feeding of Brāhman, parikramā around temple, pilgrimage to Banares and other penances. In respect of the lower castes the Peshwas followed a progressive social policy and abolished many caste disabilities. On the whole the rule of the Peshwas should be considered more efficient and progressive than that of many of the contemporary Hindu and Moslem rulers of India. In respect of the readmission of converts to Islam, the encouragement of inter-caste marriage, the mitigation of social distance as between different castes, the punishment of sale of girls, widow remarriage and the enforcement of temperance, the Peshwas were indeed in some respects in advance of public opinion in the country.

From the Peshwa's Diaries (1708-1817) M. G. Ranade found that the wages were from Rs. 3 to Rs. 7 for menials and sepoys and for higher artisans very much what were at the beginning of this century outside the great towns, from 6 to 10 annas per day. The arkoon's wages were generally Rs. 7 to Rs. 10 per month. The

price of the staple grains, jwari and bajri, were about 3 to 4 times as cheap as they were at the beginning of this century. No great famine was recorded during the eighteenth century. Due to the large wealth acquired by foreign conquest and plunder, there was no pressure felt of the land tax and other cesses except in the border provinces of the Maratha empire devastated by wars. The Peshwas were also ardent supporters of learning and culture. To their court flocked distinguished scholars from all parts of India. Baji Rao II distributed about Rs. 4 lakhs for grants to Vaidiks, Shāstris, Purāṇiks and Haridāsas, and also patronised composers of popular Powadas and Lawanis. The Peshwas claimed and exercised ecclesiastical jurisdiction and decided disputes about marriage, caste and other social and religious matters. Like the illustrious Shivāji the Peshwas showed tolerance towards Islam and continued grants in favour of Muslim mosques and dargahs for religious services. The long and bitter fight with the Mughul Emperor did not interfere with popular veneration for Mohammedan pirs.

### The Historic Intrigue between the English and the Seth at Plassey

1757, *i.e.* exactly half a century after the death of Aurangzeb, witnessed the Marathas at the height of their power. In that year they attacked Delhi, replaced Najibuddaulah who was appointed by Ahmad Shah Abdali as his agent and dictator over the Emperor by their own man and capped their achievement by the conquest of the Punjab (1758), making a fresh war with Abdali inevitable. The Peshwa in 1759 was the *de facto* Hindu-Pād-Pādshah. 1757 also saw at Plassey the upshot of Clive's successful commercial deal with the disgruntled treacherous, up-country merchant, Jagat Seth of Murshidabad, who commanded the financial resources of the Province and sought the intervention of the East India Company to replace Nawab Sirajuddowlah by his puppet, Mir Jafar. The battle of Plassey was not a battle for the empire, but a skirmish under the mango grove. Ghulam Hussain, the contemporary annalist, mentions that at Plassey the most considerable portion of the army of Sirajuddowlah was compelled to stand stiff by his treacherous general, Mir Jafar. The latter even compelled the Nawab's advance party under Mir Madan and Mohanlal to retreat as it was making the situation too critical for Clive. Such withdrawal of the hordes of cavalry of Mir Jafar, Durlabh Ram and Yar Lutif without having fired a single



shot in the battle at a moment most opportune for the Nawab's side, resulted in the general desertion of the troops. The English won with a loss of only 7 Europeans and 16 sepoys killed and 13 Europeans and 36 sepoys wounded, the loss on the Nawab's side being about 500. To extol discipline and strategy of Clive's soldiers or the superiority of his musketeers to the Nawab's bahalias on this occasion of historic treachery is entirely out of place. For the desertion of Mir Jafar and Rai Durlabh completely overshadowed the valour of Mohanlal and Mir Madan and M. Sinfray. Jean Law observes: "Fear pervaded the whole army before the action commenced. Everyone was persuaded that Sirajuddowlah was betrayed, and no one knew whom to trust. Except the vanguard under Mir Madan and Mohanlal and its twelve guns the rest of the Nawab's artillery (under the three traitors) did not fire a single shot in the day." The victory was celebrated by Clive at the house of Jagat Seth where Omichand, another banker who was the intermediary in the conspiracy, and who had threatened to divulge the plot to the Nawab, was "undeceived" by Clive showing him a forged document. There is a core of dishonesty in Clive's conduct of the Company's affairs against which the English Admiral Watson rebelled. Sometime before this, as if in true anticipation, Clive wrote to Orme: "Fighting, Tricks, Chickanery, Intrigues, Politics and the Lord knows what; in short, there will be a fine Field for you to display your Genius in." Orme appreciated the trickery because of its success. Plassey was a business deal rather than a military victory. "The victory," in Holwell's words, "was solely owing to the treason and treachery of Ray Durlov and Mir Jafar." Thanks to the intrigues of Watts the allies whom Sirajuddowlah had counted upon also deserted him. The immediate sequel of Plassey was not political either, it merely led to the extension in 1765 by the East India Company of their legitimate status and rights of Zamindars within the Mughul Empire, from Calcutta, 24 Pargannas and other areas previously held by them, to the whole of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Yet it was true that a Bengal Zamindar under the Mughul revenue system fashioned an empire. The East India Company, taking charge of the revenue collection of Bengal, ceased to bring English capital but used the revenue for both commercial and military adventures—the maintenance of factories as well as of forts, troops and garrisons so as to make the Nawab of Bengal a mere puppet in their hands. For the first time in Indian history the Indian millionaires by their intrigues engineered a political revolu-

tion whose far-reaching effects their little minds could not grasp. The unholy collusion between Indian trading interests and the East India Company gave the English the mastery of Bengal that paved the way for the ultimate conquest of the whole of India.

### The English Trade Monopoly in Bengal

English trade, and later on English monopoly in all kinds of agricultural produce, cloth, salt and other commodities that drained the wealth of Bengal to England and bled it white for about half a century, could only be secured through the assistance of the Indian banking and trading community. No sooner than Clive left Bengal 10 years after Plassey as the richest person in England, "there was a general rush of the Company's servants, of Europeans of all classes, towards the interior trade of the three provinces *viz.*, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa," observes his biographer, Sir John Malcolm. Bolts, speaking of Bengal, observes: "The dominions of Asia, like the distant Roman provinces during the decline of that Empire, had been abandoned, as lawful prey to every species of speculators; in so much that many servants of company, after exhibiting such scenes of barbarity as can scarcely be paralleled in the history of any country, returned to England loaded with wealth; where entrenching themselves in borough or East India stock influence, they set justice at defiance either in the cause of their country or oppressed innocence."

After the abolition of private monopoly or trade of the servants of the East India Company, it was the vast financial resources of Bengal that supplied the sinews of war for the Mysore and Maratha campaigns. This was the economic side. On the political side, a strong sea-power entrenching itself in strategic settlements on the coast of Bengal within effective protection of naval guns could easily transform a factory into a fort and expand the fort into a whole territory when and where the land power was weak. The position of Fort William, Calcutta, was of considerable strategic advantage. On the eastern bank of the Hooghly, Calcutta could be defended successfully against the Marathas, while since it was further down the estuary than Chandernagore and Chinsura, and dominated the Bay, the English could capture Chandernagore in 1757 from the French and defeat the Dutch at Bedara in 1759 with incredible ease and quickness. Thus factories, forts and inland territories followed one another rapidly. Four to five hundred new factories were established by



the English in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa by 1762, the number too suddenly multiplying, as Mir Kasim complained after the English victory at Plassey.

### The Causes of the Debacle at Panipat

The battle of Plassey both in the manner in which it was won by the English and its direct and indirect political consequences brings to the fore new factors of maritime supremacy, industry and commerce that governed political happenings in India in the later decades. On land, the Marathas, the only well-organised power that could have successfully fought the English, encountered a serious disaster at the third battle of Panipat (1761), only four years after the battle of Plassey. Much has been made of the decisive character of the third battle of Panipat in Indian history, but properly speaking the battle was lost during the months of preparatory skirmishes preceding the final crescendo of bloodshed. The tragic death at Barari ghat of Dattaji Sindhia, a military genius of rare calibre, left the Maratha army without a sagacious leader, the daring hero of many a fight in the plains of Hindustan and a consummate master of the Mahratta technique of warfare with light equipment and Parthian tactics. The grand army which Sadāsiva Bhau took to the north to fight Ahmad Shah Abdali was chronically short of finances, that left the bulk of the forces unpaid and under-nourished, while neither the Rajas of Rajputana and Bundelkhand, nor Suraj Mal, the leader of the Jats, nor again Shuja-ud-daulah of Oudh could be won over. Never was a commander abandoned to such financial anxiety and distress with the possible exception of George Washington. The army requiring about Rs. 72 lakhs on a minimum estimate was left to its fate in a dry inhospitable tract with a miserly sum of only Rs. 22 lakhs. The amount received from the Peshwa at the beginning of the expedition was soon exhausted. The Maratha collectors from the jagirs in the Doab could not provide any money because of the civil commotion while the Maratha vassal chiefs evaded payment of tribute. Deserted by every ally, co-religionist or otherwise, to aid him, and not a single banker to provide him credit, Bhau who was entirely unfamiliar with the conditions in Northern India, had to undergo single-handed the mortifying experience of hunger, demoralisation and dishonour due to the Peshwa's lamentable and unprecedented miscalculation. The capture of Delhi was more a handicap than a gain increasing Bhau's liabilities and leading to the starvation of soldiers,

horses and oxen, especially because of Abdali's occupation of the fertile eastern Doab. Bhau therefore took resort to strip what remained of the silver-ceiling of the Diwani-i-khas for coining it into the sorely needed amount of Rs. 9 lakhs. The capture of Kunjpura brought to Bhau the provisions and money belonging to Abdali, which stood him in good stead for some time.

At last he proceeded to Panipat, the ancient cock-pit of Hindustan. This was a strategic error of judgment that could never have been committed by Dattāji Sindhia or Raghunath Rao Dada, experienced in North Indian campaigns or by Malhar Rao Holkar, the aged warrior whose counsels Bhau treated with scorn. Panipat is advantageous as a battlefield for an invader from the Khyber gateway with reinforcements coming from the north-west; it was therefore especially dangerous for the Maratha army, because its eastern flank was exposed to their sworn enemies—the Rohillas in the Upper Doab, and the wily, unreliable Shuja-ud-daulah further east. As a matter of fact Bhau, whose head became swollen after the capture of Delhi and destruction of the enemy garrison at Kunjpura, was entrapped at Panipat as Abdali stealthily crossed the Jamuna at Baghat from the east with his large army and came to Panipat, cutting off the communications of the Marathas with Delhi and the South. After waiting at Panipat from 29th October 1760 to 13th January 1761, goaded by the sheer starvation of all his ranks and having failed in a last attempt to win peace by payment of a huge ransom to Abdali, Bhau in utter desperation decided on a battle. It must not be overlooked that the Maratha army was out-numbered at Panipat. Its aggregate strength indeed fell short of even half of Abdali's forces. Abdali had 60,000 regular troops and 80,000 more irregulars with horses and artillery hardly inferior to the regulars. On the other hand, Bhau had 40,000 starving and demoralised troops, 15,000 irregular Pindharis, that were useless for any large-scale action. The country-bred cavalry on the Maratha side was no match for the finest and best equipped stallions of the whole of Asia, recruited from Khorasan and Central Asia. Such was the famine that stalked the Maratha camp that Maratha men and officers crowded in front of Bhau's tent, and bitterly exclaimed: "It is now two days that no man among us has got a grain to eat. Let us make a valiant struggle against the enemy, and then what fate has ordained will happen." The flower of the Maratha nation fought and died in the best tradition of Indian chivalry, singing their favourite song:



Why, soldiers ! Why  
Should we be melancholy boys ?  
Why, soldiers ! Why,  
We whose business 'tis to die ?

The fight of "the black mango tree" led to the loss of an entire generation of Maratha leaders and heads of houses: the Maratha dead were estimated at 75,000 while 22,000 more paid ransom for their lives. It may be presumed without any elaborate sociological analysis that Hindustan and Deccan developed somewhat dissimilar political institutions, traditions and loyalties that largely explain why the princes of Rajputana and Suraj Mal, the Jat Rajah, sat on the fence and the Nawab of Oudh equipped with the most efficient army and artillery in Hindustan went over to the side of Abdali. Moreover, every Northern chief was confident that Abdali could not afford to stay in Hindustan, while the Maratha ambition to seize Allahabad, Banaras and Bihar and their daring military expedition in Delhi in 1757 accentuated the apprehension of full-scale Maratha empire-building, as heirs and successors to the Timurids.

### The Recovery of the Maratha Power

The true significance of the battle of Panipat could be understood far better in relation to the contemporary political condition of Northern India than to the later course of the tide of Indian history. The Maratha victory in a region of political vacuum could hardly have laid the foundation of an Indian empire. Five years of military movements of Raghunath Rao, Malhar Holkar and Dattāji Sindhia before Panipat were of little avail from the point of view of establishing an empire, beyond the forced exaction of tribute from local chiefs and Jagirdars. The weakness of Maratha finance, the absence of a sagacious and bold policy of setting up a thorough and lasting civil administration and the timidity which prevented the Maratha statesmen from conceiving an absolute unbridled Maratha sovereignty as lawful successor to the Mughul—these were really the underlying causes of the military debacle as well as of the failure of the Marathas to found an empire in Hindustan even after their military and political recuperation within a dozen years after the grim tragedy. There was no doubt recovery of the Maratha power during the next three decades, but this interval also enabled the English to strengthen their position considerably. By 1772 the Marathas could regain

enough of their military strength and prestige to be able to restore the exiled Mughul Emperor to the throne at Delhi. By that time, however, the English entrenched themselves in Bihar and Bengal so that the Marathas would not even dare to claim chauth from these provinces. Both Oudh and Allahabad came under the virtual protection of the British, nor could the Rohillas be effectively used as allies against the Nawab of Oudh by the Marathas. Neither the Jat territory nor Rajputana, nor Bundelkhand could then offer the restored Maratha power the position of vantage for entering on large-scale imperial enterprises and for dealing decisive and effective strokes at the silent, but ambitious and speedily unfolding policy of British empire building. When the Marathas were in a position to challenge successfully the supremacy of the English in India, they had to dissipate their resources for the security of the north-western land frontiers against the attacks of Ahmad Shah Abdali. This was the result of the loss of Qandahar, the strategic outpost of the Mughul Empire, during the time of Jahangir, and the subsequent loss of Afghanistan and the Punjab in the reigns of the later Mughul Emperors making the invasions of Nadir Shah and Ahmad Shah Abdali easy, repetitive and devastating.

### **The Causes of the Success of British Imperialism \***

The battlefield of Panipat is accordingly symbolic of the strategic vulnerability of the land frontiers on the north-west and the historic pressure of the peoples of the steppes from this direction. On the eve of the development of sea power on a global scale in the world in the middle of the eighteenth century, the political fortunes of India sustained the greatest reverses in the fall of the Angrias (1756), the battle of Panipat and the battle of Plassey. The immediate sequel of Panipat showed this. 14th January 1761 saw the disaster at Panipat. 15th saw the signal defeat of the Mughul Emperor, Shah Alam by the British in Bihar. 16th saw the British defeat of the French and capture of Pondicherry. The rapid rise of Hyder Ali in the seventies also followed Panipat. In the closing years of the 18th century a series of deaths—of Mahadji Scindia, Fadke, Ahalyabai, Madhava Rao, Tukaji Holkar, Patwardhan and Nana Fadnavis (in March 1800) who is considered as the greatest Indian statesman of the 18th century—crippled the Maratha nation, just at the juncture when the biggest challenge of the British world had to be faced. Here we have the element of accident playing its role in the fateful



chessboard of history. The first four Peshwas were some of the greatest rulers of India. According to Temple, only the Mughul dynasty could furnish four sovereigns equal to them. But when the Marathas could command enough armies and resources to wage a successful war against the British, power shifted to two impetuous and utterly unworthy young men—pigmies compared with the giants who presided over the counsels of the Marathas in the preceding generations. These were Peshwa Baji Rao II in the Deccan and Daulat Rao Scindhia in the north who proved treacherous to the Maratha and Indian cause. The superior military strategy and use of long-range artillery by the British from the battlefields of Arras to Assaye, the succession of exceedingly able generals and administrators, such as Lord Wellesley and his two distinguished brothers, Arthur and Henry, Elphinstone and Lake, the astute British diplomacy that took the fullest advantage of the princely feuds, family squabbles and the balance of power existing among the various Indian states were no doubt the chief causes of British success in the Battle for India. The practical withdrawal after Panipat owing to dissensions at home of Ahmad Shah Abdali, who was content with the safe possession of the Punjab, had no dependable potentate in Delhi and soon concluded a treaty of peace and goodwill with the Peshwa, also removed the long-standing threat to India from the Abdalis. Moreover, the rise of the Sikhs who seized all the territory of the Abdalis postponed any menace from the northwest for about three decades. Ahmad Shah Abdali's last visit to India was in 1767, when he was completely disillusioned about the establishment of a really powerful Indian empire with the assistance of his lieutenant Najib Khan at Delhi. He entrusted with a Phulkean Sikh chieftain the Sarhind-Patiala territory and reconciled himself only to the possession of Peshawar. Many Muslim adventurers and princes sorely disappointed him. Such was the utter decadence that set in among the famous Muslim houses of India that periodic accession of strength from beyond the Indus through successive Afghan adventures, could not mitigate the melancholy political fortunes of the Indian Muslims. Nor did the famous Rajput clans of Mewar, Jaipur and Bikaner who lived in such puissant state in the Mughul epoch retain their true characteristic valour and spirit. The decay and disintegration of the Mughul Empire led to an enormous depletion of revenues, which made it impossible for most princes and Subedars in Hindustan to maintain forces anywhere approaching the strength and efficiency necessary to combat a European

power. Amidst the general decadence in the train of the rapid decay of the Mughul Empire, rose the agriculturist race of the Jats under Suraj Mal, who were equally at home with the plough and sword and had none of the social inhibitions and aristocratic encrustations of the Rajputs. By dint of sheer courage and simplicity derived from the common stock of the land, they were able to establish a kingdom which was easily the most formidable and affluent in Hindustan, and which thrived under the very nose of the imperialist powers, Mughul, the Maratha and the British. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the Jat Raja could not afford such an elaborate technical paraphernalia as the British armed forces possessed.

The true cause of the success of the new imperialism of the British was the Western superiority in science, technique and organization, which was newly acquired in the wake of the Technological and Industrial Revolution in England. This manifested itself especially in the field of naval supremacy. The visit in 1775 of Nelson, the future hero of Trafalgar, to the west coast of India in order to explore its naval possibilities during the first Anglo-Maratha war, bears testimony to the appreciation of the significance of maritime power in the expansion of British dominion in India, especially after the disastrous loss of Great Britain's colonial empire in the New World. Again, the Second Anglo-Maratha War (1803-05) was fought under the shadow of the threat to India of Napoleon Bonaparte whose ambitions after his victories at the Pyramids and Aboukir Bay in Egypt to join up with the Marathas and "the French state erected by M. Perron on the banks of the Jumna" were foiled by Admiral Nelson's destruction of his fleet at the battle of Nile. The Battle of India was decided in the workshops, arsenals and ship-building yards of Britain. Nor was this unplanned. Clive's pleading for a strong British power in India before the Earl of Chatham as the battle of Panipat was being fought in Northern India far away from Bengal and the Carnatic, and the role, direct or indirect, played by Britain's empire-builders, Pitt the younger, Admiral Nelson and Duke of Wellington in the scramble for dominion abundantly show that there was neither accident nor absent-mindedness in Britain's acquisition of her Eastern Empire, beginning from the time of Clive's rash adventure at Plassey.



PART VIII  
THE ECONOMIC DISRUPTION

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE CLASS STRUCTURE IN MUGHUL TIMES

Caste Changes from the 6th to the 10th Centuries

India's traditional social hierarchy of varnas was completely changed from the 6th to the 10th centuries by the continuous assimilation of various foreign immigrant peoples into the Hindu social structure as degraded Kshatriyās, the destruction of the older Kshatriyās in numerous wars and the rise of the Vaisiyās and the Sudrās as the commonalty, the latter comprising twice as much as the Brāhmaṇs in the population of cities, as the Vāyu Purana mentions. In the Gupta and post-Gupta period the Vaisiyās as well as the Sudrās acquired economic power and rose to be high officials and ministers and even rulers of kingdoms. In north Bengal Divvaka and his nephew Bhima (11th century) were Sudras (Kaivarta) who became kings after a popular revolt. From the Gupta period the Kayasthas or the Karanas also came into great prominence. At the beginning all professional writers and officials were designated as Kayasthas as indicated by the Gupta inscriptions and later on by the Rājatarangini. The position of the Brāhmaṇs as scholars, priests and high officials remained intact through the centuries. But below the Brāhmaṇs, the Kayasthas and the Vaisyas, regarding themselves as the twice-born (Dvijās), as the result of the egalitarian movements of Buddhism in the earlier centuries and Bhakti cults from the 12th century, an upward movement characterised by the formation and differentiation of various new functional castes among the Sudrās came to be the chief feature of the social history in the medieval period. In the past the Sudrās could rise as kings and ministers, as captains and officers in the army and as traders. But these avenues of upward social movement became gradually restricted. The rise and fall of functional castes were within the fold of the Sudrā community that came to be excluded from the privileges of the Upanayana and Vedic studies and rituals. Below the Sudrās were the antyaja

groups living outside the habitations and usually following the occupations of hunting, fishery and scavenging. The *Mitāksharā* of *Vijnanesvarā* (written about 1100 A.D.) distinguishes between two groups of the lowest castes. The first group comprised of washerman (*rājaka*), leather-worker (*charmakāra*), dancer (*natā*), bamboo-worker (*buruda*) and fisherman (*Kaivarta*), hunter (*meda*) and *bhilla* (tribal group of hunters). Below them is the group of *antya vasayins*, viz. *Chandāla*, *Svapacha*, *Kistri*, *Sūta*, *Vaidehika*, *Māgadha* and *Āyogava*. The *Nalanda* plate of *Devaṣāla* mentions the *Meda*, *Andhraka* and *Chandāla* as the meanest castes. But *Medhātithi* (900 A.D.), commentator of *Manu*, as well as *Kulluka* definitely mention that it is only the *Chandāla* who is untouchable (*asprīya*), and other castes are not. Kane quotes *Smṛityārthasāra* (1150 A.D.—1200 A.D.) which speaks of the untouchables entering temples. *Madhavācharya* (1300-1380 A.D.), author of *Parasar Madhaviya*, also mentions that there is no impurity when the *Chandālas* take water from a large tank (used by higher castes) but as regards small reservoirs the same rules apply to them that apply to the purification of wells touched by the untouchables. Gradually the notions of ritual purity and impurity came to be stressed, and regulations in respect of touch, shadow and distance of the *Chandālas* or *patitas* (those outcast for sin) came to mar the pages of *Smṛiti* digests in the late mediaeval period. Thus many of the untouchable castes were no better than helots or slaves. Finally, there were the slaves that comprised a part of the social organisation from ancient times. They were recruited from debtors unable to repay their debts, farmers who sold themselves during famines and other calamities and prisoners of war. Even in the spacious days of the Imperial Guptas, the slaves constituted an appreciable proportion of the Indian population, though slavery was neither hereditary nor life-long.

The *Brāhmaṇisation* of the *Yavanās*, *Sakas*, *Abhiras* and other foreign stocks began in the early centuries of the Christian era, but was accelerated in the Gupta period. This started the first phase of transformation of caste associated with the entry of foreign tribes as well as aboriginal groups and *ajivas* into the Hindu social structure as *Kshatriyās* and *Sudrās*, facilitated by the *Dharmasāstra* fiction of *varna-sankara*. The second phase of social transformation took place with the invasion and settlement of more foreign groups who came after the fall of the Gupta Empire and could establish independent



kingdoms and principalities for themselves. These now called themselves Rajputs, of whom the most important immigrants were the Huns and Pratiharas. The latter established an empire with its capital at Kanauj extending to Afghanistan which in its heyday defended India against Muslim invasions from Sind, Multan or Kabul. The formation of the thirtysix royal Rajput clans out of the various semi-Hinduised foreign and aboriginal stocks that now replaced the ancient Kshatriyas and covered every nook and corner of north India is one of the revolutionary phases of social transformation in India, subjected to the historic pressure from the nomads of Central and Western Asia. The entire social history of north India from the 10th to the 16th centuries is dominated by the immigration of adventurous Rajput tribes, from the Ganges-Jamuna Doab to the terai and forest regions of the Ganges basin and beyond to the Central Provinces and Orissa. Some of these even crossed the sea and established colonies in Indonesia. An identical tradition is preserved in Western India and in Bengal and Orissa by the importation of a few pure Brāhmanas from Kanauj acquainted with the Vedic rituals for the renovation of society, afflicted by caste admixture (*Varna Sankara*) and social impurity (*anāchāra*) under the aegis of Rajput rulers. Thus did the new ruling caste seek to perpetuate the iron frame of caste as the champion of neo-Brāhmanism.

### The Impact of Islam on Caste

Islam then came onto the scene with its new ideal of social equality, on the one hand, strengthened by mass conversion and the accentuation of high social status and rank due to wealth and political privilege, on the other. Caste rules that were enforced before now became much more rigid due to the dangers from conversion and from social intercourse with the Muslim ruling country that were real in the Turko-Afghan period. Ibn Batuta mentioned that the Hindus had very strict caste regulations, while al-Beruni expressed surprise at the lengths to which they carried their doctrine of impurity against the outcastes and also against anything and anybody that was foreign (*mlechhas*). The *Chandālas* were not only untouchable but also unapproachable, and their entry into the city or market place had to be announced by their striking a piece of wood.

The Turko-Afghan conquest led to the tightening of all caste regulations, mass conversion of Hindus into Islam and increase of

the slave population. Prisoners of war, robbers, rebels and cultivators who could not pay the land tax or debts were enslaved. Akbar endeavoured to put a check on slavery, at least on the trading of slaves, by the Mughul army after subjugation and conquest. Abu-I-Fazal observes: "It had been the custom of the royal troops, in their victorious campaigns in India, to sell forcibly and keep in slavery the wives, children and dependants of the natives. But His Majesty, actuated by his prudent and kindly feelings, now issued an order that no soldier of the Royal Army should act in this manner." That enslavement was going on on a large scale even during the Mughul empire is evidenced by the boast of one of the Provincial Governors in North India that he had beheaded 200,000 rebels and made prisoners of half a million more, all of whom he had sold as slaves, adding that all of them had become Muslims. Linschoten (1583-1589) also mentions that there was a constant war between kings and rulers of areas separated by 10 or 20 miles, and prisoners of war were kept as slaves or sold as beasts.

### **Increase of the Slave Population**

War, default in payment of revenue, indebtedness and conversion, all contributed for centuries under the Mughuls towards replenishing the slaves (golams) in society. India became an important slave market, importing and exporting slaves. One of the favoured items of import in overseas trade in the 16th and 17th centuries was slaves from Africa, especially Abyssinia and Mozambique and from Persia. Slaves and eunuchs were included among the items of export from Bengal, as mentioned by Pyrard de Laval (1608-11). In Bengal the major slave markets were Pipli, Balasore, Talmuk, Hooghly and Chittagong. All these became important in the Portuguese slave trade in Asia in the sixteenth century and maintained this importance in the eighteenth. The Portuguese, the Maghs as well as the Arakans were lawless pirates who harried large parts of the Bengal delta. Entering far in the interior along the channels and tributaries of the rivers in their galleys they plundered towns and villages and carried off men, women, boys and girls as slaves. The Sundarbans, the islands of the Meghna estuary, and the deltaic districts of Bengal were all laid waste. Men, women, children and even babies at the breast were carried off, and sold at the slave market at Hooghly.

### **The Traffic in Slaves**

This nefarious trade in which the Portuguese, Maghs and Araka-



Bhils and Minas were made slaves or sent to Kabul "to barter for horses and dogs".

While slavery and agricultural servitude were responsible for the depressed condition of a section of the population, the rigid caste barriers, enjoined by custom and tradition, kept the majority in the lowest rungs of the economic ladder whence no rise was possible for individuals and groups. Francisco Pelsaert (1626 A.D.), in his well-known memoir written in Jahangir's time, refers to the inflexibility of caste and occupation barriers as one of the causes of poverty and low standard of living of people. He observes: "The life of the people can be described only as the home of stark want and the dwelling place of bitter woe. The people endure patiently, seeing that there is no prospect of anything better, and scarcely anyone will make an effort, for a ladder by which to climb higher is hard to find, a workman's children can follow no occupation other than their father's, nor can they marry into any other caste."

### The Absence of a Middle Class

In Mughul India the lowest rung of the economic ladder was represented by the agrestic serfs; above them were the common peasantry and handicraftsmen who also lived in poverty. Pelsaert shrewdly observes that there were in Mughul society "three classes of people who are indeed nominally free, but whose status differs very little from voluntary slavery—workmen (craftsmen), peons or servants and shopkeepers. Whatever he may deal in—spices, drugs, fruit, cloth or anything else—the shopkeeper is distinctly better off than the workman, and some of them are even well-to-do." Next was the middle class composed of the writer caste, traders and merchants who were thrifty and rich, while at the top was a small but extremely luxurious aristocracy, wearing the most expensive apparel, eating the daintiest food and enjoying the pleasures of life. That the middle class was not powerful is attested by Bernier's pithy remark: "In Delhi there is no middle state. A man must either be of the highest rank or live miserably." The shopkeepers, the traders, the merchants, the bankers as well as the physicians and the writer caste constituted the middle class in Mughul India. Bernier's remark has to be taken with caution, for the merchants in such great cities as Agra, Delhi, Lahore, Multan, Surat, Ahmedabad and Dacca acquired large fortunes. He mentions that in Agra the Benyas or Gentile merchants had built "lofty stone houses with gardens and courts" looking like "castles buried in

forests". "The richest merchants of the Indies are of the Banias", also observes Thevenot, and "such I have met with in all places where I have been in that country." The Kāyasthas also rose into prominence in Mughul administration throughout the country, and Manucci records that they were "great scribes and arithmeticians, and through these arts they ruled all the courts". Physicians also earned large fortunes by their practice. Linschoten (1583-89) found the Indian physicians at Goa prosperous with lucrative practice both among the Portuguese and the native population and earning high honor and esteem. Astrologers were also in large demand, especially among the nobility and acquired large wealth.

### The Proliferation of Castes

By the 17th century there was a great proliferation of castes and the caste system developed most of the features existing today. This is evident from the descriptions of European travellers, especially Bernier, Tavernier, Thevenot and Careri. Tavernier speaks of the disunity and diversity of opinions and customs due to caste that were responsible for foreign subjection. "Each caste is what a tribe was among the Jews." Tavernier mentions 72 and Thevenot and Careri 84 castes. Thevenot's account of the caste system refers to Western and Northern India. Among the castes mentioned by him are the Khatri (identified by Bernier with the Rajputs) who are merchants and weavers in the Punjab and Sind, the Kurmys, who are agriculturists and also bear arms, the Banias, the Banjaras, the Colis or cotton-dressers, and the goldsmiths, carpenters, blacksmiths, masons, dancers, tailors, saddlers and palanquin-bearers. The untouchable castes are the Pariahs, Dhers or Dheds, Chamars or curriers and sweepers (called Halalkhors by most European travellers, because they consider every food lawful). Careri's survey of castes is confined largely to Western India, and comprises the Prabhus, Sūtras, Kansars, Gaulis, Malis, Sonars, Valars, Kalambis, Dublas, Bhathelas, Bhandāris, Dhobis, Kolis, Solankis, Charanas, Bhansalis, Bhātiās, Babrias, Kathis and Chambhārs (Careri's list has been certified as above by S. N. Sen on the basis of Ethnoven's survey of Bombay tribes and castes). The untouchables in Careri's description include the Chambhārs and the Pulayans (of Malabar and Cape Comorin). Between the 14th century when al-Biruni described the Indian caste system and the 17th century, the characteristic changes were represented by two features in the social gradation. Castes multiplied considerably in the intervening period. The reason



was thus adduced by Thevenot: "Anciently there were no more tribes but these four (Brāhmaṇs, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sūdras); but in succession of time, all those who applied themselves to the same profession, composed a tribe or caste, and that's the reason they are so numerous." Similarly, Herbert links the proliferation of castes with craft and occupation. It is the functional or occupational differentiation which underlies the multiplication of castes of which formidable lists have been given by both Thevenot and Careri from different regions of India. Tavernier also mentions that if a rich man has "fifty" servants, each undertakes his special function or service, for which no other man is available. "The servant remains as though he is immovable." It is only the slaves who may do whatever the master bids them to do. Many of the new occupational castes had social dealings with the upper castes, and in cases where they bore arms, they could easily win social recognition.

The European travellers were shrewd enough to find that some of the Sūdras, such as the Kūrmīs, owed their respectable status to the fact that they carried arms, "since that is an honourable trade and of a superior caste." Thus many castes were comprehended within the upper category of the Antyaja group as in the stratification of the Dharmasāstras. To the lower Antyaja or Antyabasin category belonged the exterior untouchable castes, that were mostly identical with the Chandāla-Nishāda group as described by Bāna, Fa-Hien and al-Biruni. The European travellers and factors in the 17th century, where they have not specifically mentioned the Chamārs, Dheds, Dublas, Doms, Haddis, Pulayans and other exterior castes, used for them the generic term of Halalkhors, including sweepers, scavengers, leather-dressers and other despised groups. Tavernier mentions that the caste of the Halalkhor is only occupied in removing the refuse from houses, gets the remains of what the others eat, of whatever caste they may be, and does not make any scruple about eating indifferently of all things. "It is also the Halalkhors in India who alone feed pigs and use them for food." On the whole, we find at the bottom of the social hierarchy the same untouchable aboriginal and menial groups as one comes across in the Gupta and post-Gupta periods.

### Caste Stratification in Bengal in the 16th Century

In a sketch of rural society in Bengal, bequeathed to us by the Bengali poet, Muṅkandarām, who composed his epic probably

between 1578-1589 in Burdwan, we have an interesting description of the social hierarchy in that province before it was materially affected by Muslim rule. The following classes were mentioned :—

- (1) The higher class Brāhmaṇs who were learned and who taught in their tols.
- (2) The lower class Brāhmaṇs who served as priests in temples and depended on contributions given by the villagers, milk from the cowherd, oil from the oil-presser, sweet-meat from confectioner and the rice-cowries and balls of pulse (dālbāri) from the general population.
- (3) The village astrologers or minstrels who also subsisted on offerings obtained from house to house.
- (4) The professional class represented chiefly by physicians and the writer caste (Kāyasthas). The Kāyasthas were proud of their learning, boasted that they were the ornaments of the palace and claimed that they should have the best lands and houses rent-free. Physicians also thrived, going about decked in fine clothes with palm-leaf books under their arms.
- (5) The Vaisyas who were traders, “a happy set of men, always buying and selling.” Some tilled land, tended cows and were carriers. Some were money-changers who made money by money-lending and pawn-broking. Some of them went to distant lands by river and by sea, their boats going out with local produce to the island of Ceylon and returned with cargoes and luxury articles, such as sandal-wood, conch shells, pashtu shawls, and Tibetan fly-whisks. Foreign trade with Burma, Ceylon, the Malay Peninsula, Indonesia and Gujarat accounted for the fabulous wealth they earned (seven vessels—gharas—of gold in the courtyard).
- (6) The agriculturist caste represented by the Hakil Gopes and the Baruis. The latter cultivated betel.
- (7) The artisan castes represented by goldsmiths, blacksmiths, braziers, potters, carpenters, dyers, oilmen, confectioners, spice-dealers, conch-shell bangle-makers, cotton weavers and silk-weavers. The last of these were encouraged by the assignment of rent-free lands.



- (8) The lowest castes including the Doms, hunters, fishermen date-palm-tappers and watchmen.
- (9) The depressed castes who lived outside the village, such as the Kols, Korenas and Mahrattas. The occupation of the last is to tap for the cure of diseased spleens, and to operate for cataract.

### The Great Fishes Eat up the Little Fishes

Such is class structure in mediaeval Bengal delineated by an observant and sympathetic Bengali poet, who vividly depicts the misery to which the rural population could be reduced by local representatives of the Mughul government uniting power with irresponsibility. The village lands were surveyed as a preliminary to the assessment of land revenue, in order to ascertain the proportion of the produce or its cash value which the State could claim. The survey was vitiated by false measurements, 15 Kathas of land being measured as a Kura of 20 Kathas; wasteland was entered as arable and assessed accordingly; the demand was put at such a high figure that it was beyond the capacity of the villagers to pay it. To raise money they sold their stocks of rice and cattle, but they could get only a fraction of their value, and at length there was no one left to buy. They then turned to the money-lenders, who were as cunning and extortionate as their modern representatives, charging exorbitant rates of interest and paying in hard cash only seven-eighths of the agreed sum, the balance being deducted as interest in advance. The money-lenders were 'death' to the people. Guards were stationed round the village to prevent cultivators from absconding, but the poet himself managed to escape in a state of destitution, leaving the holding which had been in the possession of his family for six or seven generations. Fleeing from the oppression of the Mughul dihidar, he sought refuge in the household of a Brāhman King at Midnapore, and engaged himself as his son's tutor. The poet also describes the cunning and deceit of the trading class. The rich Baniā does not even have any scruples to obtain meat and fuel on credit from a poor hunter to whom he owes only  $1\frac{1}{2}$  buri or  $7\frac{1}{2}$  gandas ( $1\frac{1}{2}$  pice). The latter lives from hand to mouth and is repaid in rice particles, rice and cowries. He cannot even buy earthenwares, but stores amani rice by digging a hole in the floor of the hut, and on the day when he cannot sell meat he and his wife subsist on wild fruits (boin-chee). Their clothing in winter is deer skin, and they protect them-

selves from cold with an old wrapper (Kanthā) which tears itself into shreds on being stretched.

Among the Bania caste quick acquisition of wealth and improvement of status and prestige were possible, if we accept Mukandarāma's testimony. The wife of the rich merchant (Sadāgar) Dhanpati formerly used to tend goats in the fields. Another big merchant's father used to sell myrobalans and buckster to all kinds of women. Precedence in caste began to be won by wealth though this was vigorously challenged. "What fault can there be in one's plying his trade? Is not the keeping of cowrie bundles a legitimate function for all of us who belong to the Bania caste?" (Translation by Dinesh Chandra Sen). The considerable proportion of the population in the Indian villages eked out a bare subsistence.

The contrast between the pomp and luxury of the Omraos, officials and fief-holders in the cities and towns and the misery of the rural population was vivid. Mughul administration on the whole completely neglected the village and the peasantry, leaving them in the hands of the Dewans and Faujdars. The Faujdars who were the most important revenue officers on the spot lived usually in the small towns and were too ready to use regular and irregular troops against powerful refractory zamindars. Landed estates were often transferred to rival or docile zamindars who used to rackrent the cultivators as they liked. Or the peasantry were distributed among the jagirdars, whose shiqdars, gumasthas and amlas were ever anxious to demand exorbitant mahsul and levy a whole host of imposts, abwabs and cesses. The abuses connected with the imposition of imposts in both jagirdaris and khalsa mahals (crown lands) on sales of property and produce, taxes for plying certain trades, forced labour and gifts as well as certain special imposts on the Hindus became notorious in the time of Shah Jahan when these swelled to about fifty in number and variety. Too often the proceeds of the abwabs went not to the royal treasury but to the lower revenue officials. Mismanagement was rampant even in the crown lands. In Orissa the Dewan changed the Kroris (revenue collectors of 1 crore dams, i.e. Rupees 2½ lakhs) one after another, giving the mahals to the highest bidder and enhancing the revenue two to three times. The ryots unable to pay abandoned the villages and the mahals of crown land were reduced to wilderness. In the same area there were sometimes two revenue agencies—the jagirdars and revenue officials of the government. Thus the peasantry hardly



obtained respite. They sold their property, pledged their children as serfs and "preserved their lives as the only stock for the next year."

Like fire they ate sticks (i.e. received beating) and gave up  
gold (or sparks),

And then, through loss of strength, they fell down dead in  
misery.

(Translated by Jadunath Sarkar).

From the subahs of the Mughul Empire constantly flowed to Delhi the wealth wrung from impoverished and evicted ryots to build the great mausoleums and palaces in Agra, Delhi, Lahore, Kabul or Kashmir and the Peacock Throne of the Mughul Emperors, or to increase their fabulous riches. The aim of the Mughul administration was largely the maintenance of law and order in the villages. The temper and attitude of the Mughul officials were essentially urban, sophisticated and exotic and characterised by great contempt for the rustics. This will be evident from the following couplet in Hamid-uddin's *Ahkam-i-Alamgiri*.

The tail of a crow was turned towards the city and its head  
towards the village;

Surely, the tail here was better than the head—  
better, i.e., nobler and happier.

(Translated by Jadunath Sarkar).

The absence of a strong middle class, except in the Western and Coromandel coasts and the sea-ports of Bengal, aggravated the cleavage between the aristocracy and the masses. This did not escape the notice of Sir Thomas Roe, who shrewdly observed: "(The people) live as fishes do in the sea—the great ones eat up the little. For, first the farmer robs the peasant, the gentleman robs the farmer, the greater robs the lesser and the king robs all." Pelsaert also comments in a socialistic vein: "In the palaces of these lords dwells all the wealth there is, wealth which glitters indeed, but is borrowed, wrung from the sweat of the poor. Consequently, their position is as unstable as the sand resting on no firm foundation; but rather on pillars of glass, resplendent in the eyes of the world, but collapsing under the stress of even a slight storm."

### The Curse of Untouchability

In the rural areas of Southern India untouchability was a curse which did not escape the notice of some of the European

travellers. Varthema (1503-1508) was the first of these travellers to record the social hierarchy among the castes of the Malabar Coast. He described the Brāhman, the Nairs, the artisans and other castes of the area. "No one of the two lowest castes may approach a Brāhman or a Nair within fifty paces unless he bid him do so; wherefore they shout as warning as they pass along (Po, po) and take private paths through the marshes, for, should they not cry aloud, and should any of the Brāhman or the Nairs meet them, they may be killed by him, and no punishment follow thereupon." The Italian traveller further observes that the lower castes eat mice and fish, dried in the sun. The food of the common people comprised balls of rice taken by the hand from a pipkin. All castes and both sexes wear a cotton loin-cloth only. Thevenot (1666 A.D.), who visited Malabar and Cochin, describes the degradation of the Pulayans, who cannot enter a town and are unapproachable. "The Poleas cry incessantly when they are abroad in the fields: Po Po (Go away), to give notice to the Nairs who may be there, not to come near". If the Pulayans want to buy a commodity from a town, they wait outside and cry as loud as they can, leaving money at a place appointed for that traffic. Then the merchant brings what they demand for the Pulayans to take. Then they depart. If a Nair is polluted, he is obliged even to kill the Pulayan; otherwise he himself will be killed. "If a Nair came so near a Poleas as to have felt his breath, he thinks himself polluted, and is obliged to kill him; because if he killed him not, and it came to the king's knowledge, he would cause the Nair to be put to death, or if he is pardoned him as to life, he would order him to be sold for a slave." Careri, who visited India in 1695, gives an elaborate description of the various castes of Western India. At the lowest rungs of the social ladder, he mentions the Pulayans in the region of Cape Comorin. His account is as follows: "In the country of the Nairs of Cape Comori (Comorin) they are called Poleas, and as they go along the streets, if they will not venture to be beaten, must cry Po Po (i.e. go away), that the other Gentiles may take care their very shadow does not touch them, which would defile them, and they would be forced to wash."

### The Luxuries of the Nobility

In the first quarter of the 17th century the head of the Dutch factory in the imperial capital observed that while the mass of the population



was steeped in misery the richer classes, especially the nobility, lived most luxuriously and dissolutely. "The mahals of the rich were adorned internally with lascivious sensuality, wanton and reckless festivity, superfluous pomp and ornamental daintiness", observes Pelsaert. Careri speaks of the mansions of the rich thus, "The great men have noble structures, with several courts, and the tops of the houses flat to take the air, and fountains with carpets about them to sit and receive visits from their friends." The food of the rich consisted of brinji (dressed rice), aeshakia (spiced meat), pollaeb (pulao) which is yellow, red, green or black, zueyla (probably Thuli, spiced wheaten cakes), dupiaza; also roast meats and various other good courses, served on very large dishes. Fruits of different varieties were also regularly eaten by the nobility. We find a brief description in Wakiat-i-Jahangiri which refers to the celebrated melons of Karez, Badakshan and Kabul, grapes from the latter place as well as from Samarkand. The sweet pomegranates of Yazi, and the subacid one of Farrah, pears from Samarkand and Badakshan, apples from Kashmir, Kabul, Jalalabad and Samarkand were also there. Pineapples from the sea-ports of Europe were also in the tray. "It is also pointed out that in the time of Akbar who was exceedingly fond of fruits, the melons from Karez, the pomegranates from Yazi and pears from Samarkand used to be brought to India. Bernier points out that these fruits were very dear; "a single melon selling for a crown and a half." But "nothing is considered so great a treat, it forms the chief expense of the Omrahas." White sugar which sold at the high price of 128 dams per maund was beyond the reach of the bulk of the population. Ice which was also very costly was also consumed by the nobility all the year round. "Gold and silver were used more in serving food than we (Dutch) do in our country", observes Pelsaert; "while cots and other furniture of kinds unknown in our country were also lavishly ornamented with gold and silver. Chinese porcelain goods, European glasswares, velvets, broad-cloths and wines as well as Abyssinian slaves were also commonly met with in the houses of the Mughul nobility." All European travellers were struck by the splendour and luxury of the Omrahs. With thirty or forty footmen about them, some making way, some carrying the umbrella, lances, tobacco-pipes, and pots of water, and others with napkins driving away flies, they were carried about in gorgeous palanquins carved with silver. Arrogant and oppressive they robbed the artisans and shopkeepers of their legitimate dues by paying "very little less than half price",

and their "wealth which glitters, indeed, is borrowed, wrung from the sweat of the poor". Living luxurious and profligate lives in Delhi and the Provincial capitals, they hardly engaged themselves in trade and commerce except when they could obtain some lucrative monopoly or special privilege through the fiat of the Emperor or a Provincial Viceroy, and usually squandered their fortune in drink and dissipation. The system of escheat according to which the entire accumulated fortune as well as the mansab and jagir of the nobles were taken over by the crown immediately on their death encouraged prodigal expenditure as well as concealment of wealth. "Informers swarm like flies round governors", remarks Pelsaert. Thus the concealment was difficult and hazardous. Escheat directly prevented the accumulation of capital and the development of a rich mercantile entrepreneur class in Mughul India. On the other hand, ✓ the preference of the Mughul Emperors for the Omraos as a class in distributing high military and civil offices of the state kept alive racial pride and class arrogance and fostered extravagance, profligacy and idleness. The infiltration of adventurous families from Shiraz, Bokhara, Samarkand and Kabul into the Mughul Court that continued until the reign of Shah Jahan was choked in the later days of the Mughul Empire. Thus racial decadence set in. Sturdy Turkish and Afghan strains ceased to replenish the blood of the Mughul aristocracy while there were both miscegenation and inbreeding promoted by polygamy, concubinage and the institution of harem comprising women derived from all stocks and strains, high and low, local or foreign. The closed, unwholesome degraded life of the women behind the iron curtain of the harem quickened the pace of degeneration of the Muslim nobility that deteriorated much faster in India than in Arabia and Persia.

### Food of the Common People

No accurate descriptions of the food and social habits of the common people can be expected either from the Mughul chronicles or from the European travellers, most of whom including Pelsaert, lived in the city nor, again, from the correspondence of the English and Dutch factors. But the contrast between the extravagance of the rich and the misery of the peasants and artisans is insisted upon by many, especially by Pelsaert, Bernier, Tavernier and van Twist and Pelsaert describes the daily food of the common people as both meagre and monotonous. "There was only one meal in the day.



They have nothing but the khichri made of green pulse (which probably indicates moth) mixed with rice, which is cooked with water over a little fire until the moisture has evaporated and eaten hot with butter in the evening; in the day-time they munch a little parched pulse or other grain which they say suffices for their lean stomachs." Bernier also describes khichri as a mess of vegetables, the general food of the common people. For Bengal, Bernier notes that "three or four sorts of vegetables together with rice and butter form the chief food of the common people. These are purchased for the merest trifle". For Western India, Ovington (1689) mentioning that khichri is very common among the people observes that it is made of dol, i.e. a small round pea and rice boiled together. John Fryer (1673-1681) who travelled mostly on the Coromandel and Malabar Coasts mentions "boiled rice, nichanaey, millet (in great scarcity) and grass-roots as the common food of the ordinary people; which with a pipe of tobacco contents them." The mention of tobacco consumption by the general population is significant. Khichri, mentioned by a number of European travellers, did not, however, exclude wheat flour as the principal food of the poor people. In Northern India it is evident that wheat was usually consumed by the common people. Barley, gram, rice and millets were eaten probably according to the agricultural seasons. Terry mentions that the grain of Indian wheat is somewhat bigger and whiter than that of English wheat "of which the inhabitants make such pure well-relished bread, that I may speak of it, which one said of the bread in the Bishoprick of Leige, it is, Panis, pane melior", and adds that the common people made their bread out of wheat, rice, barley and other food grains in the form of cakes which they bake on small iron hearths. Thus bread made from wheat, gram and barley was what the people consumed in Northern India as they consume now. Bernier describes rice, barley, chick-peas, wheat and other grains and pulses as the ordinary food not only of the Hindus who never eat meat but of the lower classes of the Mohammedans and a considerable portion of the military. It is noteworthy that both tea and coffee were in common use in the 17th century, as mentioned by Terry and Ovington. Ovington remarks: "The Bannias are not restrained from the liberal draughts of tea and coffee to revive their wasted spirits any part of the day. Tea is a common drink with all the inhabitants of India, as well Europeans as Natives." Toddy was a common drink as mentioned by both Thevenot and Tavernier. But the people as a whole were

frugal and abstemious. Terry notes that "none of the people there are at any time seen drunk (though they might obtain enough liquor to do it), but the very offal and dregs of the people, and these rare or very seldom." What the peasantry and the small artisans and traders of the country consumed bore no comparison at all with the assortment of spiced cereals and meats, rare fruits and iced wines consumed by the upper classes, especially by the Omraos of the metropolitan city and the provincial capitals. Destitution and pauperism became very common in Mughul India. Tavernier gives the estimate that there were 12 lakh Hindu mendicants and 8 lakh Mohammedan fakirs.



## CHAPTER XXXVII

### ECONOMIC FACTORS IN THE DOWNFALL OF THE MUGHUL EMPIRE

#### Evils of Farming the Revenue

The common people in Mughul India lived from hand to mouth, with the shadow of drought, famine and pestilence brooding over their lives. Early in the 17th century, the Dutch factor at Agra, the metropolis of the Mughul Empire, observed (1616): "So much is wrung from the peasants that even dry bread is scarcely left to them for their food." This oppression of the Mughul officials was directly the result of the widespread system of farming the revenues, "Villages which owing to some small shortage of produce are unable to pay the full amount of the revenue-farm are made prize, so to speak, by their masters and governors, and wives and children sold on the pretext of a charge of rebellion", says Pelsaert. Bernier later on corroborates this: "These poor people (the cultivators are referred to here), when incapable of discharging the demands of their rapacious lords, are not only deprived of the means of subsistence, but are bereft of their children, who are carried away as slaves." Manrique also supports this observation. He relates the oppression exercised upon the common people by the shiqdārs or revenue collectors. The shiqdārs in order to keep the people more subject and impotent augment their tribute (revenue), making them pay four or six months' tribute in advance. They only hold their governorship for a short period, simply at the Emperor's wish, who when they least expected it either transfers them to more important positions or merely deprives them of their governorship. On this account they are always used to exact all the tribute in advance, often by force, and when the wretched people have no means of paying this, they seize their wives and children, making them into slaves and selling them by auction.

The standard of land assessment which went to the share of the State in Mughul India was gradually enhanced from the traditional one-sixth of the agricultural produce in the Hindu period to one-half

in the reigns of Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb. This was accompanied by the formulation of the new theory of "the Great Mughul being the Lord of the Land". While Akbar aimed at obtaining the value of one-third of the gross produce, the ratio was moderately increased under Jahangir and became one-half under Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb. The mention of rates of one-half or two-fifths of the produce as revenue even in the case of the peasants who are "poor" and who "lack capital" indicates that by Aurangzeb's time the pitch of revenue was raised. To what proportion of the cultivated area was the higher revenue rate applied is, however, indefinite. Manucci and Ovington have recorded that the state's share in Aurangzeb's time was one half of the produce. De Jongh mentions that the share of the state was three-fourths of the gross produce in Ahmedabad while Van Twist specifies one-half and sometimes three-fourths as the share of administration in Gujarat. Careri mentions that the cultivators paid the state three-fourths of the produce. One-half of the gross produce of the land seems to have been the standardised rate of land revenue in the 17th century.

### **The Vicious Circle in Agriculture: From the Tillers to the Proletariat of Cities and Military Camps.**

By the end of the reign of Shah Jahan, Indian agriculture was caught in a vicious circle. First, the total land revenue demand of the Empire was increased from 363 crores of dams to 880 crores of dams. This involved not only a much wider vogue of the practice of 'farming' the revenue, but also the squeezing of the *jāgirdārs*, governors and contract-farmers. Secondly, the assignees, who considerably multiplied in the latter days of the Mughul Empire were constantly changed. Thus they endeavoured to make hay while the sun shone and to extract more than the normal yield of their grants, drawing from the soil, in the words of Bernier, all the money they could, though the peasantry would starve or abscond. No capital was invested for the improvement of the land, since the *jagirs* changed hands yearly or even half-yearly. If the farmers gave up cultivation the assignees would leave the estate a dreary wilderness for the next *jagirdar* befriended by the Emperor. Thirdly, the *jagirdārs* and other assignees did not permit the *ryots* to continue to cultivate their holdings and enjoy any security of tenure whatever. Manrique who visited India in 1629 and again in 1640-41 recorded that the frequent change of the Mughul



officials at the pleasure of the Emperor who transferred or dismissed them when it was least expected led not only to increased exactions from the farmers but also to collections even before the crops were ready. "On this account they always used to collect the revenue in advance, often by force and when the wretched people have no means of paying they seize their wives and children, making them into slaves, and selling them by auction, if they are heathens." Jahangir issued a *Firmān* restraining the *jāgirdārs* and officials of the crown-lands from seizing the *ryot's* holdings and from transferring it to another cultivator or cultivating it themselves. de Laet also testifies to the frequency with which the *ryot's* holdings were transferred from season to season. There was in fact no security to the cultivator, and often force had to be resorted to keep him on the land. Bernier observes: "As the ground is seldom tilled otherwise than by compulsion, and as no person is found willing and able to repair the ditches and canals for the conveyance of water, it happens that the whole country is badly cultivated, and a great part rendered unproductive from the want of irrigation." Neither the *jāgirdārs* nor the *ryots* had any incentives to invest money in the land to make it more productive, and even the huts of the peasantry were left in disrepair and neglect, lest these be appropriated and seized. Finally, the peasantry to escape from the clutches of the oppressors would sometimes migrate to the territory of a neighbouring *Rājā* or to the towns and camps as "bearers of burdens, carriers of water and servants to horsemen or troops" for "a more tolerable mode of existence." Such was the transformation of the tillers of the soil to the proletariat of the cities and military camps.

### The Oppression on the Artisans and Traders

From towards the end of Shah Jahan's reign, cultivation in the Empire was, according to Bernier, tending to decrease, inspite of the increase of population due to relative peace in the country. The whole country, though fertile and productive and teeming with peasants, bore "evident marks of approaching decay." "You may see in India whole provinces from whence the peasants have fled on account of the oppressions of the governors." Speaking of the artisans, Bernier says, "He never can become rich, and he feels no trifling matter, if he has the means of satisfying the cravings of hunger and covering his body with the coarsest garment. If money be gained, it does not in any measure go into his pocket but only serves to

increase the wealth of the merchant." Peter Mundy lists a series of deductions from the weaver's earnings: a fragment of 19 per cent cut off from the piece of cloth (*raza*), brokerage in the unbleached piece and brokerage of 5 pice to a piece, of which 2 pice went to the Governor, 2 pice to the broker and 1 pice to the merchant. Besides the weaver was mulcted, say  $6\frac{1}{2}$  per cent more due to variations in measurements, Agra, Patna, Lakhawar, and Surat, for instance, adopting different standards for the measurement of cloth goods. On the other hand, the merchant was also subject to occasional confiscation of wealth while the practice of escheating was also prevalent. It is mentioned that Mir Jumla once demanded Rs. 50,000 from the merchants of Dacca. On refusal they were threatened with death by being trampled upon by elephants and compromised for Rs. 25,000, while the bankers of the city appeased his wrath by paying Rs. 300,000 without further ado. Occasionally, however, the mercantile community could protest successfully against the exactions of a Governor or high administrative officer by *hartal* or suspension of business.

### The Vicissitudes of Handicrafts

It was the excessive price of the raw materials as well as the burden of miscellaneous cesses levied on the artisans and their products which drove them into the clutches of the middlemen and the financier. Thus the artisans could not overcome the periodic crises of scarcity and famine which left them altogether destitute, as is abundantly testified by the Surat and Madras factors, with reference to the weaving communities. On the other hand, since the market of the principal handicrafts and artistic industries was chiefly confined to the limited class of the Mughul aristocracy, there was little scope of expansion for this class of crafts, until the Dutch, English and French merchants developed foreign markets for Indian calicoes and ransacked the whole country for supply at the opening of the 17th century. Besides, the Mughul nobility often preferred foreign products, novelties and "toys." We have, however, the shining example of Akbar directing certain ranks of the nobility to wear particular kinds of indigenous fabrics, and inducing carpet weavers of Persia to settle in Agra, Fatehpur Sikri and Lahore. Akbar's patronage was directly responsible for the expansion of silk, carpet and shawl-weaving industries in different parts of India and amelioration of the lot of workers in these fields. We read in the *Āin-i-Akbarī*; "Through the attention of His Majesty,



a variety of new manufactures is established in the country; and the cloths fabricated in Persia, Europe and China have become cheap and plenty. The skill of manufacturers has increased with their number." "Now shawls are worn by people of all degrees." These were formerly high priced and used to come from Kashmir generally for the nobility. "In Lahore there are upwards of a thousand manufactories of this commodity." From Akbar-nāmā we also learn that Akbar caused to be sent intelligent artisans to Goa with a view "to examine and bring to the Emperor's knowledge the various production of art and skill to be found at that time." "The artisans who had gone there to acquire knowledge exhibited their skill and received applause," when they returned to the court.

In the 17th century calicoes, silk, fancy goods, muslins and yarns were some of the major commodities of Indian export. We give below a rough list of the handicraft products of a few important cities :

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Delhi     | : Cotton cloths, mostly dyed in various colours, and stuffs called Chitas (Manrique, Vol. 2, page 180.)  |
| Lahore    | : Fine white cloths, coloured silk cloths in embroidery, carpets, woollen goods, bows and arrows, tents, saddles, swords, boots and shoes (Manucci, p. 424). |
| Agra      | : White cloths, silk stuffs, lace, gold and silver embroideries on turbans and other kinds of cloth (the Khulasat).  |
| Patna     | : Silk and cotton goods, shields, artistic pottery and salt-petre (Bowrey).  |
| Banares   | : Muslins, silk stuffs of various kinds, gold and silver embroideries, belts and turbans (Manrique, vol. 2, p. 147).   |
| Dacca     | : Finest and richest muslins with borders of gold and silver or coloured silks (Manrique, vol. I, p. 56).  |
| Ahmedabad | : Gold and silver cloths, flowered silks, painted cloths, gold and silver work, jewellery (Manucci and Thevenot).  |
| Burhanpur | : Fine white and coloured cloths, belts and turbans embroidered with gold and silver.  |
| Srinagar  | : Shawls and carpets, beds, ink boxes, trays, boxes, and wooden spoons.  |

Besides, there were many cities like Samana, Khairabad, Rajmahal, Multan, and Masulipatam where important handicrafts were carried on. In these provincial and smaller cities the artisans generally used to ply their crafts on their own account, but probably there were a few *kārkhānās* organized by local merchants or *Kārkhānādārs*. With the participation of the English, Dutch and French merchants in Asian and European calico trade, Indian handloom products began to command the markets of Europe, Africa and the Far East. By 1620 the Dutch and English established their trade in Indian indigo and calicoes in Surat, Agra, Lahore, Samana, Lucknow, Patna and Masulipatam. By 1651 the two European powers founded factories also in Bengal, and exporting salt-petre, calicoes, silk and sugar to Europe. The French entered into competition in the Indian commercial enterprises somewhat later, establishing their factories in Surat in 1668, in Masulipatam in 1669, in Pondicherry in 1674 and in Chandernagore in 1690.

### The Trend of Wages

We may now examine, on the basis of existing data, the trend of wages of the workers through the centuries. The *Ain-i-Akbari* mentions two and three dams per diem as wages for ordinary labourers, one dam was the wage rate for slaves. Two dams make about 4 pice. In the *Akbar-namā* we find that a rupee of full value was worth 39 or 40 dams. From 1627 a rupee was worth 30 dams as against 40 dams under Akbar. In 1695 Careri pointed out that a rupee was worth 54 paisas. Here paisa denotes half dam (*adhela*). Thus the ordinary labourer was getting in Akbar's time only 3 or 4 pice. Francisco Pelsaert who wrote his memoir in Jahangir's time (1626) mentions wages of servants for a whole month reckoned at 40 days at the rate of Rs. 3 to 4 for that period. It is not true that monthly wages of labourers were calculated on the basis of 40 days. For Terry mentions that wages were five shillings the moon paid the next day after the change. The *Oncost Boek* (Account Book) of the Dutch factory at Agra (1637) also shows that wages were paid regularly at the end of the month on the full moon day and that these were Rs. 3½ for servants, porters, and sais (horse-men) and Rs. 5 for the sweeper and washerman. "A simple servant, between wages, victuals and clothing stand not more than three rupia a month," observed Pietro della Valle from Surat in 1623. In 1628 or 1629 de Jongh gives 3 stivers daily or Rs. 3½ per mensem as the



typical rate of wages for Broach. In 1634 wages at Surat were 5 to 7 mahmudis per mensem (i.e. Rs. 2/8/- to Rs. 3/8/-), but the rates were increased by 3 mahmudis in 1638. In 1636 when food prices returned to the normal in Gujarat a messenger was paid an allowance of 3 pice daily, which may be taken as about the minimum required for the subsistence of a "lean, lazy knave". 3 pice a day was considered by Methwold as more than adequate, "and so comes to cost more brasse than his body weighs. 3 pice became the normal daily wage in the Bombay factory in 1674 instead of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  pice, and this was again raised to 6 pice in 1675 due to the high cost of living and scarcity of provisions. In South India we have records of rates of wages for the factory servants in Masulipatam since 1622 when they were obtaining about Rs. 2 per mensem. William Smyth writing to his father, John, in 1658 observes: "This country is a very cheap place of residence, were it not for the state and multiplicity of servants we strangers are constrained to keep; all men being respected according to his train and habit. We have at present belonging to our factory near 70 persons to whom we covenant to pay between 4s. and 5s. sterling per month each, they finding themselves all provisions and necessaries. These servants are allowed, when they travel or are sent on our business, 2 d. per diem, which is the rate we give to all day labourers and porters we usually employ to carry burdens 50, 60 or 100 miles outright, which is the usual conveyance we make use of for all sorts of goods . . . All sorts of provisions are extreme cheap."

It is noteworthy that Thomas Herbert (1626) mentions the same daily wage of boys, viz. 2d. in Surat as prevailed in Masulipatam in 1658. The rupee at the time was equivalent to about 2 s. 3 d. Thus the factory servants were obtaining Rs. 2 per mensem. This may be compared with the allowance of a dam ( $1\frac{1}{2}$  pice) fixed for the lowest grade of slaves and 2 and 3 dams per diem (3 or  $1\frac{1}{2}$  pice) for ordinary workers at Akbar's court.

Pelsaert gives the figures of 5 or 6 tuckās, i.e. 4 or 5 Dutch stivers for artisans in all crafts as wages. 5 or 6 tuckās will be equivalent to 10 or 12 pice which represented the daily wages of craftsmen and artisans in Jahangir's time. This agrees with the accounts of the Dutch factory at Agra (1637), according to which skilled workers were paid 12 to 13 pice daily. The *Āin-i-Akbarī* allows 6 to 7 dams for skilled workers which would be  $2\frac{1}{2}$  as. to 3 as. Thus the figures of wages both for skilled and ordinary workers remained identical in Akbar's

and Jahangir's times. At the beginning of the 18th century in Calcutta wages for ordinary workers ranged from 12 as. to Re. 1 per mensem. Half a century later (1751) the average wage of coolies in Calcutta was raised to 2 puns, 12 gundas of cowries per diem, and in 1759 to Rs. 2.8 as. per mensem. In the Consultation (6th November 1770) we read: "The rate of wages—six or eight annas a month for a labourer (i.e. besides a certain allowance of food) is calculated for a time when rice is at two or three maunds for a rupee". Bernier found in Bengal that "for the merest trifle rice, ghee and vegetables could be bought by the common people". Manucci observed that if the common people of India had four rupees they were quite high and mighty, and declined service. Both de Laet and Ovington seem to support this observation. From the account of the European factors in Gujarat, Madras and Bengal it would also appear that 3 pice per diem or  $1\frac{1}{2}$  dam would assure subsistence for the worker. On the whole, it may be said that an adult worker could live in the 17th century from hand to mouth on Re. 1 to Re.1-8-0.

### MOVEMENT OF REAL WAGES: 1600-1938

#### Quantities Available (in seers) of food-grains

##### The Mughul Period

Barley Wheat Jowar Bajra Gram Rice

Wages of unskilled workers

in Akbar's time : 2 dams

(Ain) 6.76 4.52 5.42 9.04 6.78 2.71

Wages of skilled workers 20.34 13.56 16.27 27.12 20.34 8.13

in Akbar's time: 6 to 7 to to to to to  
dams (Ain) 23.73 15.82 18.98 31.64 23.73 9.48

Wages of unskilled workers

in Jahangir's time: 5 to 7

dams (Agra Dutch Accounts). 12.5 8.3 10.23 16.7 12.5 5.01

Wages of skilled workers

in Jahangir's time: 10 to

12 pice (Agra Dutch Accounts). 25.0 16.6 20.46 33.4 25.0 10.02



	Barley	Wheat	Jowar	Bajra	Gram	Rice
Wages of unskilled workers in Calcutta at the beginning of the 18th century: 1 pice to 1½ pice (Diary of the E.I. Co.)	4.37 to 6.56	2.05 to 3.07	..	..	2.66 to 3.99	2.39 to 3.58
Wages of skilled workers in Calcutta at the beginning of the 18th century: 3 pice to 1 Anna (Diary of the E.I. C.O.)	13.0 to 17.5	6.14 to 8.2	..	..	7.98 to 10.64	7.16 to 9.56
Wages of unskilled workers in North Bihar and Bengal in 1807 3 pice to 1 Anna (Buchanan's Survey).	3.2 to 4.375	3.2 to 4.375	..	..	..	5.62 to 7.5
Wages of skilled workers in North Bihar and Bengal in 1807: 2 as. to 3 as. (Buchanan's Survey.)	8.75 to 13.12	8.75 to 13.12	..	..	..	15.0 to 22.5

### INDEX NUMBERS OF REAL WAGES: 1600-1938

(1960 Base Year)

Year	Skilled Workers	Unskilled Workers
1600	100.00	100.00
1650	184.51	123.36
1729	62.04	53.48
1807	69.82	62.02
1812-29	35.98	23.58
1850	52.22	29.35
1870	43.15	24.97

Year	Skilled Workers	Unskilled Workers
1880	48.13	25.68
1890	36.48	21.89
1901-05	43.26	26.48
1911	40.14	25.91
1916	31.19	26.81
1928	33.75	25.43
1934	59.62	42.98
1938	49.06	45.33

### Effects on the Standard of Living

It is clear from the study of the trends of prices and wages that the agricultural wage in Northern India in the reign of Aurangzeb and also in the modern era bought about one-half of the quantity of foodgrains available for the agricultural worker or day labourer on the prevailing scale of wages in Akbar's time. The essential necessities of life such as wheat, rice, gram, vegetables, milk and ghee sold exceedingly cheap in Akbar's time, and most European travellers especially Fitch, Roe, Terry, Bernier and Tavernier testify to the general prosperity and plenty of the land. Terry (1616-1619) mentions that "the plenty of provisions was very great throughout the whole country and every one there may eat bread without scarceness." Fish was "sold at such easy rates as if it was not worth the valuing". Thomas Coryat (1612-1617) observes that such was the cheapness of all eatable things that he could live pretty well according to his manner of living at two-pence a day. £ 12 would maintain him for 3 years in his travel with meat, drink and clothes. The most serious encroachment upon the standard of living has come since the days of Akbar from the virtual banishment of ghee and milk products from the dietary of the lower classes. Butter, oil and sugar have tremendously increased in prices. Both Pelsaert and de Laet mentioned that the lower classes were consuming butter every day with Khichri. Ghee and oil were much cheaper in Akbar's time relatively not merely to money but also to the food grains. Terry specifically mentions the



"great store of salt and abundance of sugar growing in India." Sugar which sold at the rate of 2d. per lb. or under (about 5 pice) also entered as an item of household consumption of the poorer classes more commonly in Mughul India than in contemporary Europe or modern India. In the Mughul age there was also a much larger use of the woollen goods. Blochmann observes that at the time of Akbar and before, the use of woollen stuffs and for the poorer class blankets was much more general than now. Blankets sold from four annas to two rupees. Careri mentions that the people did not use quilts, but lay coverlets and sheets on the bed, made of wool and cords without boards. Buchanan writing at the beginning of the 19th century makes mention of the import of cotton wool from the west of India to Northern Bihar and Bengal at seventeen or fifteen rupees per maund. With respect to cloth and sugar it would appear that the decline of the home industries has been responsible for the lower standard of living in these respects. Buchanan's survey shows that the poorest people in North Bihar and Bengal could not afford the daily use of rice. They lived much on cakes made of maize, china kangni or other coarse grains and still more on those made of pulse. The supply of milk, oil, sugar, vegetables, pulse, salt and other seasoning is more scanty. Some could not obtain daily even the smallest quantity of oil and salt. Those who could not afford salt supplied its place by potashes: or they compensated the deficiency in salt by ashes. No doubt the private monopoly of the servants of the East India Company and later on government monopoly pushed up salt prices. At the close of the 18th century a maund of Bengal salt sold at Patna for Rs. 3, while the worst quality of rice sold at 72½ seers per rupee. In terms of rice salt had more than twelve times its present price. Colebrook who served at Tirhoot and Purnea (1786-1789) recorded the following prices and items of consumption of the peasantry in his "Husbandry of Bengal" (1794). Rice, wheat and barley sold at 12 as. a maund; ghee at 3 as. per seer. The average price of cattle was Rs. 5, while the wages of the farm servants ranged from as. 8 to Re. 1 per mensem. 2½ ounces of salt, 2 lbs. of split pulse, 8 lbs. of rice, formed the usual daily consumption of a family of 5 persons in easy circumstances. Or, according to another estimate 4 maunds of rice, 1 maund of split pulse and 3½ seers of salt supplied for the monthly consumption of a family of 6 persons, consisting of 2 men, as many women and the same number of children. Colebrooke concludes that "the

necessaries of life are cheap, the mode of living simple and subsistence may be earned without uninterrupted industry". Both Thevenot and Careri mention that the Indians wear long breeches down to their ankles and shirts and vests narrowed towards the waist over the breeches. Thevenot mentions shoes of Moroquin or Turkey leather of the shape of Persian slippers worn by the common people. Turbans, woven of muslin or calico were used as head-gear. With reference to shoes we have the statement of Barbosa that the common people in the city of Bengal used to wear shoes. Careri mentions also the use of shoes. The foot remains bare with a sort of flat shoes like our slippers which are easily slipped off when they go into rooms, to keep them clean. It would appear that with regard to other features in respect of the standard of living the common people were living then much as they live today, having only a few earthen utensils, bed-steads, bamboo mats and scanty bedding. Brass or bell-metal plates were not used generally by the lower classes. These have now obtained entry into the poor man's household. On the other hand, in many cases in Northern India gunny or sack cloths made out of local hemp have now given place to straw bedding. Matches, kerosene oil, and aluminium utensils, all imported goods, illustrate present items of the poor man's requirements which were unknown in the preceding centuries. India's foreign trade in the past was largely for the benefit of a small, extravagant aristocracy and merchant class. It did not contribute much to improve the standard of living of the mass of the population, while the weavers who represented the largest section of the industrial workers, and who should have benefited from the considerable expansion of cloth exports, were disorganised and at the mercy of an exploitative system of *dadani*. Their wages and economic condition were, however, far superior to those of this class today.

The peasantry of India were hit hard in the reign of Aurangzeb as a result in the fall of the value of silver and appreciation of the value of copper. In the Mughul Empire the revenue assessment (*jama-dami*) was made not in silver but (*dam*) copper; while standard revenue *hasil kamil* was expressed in rupees in which the revenue was largely payable. The land revenue already increased from 363 crores of *dams* in the time of Akbar to 880 crores of *dams* in the time of Shah Jahan as recorded in the *Āin-i-Akbarī* and *Bādshāh-nāmā* respectively. Another estimate is an increase from Rs. 17



crores of rupees for Akbar's reign (1605) to Rs. 38 crores of rupees as given by Manucci for Aurangzeb's reign (1696), excluding the revenue of the suba of Bengal, estimated at Rs. 5.5 crores by Tavernier. Jadunath Sarkar estimates the increase of land revenue from 13 crores under Akbar to 33 crores, 25 lakhs under Aurangzeb. The real burden of the peasantry increased even more due to the currency debasement and diminution of the value of copper (dam). With the gradual relaxation of authority at the centre the Mughul currency was debased. It is noteworthy that under similar circumstances of constant war with the Huns and other warlords and the weakening of the central authority of Pataliputra or Ujjāini, the Gupta Empire in its phase of decline showed a great scarcity of the precious metals and debasement of currency as compared with the earlier Imperial Gupta period. Economic history repeats itself. The degeneration of currency with bad coins driving out good coins is true of both the Gupta and Mughul Empires in their periods of downfall. In Gujarat the silver mahmudi struck by the Sultāns of the Province was about 13 per cent below the Akbari standard and its value in terms of copper greatly fluctuated. Normally 32 pice were equivalent to 1 mahmudi. But within the boundaries of the Mughul Empire the custom of farming out the mints was adopted. Old rupees were taken into the mints to be recoined into sikkas, the name given to the rupees of the current year which were lighter in weight and lower in value and which altered from year to year. We have unimpeachable evidence of currency debasement from the coinage of new lighter rupees at the mint in Banares, for instance, under the charge of eminent Banares bankers. In fact, the lowering of the weight and standard began in the time of Aurangzeb and was especially marked in Muhammad Shah's time. Copper coins also constantly altered in weight or value in different parts of the Mughul Empire and this caused considerable confusion. Unscrupulous *sūbādārs* and *Darogās* in charge of mints also took advantage of the fluctuations of silver and copper prices to alter the value of the coins to obtain profit. The major causes of the fluctuation of prices of precious metals were the influx of silver bullion into Bengal, Sindh and Gujarat, the cost of transport from the ports to Agra and the exhaustion of the copper mines of Rajputana and Central India during Akbar's reign. Copper was imported into Gujarat and Bengal from Japan, and it was but natural that since the supplies of both copper and silver for Northern India depended upon foreign sources there were great fluctuations in their prices. At the beginning

of the 17th century the rupee was worth 80 pice or 40 dams. In 1614 Nicholas Ufflet records that the *chālāni* rupee was worth in Agra from 96 to 102 pice, according to the exchange. Metford (1615), writing from Ajmere, mentions that the *chālāni* rupee of Agra went for 83 pice, the *sikka* of Ahmedabad for 86 pice and the *Jahangiri* rupee at 100 pice. In Burhanpur between 1618 and 1621 the rupee was worth 80 pice. This was because Burhanpur was more distant from Rajputana where the copper mines were worked. But by 1626 Pelsaert records that at Agra 58 pice went to the rupee. From 1627 onwards, Moreland reckons, the rupee was worth 60 pice (30 dam) or a little more or less. The Dutch Accounts in Agra (1637) give the value of the rupee in terms of pice as varying from 50 to 55 pice per rupee from January to December. Van Twist also records (1638) the exchange at 53 or 54 pice to the rupee, while Tavernier (1645) quotes 55 to 56 pice per rupee at Agra. We have already referred to the ratio of 54 pice per rupee as mentioned by Careri in 1695. The lowest value of the pice is recorded by Thevenot (1666), who found the rupee equivalent to  $32\frac{1}{2}$  –  $33\frac{1}{2}$  pice in Surat, and by John Marshall (1668-72) who mentions that 25 dams made 1 pice and that 40 pice were equivalent to a rupee at Patna and 26 pice at Bhagalpur. In Masulipatam 27 or 28 pice went for a rupee.

### Depreciation of Silver and Its Effects Upon the Peasantry

The depreciation of the price of silver, whether in Western India for a *mahmudi* to decline from 31 to 32 pice for the coin as recorded by Finch in 1609 and 34 pice as recorded by Elkington in 1614 to 20 pice for the *mahmudi* in 1636 as recorded by the English factors at Surat or of the rupee in Northern India which was reduced from 40 to 30 dams and from 102 to 53 pice in Aurangzeb's reign was rather unfavourable to the lower economic classes in the country. The depreciation of the value of the silver coin or appreciation of the value of the pice from 102 to 53 per rupee from Akbar to Aurangzeb's reign promoted a brisk trade in money changing, the merchants purchasing copper in the cheaper markets and selling where it was dear in the country. With the relative depreciation in the value of silver in terms of copper, the real burden of the revenue demand which was assessed in dam (copper) but actually paid mainly in silver also considerably increased. The appreciation of copper dam was equivalent to a general fall of the prices of agricultural produce, and a diminution of agricultural income measured in terms of dam. On the other hand,



the revenue demand reckoned in dams remained fixed. Thus the peasantry had to part with a larger share of their produce not only to meet the state demand but also interest payment to their creditors. And the grinding poverty of the bulk of the population was rendered more severe. The Mughul practice of assigning jagirs to a host of civil and military officials, instead of giving them fixed salaries in rupees, also resulted in greater exploitation of the peasantry due to the fall in the value of silver, while the official class would not permit any reduction of their official expenses and their standard of living and status as well of the cost of the troops and horses which they were bound to maintain. As a matter of fact Manucci records in the reign of Aurangzeb that the old rate of 40 dams to the rupee was still in force for the conversion of salaries by the administrative and middle classes. Similarly Sayyed Ghulam Husain Khan (1783) also observes that the dam was really equal to from the 40th to 48th part of rupee, but in the Chamber of Accounts 40 dams always went for a rupee. The weight of the dam was by this time reduced by one-third. It appears that Aurangzeb attempted to face the situation by passing a decree that rupees whose intrinsic value was less than annas eight should pass current as full weight rupees and also by reducing the weight of the common copper coins. We have ample evidence of the scarcity of copper in different parts of India in the reign of Aurangzeb and the consequent coining of lighter dams from different mints situated in various parts of the Mughul Empire. Aurangzeb's dams are pointed out by Hodivala, weighed from 190 grs. to 215 grs. as compared with Akbar's dam of about 320 grs. Such was the scarcity of copper in Ahmedabad, for instance, that the money-changers of the city had black coins of iron made and circulated and exchanged them at exorbitant rates. On this the Sūbādār of Ahmedabad coined copper of lighter weight which was later on sanctioned by the imperial order of Aurangzeb to the effect that the weight of the dam should be now fixed at 14 mashas as compared with 20  $\frac{7}{8}$  mashas of Akar's dam. The lighter copper coin continued to be current later on at the time of Bahadur Shah and Farrukh Siyar. The Dutch who were having a profitable trade with Japan for some time by importing copper from that country into India met with difficulties when in 1640 Japan prohibited the export of copper and turned to European sources such as Sweden for the Indian supply. At one stage the authorities in Gujarat also had to prohibit the exports of copper (coined or uncoined) to Persia and other places in order to

check the depreciation of the rupee, which rose in consequence to only about 30 to 33 dams. The depreciation of the value of silver from 40 to 30 dams and the increase of burden for the majority of the population coupled with currency debasement and confusion introduced by Aurangzeb may be regarded as economic causes contributing to the downfall of the Mughul Empire.

### Effects of Wars on Economic Conditions

Population in the Mughul Age was considerably less than at present; the total was estimated 100 millions by Moreland at the death of Akbar (1605). Although in such regions as Gujarat, the Coromandal Coast, parts of the U.P., Bihar and Bengal there were heavy densities. Manucci found many regions "extremely populous". He observed, "Everybody of both sexes marries and a considerable number of men take more wives than one". For the Deccan, Niketin observes early in the 15th century, "the land is overstocked with people; those in the country are very miserable while the nobles are extremely opulent and delight in luxury". Tavernier estimates that in the Mughul days the Muslims comprised one-sixth of the population. In the 16th and 17th centuries famines did play their role in reducing the population and; "disjointing all trade and economic life out of frame". But even without the visitation of famines the petty Rajas, Rajputs and Kolis and small zamindars in the 17th century interfered with trade, levied tolls and customs, and pillaged traders and merchants, as mentioned by Mandelso, Thevenot and Tavernier and indirectly contributed to reduce even further the standard of living of the common people. As the high roads, as for instance, from Agra to Ahmedabad, became unsafe in times of war and unsettlement, or as armies traversed them merchants travelled in quafillas or caravans and engaged armed guards, called the Charans. On the whole, however, the roads of India were safe for brisk internal trade and traffic until the struggle between the Marathas and the Mughuls commenced and the roads of Gujarat and the Deccan became insecure. Such European travellers as Conti who travelled in the 15th century and Pietro della Valle, Terry and Thomas Roe, who travelled at the beginning of the 17th century, made their journeys with perfect safety and without great discomfort. From Akbar to Shah Jahan the country, especially the richer and more heavily populated northern part, enjoyed relative peace and prosperity, but Aurangzeb's campaigns caused severe loss of human life and destruction of crops and forests. As the imperial



army traversed a region during its campaign the entire territory was laid bare and desolation overtook it. Manucci describes that Aurangzeb left behind him the fields of these provinces devoid of trees and bare of crops, their places being taken by the bones of men and beasts. "Even in the imperial camp", observes Sarkar, "where greater comfort and security might have been expected, privations were experienced; the annual wastage of the Deccan wars was one lakh of men, and three lakhs of horses, oxen, camels and elephants". Agriculture was also dislocated during these campaigns not merely through forced labour, violent capture and food shortage of the peasantry but also by the devastating epidemics which accompanied some of the Mughul campaigns. Nor should the effects of guerilla warfare carried on by the Marathas be disregarded in their effects on economic conditions. The plundering hordes of the Marathas destroyed everything what they could not loot. They used to feed their cavalry on standing crops and ravaged and burnt whole villages.

### Degeneration of the Mughul Aristocracy

Increase of population of the ruling Muhammadan and Rajput stocks in India could not be expected. The Muslim aristocracy obeyed the pernicious practice according to which the state confiscated all lands and personal effects on the death of a nobleman, so that if his sons obtained anything it was merely an act of grace on the part of the Emperor. Careri mentions that "when a general, or any other person who has received the King's pay dies, all his goods fall to the king, without leaving the children so much as a maintenance; a custom Aurangzeb condemned, when he spoke of his father, and yet all employments to Civil and Military are sold. For this reason no family can continue long great, but sometimes the son of an Omrah goes abegging." This escheat system was characterised as "barbarous and ancient" by Bernier. Hawkins gives a more favourable account of the custom. "The custom of this Mughul Emperor is to take possession of his noblemen's treasure when they die and bestow on their children what he pleases; commonly he deals well with them, possessing them with their father's land, dividing it amongst them; and unto the eldest son he has a very great respect who in time receives the full title of his father." The truer picture is that drawn by Bernier. Property belonged to and was escheated to the Crown on the death of a nobleman whose son or heir by no means obtained possession of a mansab or jāgīr, except through the sweet will of the Emperor.

Even during a nobleman's lifetime mansabs and Jāgīrs were arbitrarily transferred to others at the behest of the Emperor. The Mughul princes were not exempted from this general practice. The jāgīrs which were held by Shah Jahan were transferred to Shariyar. The custom on the whole naturally resulted in extravagance and luxury in the court, a large harem and concubinage and the disregard of family obligations which were encouraged by the immoral atmosphere in the capital cities. Almost the entire nobility had to accompany the Emperor in his campaigns and for a whole generation the sons of the aristocracy had to spend their entire youth in the camp without being able to live in their homes. Even the war-like Rajputs complained that if they were to spend their whole life in the Deccan in the campaigns of conquest they would not be able to have home-life and rear families. It was in this manner that the actual loss of human lives in wars, destruction of crops and trees, ravaging epidemics that followed imperial campaigns, famines and continuous camp life for a whole generation on the part of the nobility directly or indirectly contributed to cause both reduction of the population and impoverishment of the peasantry. Further, polygamy and the maintenance of a harem which was recruited from all castes, races and grades of society led to the deterioration of the stock. Miscegenation was no doubt the chief cause of the degeneration of the Turkish and Afghan nobility settled in India. An admixture of the Afghans, Turks, Persians, Arabs and Uzbeks constituted the so-called Mughul Court. It was the newcomers especially the Persians, who were given preference in high administrative or military appointments. The bulk of the Mughuls of the third or fourth generation was employed in the army. Nor can we disregard the influence of the warm climate and mode of living in India in sapping the vitality of the once war-like stocks from Western Asia. If there was any hereditary aristocracy in India it lingered among the kingdoms and the principalities of the Hindus as in Rajputana and Vijayanagar.

### **The Expropriation of Village Communities**

Political and economic disorder supported each other in India throughout the 17th century. Aurangzeb's series of uninterrupted wars in which there was no respite, permitting financial recoupment, depleted the Indian treasury. The military campaigns were indirectly costly, not merely in their effect on the devastation in the countryside by the armies and camp followers, but also in the dis-



tribution of the territory of the Empire as *jāgīrs* to soldiers and military and civil officers for the satisfaction of their dues. Where the might of arms did not succeed to capture a fort, heavy bribery was resorted to, and this multiplied enormously the list of assignees and grantees to whom reckless promises were made by the Emperor. It is true that the *jagirs* could not be taken possession of easily but the scramble for these led to contests between the rivals and the appointment of an army of *shiqdārs* and *amlās*, the effects of which were altogether unfavourable to the peasantry. This also encouraged the quick succession of *jāgīrdārs* which resulted in the exploitation of the peasants and even the abandonment of whole *purgannāhs*. On the other hand, as the rent collection dwindled, the Governors of the provinces were compelled to reduce their army establishments which encouraged all kinds of people from such agricultural-military castes and tribes, such as the *Jāts* (Western U.P.) *Mewātīs* (South-Western Delhi), *Bais* and *Rajputs* (Oudh), and *Ujjanias* (South Bihar) to feudal chiefs and nobles, in carving out estates and villages for themselves. Thus began the expropriation of the village communities by warlike and landlord families, tribes and castes which often resulted in the displacement of the entire rural population.

### Transformation of the Mughul Social Structure

The Mughul social structure which may be likened to a pyramid standing on its apex underwent a profound transformation in the eighteenth century. The small but extremely rich and extravagant upper class dwindled, and a new aristocracy composed of the city merchants and traders emerged. In spite of a variety of imposts, fines and exactions a class of rich shopkeepers, traders and financiers developed in the larger towns in India. Pelsaert refers to the leading Hindu merchants and jewellers of Agra as rich as well as most able and expert in their business. In the Imperial capital, Delhi, Mandelslo records that there were 80 *caravenserais* for foreign merchants, most of them three stories high, with very noble lodgings, store-houses, vaults and stables belonging to them. It was estimated by Manrique (1629-1643) that at the town of Patna there were as many as 600 brokers and middlemen most of whom are wealthy. At Agra Manrique found merchants of immense wealth, especially those known by the generic title of *Sodāgar* (*Saudāgar*) and by the local appellation of *Katwri* (*Khatrī*) and referred to vast sums of money piled up like heaps of grains in their houses. Similarly, in Dacca money was heaped

up in such large quantities in the houses of the Kataris that being difficult to count, it used commonly to be weighed. Of the Banias of Gujarat, W. G. de Jough writes: "One finds the Banias all along the coast, that is in Goa, Coromandel, and Bengal, making a living by trade. On the other hand, they are found in Persia, Ormus, Gomeron, Dieu, Dabol, upto Mocha who, like the others mentioned before, live by trade. Many of them are brokers . . . . . Among these Banias there are many substantial merchants, who do a great amount of trade, so that the largest trade and the best is carried on by them, and they do more trade than the Muhammedans. They are sharp businessmen and honest in payment . . . . Among them there are many money-changers, found in all places in these parts." Reference may be made here to the celebrated Gujerati merchant, Virji Vora (1619-1670), who controlled the entire trade of Surat and a large portion of the coastal trade to Malabar, had his establishments in such distant centres as Agra, Burhanpur and Golconda, and traded with the Persian Gulf and the Indian Archipelago. He was regarded as the then richest man in the world, worth, in the estimate of Thevenot, at least 8 millions. Similarly, in Bengal there were the Seths of Murshidabad who represented a most influential banking and financial house, advanced money to both the farmers of revenue and Nawabs of Bengal, and wielded great political influence at the time of the advent of the English in that Province. The Indian merchants were described by William Finch "as subtle as the devil," i.e. they showed themselves as shrewd businessmen. President Pitt of Madras, grandfather of the Earl of Chatham, observed, however, that it was through the example of the European merchants that the Indian traders have grown "very crafty and cautious" and "no people better understand their own interest, so that it was easier to effect that in one year which you shan't do now in a century, and the more obliging your management, the more jealous as they are of you." Some of them grew immensely rich by acting as intermediaries of the European merchants, and they as well as the small middle-class population profited from the expansion of Indian export trade in calico, indigo, sugar and saltpetre. But they could not indulge in expenditure for luxuries such as might arouse the jealousy and wrath of officials; while in profitable fields of business they had to face the competition of members of the Imperial Court, Governors and high officials who entered into trade at suitable opportunities and interfered with it by setting up monopolies or combines. But



on the whole the development of both internal and foreign trade, and specially wholesale and lengthy trade operations gradually built up a strong and competent mercantile community throughout the land. With the disintegration of the Mughul Empire, the East India Company became very powerful and as they established their monopoly in cloth, salt, betelnut, tobacco and other businesses they displaced the Indian merchants. Such displacement was brought about only in the course of a century in Bengal, and involved the ruin of Armenian, Bengalee and up-country merchants. Many persons belonging to trading and money-lending classes gave up trade and acquired large and small estates. The accumulated capital came to be invested more in land than in trade and industry. The middle-class, which was small and weak in Mughul India, was swept away, and this increased the gulf between this newly-enriched, landed aristocracy and the peasantry. The more powerful agriculturist-military tribes and castes also became proprietors of land. Village communities fast disintegrated due to revenue-farming, causing the obliteration of many cherished customary rights and privileges of the ryots. The cultivators gradually lost their customary rights and privileges, while as new classes intervened between the actual tillers of the soil and the state, the profits of agriculture could not go back to the land, but were intercepted by the increasing group of intermediaries. A class not altogether new to India, the landless proletariat comprising of serfs and farm hands, also multiplied and was soon to come to great prominence in the economic life of the country. Agrestic slavery in all probability became common in the eighteenth century. "All villages were abandoned wholesale by the peasantry due to heavy assessment; men, women and children were sold in slavery. Some peasants absconded to escape tyranny, and took refuge with Rajas, who were in open rebellion, and consequently the fields lay empty and grew into wildernesses," recorded Pelsaert in the reign of Jahangir when oppression was less severe than in the subsequent period. In the reign of Shah Jahan the system of *Jāgirdārs*, Governors and contract-farmers became widely prevalent as pointed out by Bernier. He vividly delineates its pernicious economic effects: "The persons put in possession of the land have an authority almost absolute over the peasantry, and nearly as much over the artisans and merchants of the towns and villages within their district; and nothing can be imagined more cruel and oppressive than the manner in which it is exercised." Neither the peasants nor the

artisans, nor again the traders and merchants could obtain adequate redress of wrongs meted out to them from their "merciless oppressors", since the distance from the Imperial capital made the people's grievances inaccessible to the Court, while the local Kajis were not invested with adequate powers. "This debasing state of slavery," Bernier concludes, "obstructs the progress of trade and influences the manners and mode of life of every individual." Again, "the cudgel and the whip compel the people to incessant labour for the benefit of others; and driven to despair by every kind of cruel treatment, their revolt or their flight is only prevented by the presence of a military force". Prisoners of war were distributed under the Mughul regime as slaves among the fief-holders and officers, and their descendants as they multiplied, continued in slavery. Referring to the devastating famine in the Coromandel Coast in 1616-1618 that destroyed many people, Methinold records that "parents have brought thousands of their young children to the seaside, selling their child for 5 famans of rice". The starving slaves were bought by the European factors at Masulipatam, and Negapatam for export to Batavia and Achin. A lurid description of the famine which ravaged Gujarat, Sind, the Deccan and Vijayanagar in 1630-32 is handed down to us by the Dutch merchant, van Twist, "Cattle died. In towns and villages, in fields and on roads, men lay dead in great numbers, causing such a stench that it was terrible to use the ways. For want of grass, cattle fed on the corpses; men took the carcasses of beasts to eat; some in desperation went about searching for bones which had been gnawed by dogs. As the famine increased, people abandoned towns and villages, and wandered helplessly. Men deserted their wives and children. Women sold themselves as slaves. Mothers sold their children. Children deserted by their parents sold themselves. Some families took poison, and so died together, other threw themselves into the rivers. Others cut up the corpses of men, and drew out the entrails to fill their own bellies; yes, men lying in the street, not yet dead, were cut up by others, and men fed on living men, so that even in the streets and still more on road journeys, men ran great danger of being murdered and eaten. Terrible tragedies were seen every day. Thus famine lasted throughout the year, and pestilence and fever followed, so that scarcely a healthy man could be found." Peter Mundy gives the following prices of slaves at the time of this famine: "the prices of children are 12 d., 6 d. and 3 (?) pence a piece. Adult slaves can be bought for 4 as. to 8 as. a piece, and good ones



for one rupee a piece". Abul Hamid Lahori, Shah Jahan's chronicler, also observes : "Men began to devour each other, and the flesh of a son was preferred to his love". John Marshall, who saw the effects of the famine that devastated Bihar in 1670-71 observes in respect of people being sold en mass as slaves ; "a great number can be purchased for next to nothing." Van Graff, the Dutch traveller, also wrote about the Bihar famine in 1671 : "Slaves could be bought for next to nothing."

Devastating epidemics also caused widespread unsettlement, misery and abandonment of habitations by people who sold themselves off for nothing. Instances of fulminating diseases are malaria which ravaged Gaur in 1575, plague which scourged Northern and Western India between 1616 and 1623, Bijapur in 1689, and the Deccan in 1703-04, and cholera, known in the western ports as Mordechin, from the vernacular and mentioned by Thevenot, Fryer and Linschoten. The common remedy adopted for cholera which would cause death within twenty-four hours, was the application of red hot iron to the feet, or binding exceedingly tight the body from head to foot. Another common disease was blood dysentery, mentioned by Thevenot as causing heavy mortality. Both drought and disease took a heavy toll, in the Mughul period, of human lives and caused the destitution and enslavement of thousands. In a Bengali document (1729) we read that a person sold himself for ever with his wife and children for Rs. 11 only on the condition that his descendants would be likewise bound to serve his master's descendants for all generations to come. When holdings were sold off such serfs were also transferred to the new owner. Another region where agrestic serfdom was rather general was Malabar, where according to Barbosa and other European travellers, during the Mughul period the cultivators and labourers were slaves. Agricultural servitude is to be distinguished from domestic servitude, and seemed to have prevailed in the frontiers of civilisation, in the jungles, in northern Bihar, northern and eastern Bengal, Malabar and Canara, where a feudal agrarian organisation superimposed upon low-caste slaves of the plough, was appropriate for general protection and extension of agriculture. In the later decades, due to the extension of cultivated area and reclamation of virgin land there was an increasing demand for free labour and agrestic serfdom gradually declined or its archaic features got rid of. Agriculture, industry and commerce were all dislocated, as the Mughul imperial authority waned and the

Marathas constantly harried several of the Mughul provinces, levied Chauth and Sardeshmukhi, with the alternative of fire and sword. A complete cessation of English trade in calicoes took place in the last decade of the 17th century. Its effect was thus pointed out by Aurangzeb's chronicler, "Thus ensued a great economic impoverishment of India—not only a decrease of the 'national stock', but also a rapid lowering of mechanical skill and standard of civilization, a disappearance of art and culture over wide tracts of the country". Almost simultaneously prohibitory duties were first imposed in the year 1700 in England against the import of Indian calicoes, paving the way towards the gradual ruin of the Indian cloth and silk-weaving industries. The first decade of the 18th century was also a period of scarcity and famine in India, famine affecting the weavers in the Deccan in 1705-08 and in the Coromandel Coast and Bengal in 1709-11. The gradual displacement of the weaving population, which was the most considerable section among the industrial workers, from the handicraft, and their crowding on the land, marked from the close of the eighteenth century, were synchronous with a rapid multiplication of population. Population increase, de-industrialisation and rapid expansion of the landless proletariat invested the Indian social structure with features which became more sharply defined as the nineteenth century progressed.



## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### THE EUROPEAN STRUGGLE FOR COMMERCE AND EMPIRE IN INDIA

#### The Great Emporia of the Indo-European Spice Trade

Throughout the Middle Ages the world demand for spices maintained a brisk and lucrative trade in the Asian waters. Spices were eagerly sought by the then entire civilised world, by India, Western Asia, Egypt and Europe. It was the Chinese, who landing upon the Moluccas or the Spice Islands, discovered the clove and the nutmeg, in consequence of which a taste for these commodities was diffused over India, and thence extended to Persia and to Europe. The Chinese merchants had their active trade relations in the 13th and 14th centuries with Malabar as recorded by Marco Polo and Ibn Batuta. Kayal, Quilon, Calicut, Hili (Monte de Ely) were then the most important ports visited by the Chinese traders who avidly sought pepper and spices. In the Chinese record of Chu Fan-che of the 13th century, we find that the Chinese were fully acquainted with the Chola Kingdom. In the 15th century, both Ma Huan (1406) and Fei Hsin (1436) speak of the Chinese trade in the south. The former refers to Chinese silk goods being exchanged for pearls and precious stones. The latter mentions as merchandise gold, silver, satins, blue and white porcelains, beads, musk, quicksilver and camphor. At Calicut there was a Chinese colony with "sumptuous idol temples," and perhaps there was another settlement at Negapatam as evidenced by the remains of a Chinese pagoda. Chinese traders visited the Coromandel Coast, and the ports of Kaveripattanam (the Fattah of Arab writers) and Mailapatam are mentioned in this connection. Thus, they were active participators in the trade between the Far East and the Empire of Vijayanagara. Trading in Southern India and Ceylon from the early centuries B.C. they first came to know the Arabs in the eastern waters in 628 A.D. and a century later we find Canton being described by Kien-Tehen (742-54) as frequented by the Persians, Malays, Ceylonese, Arabs, and Indians coming in ships laden with incense, herbs, jewels and other precious products. Southern India from the beginning of this millenium to

the rise of the Arabs experienced the intimate contact between India and China. This was dominated by the lure of trade in such scarce Indian merchandise as the spices, cotton and silk goods and precious stones while the contact between India and China in the Tarim basin that was contemporaneous was of far greater spiritual and human significance due to the diffusion of the spiritual, aesthetic and humanistic elements of Indian culture from Kashmir to Korea and from Mongolia to Indo-China. The 9th and 10th centuries saw the enormous rise to prominence of the Arabs in the trade of the Indian Ocean from Malabar to Sumatra and Indo-China, as testified by the Arab geographers. "Mabar extending in length from Quilon to Nellore" was rightly appreciated by the Arab writer Wassaf as "the key of Hind". It is significant that the great marts of this pepper region were the magnets attracting the Romans, the Chinese, the Arabs and the Portuguese in succession across the centuries. The routes of trade to the coasts of Malabar and Coromandel have been the same for millenia and the great marts have been found almost on the same sites for centuries unless the erosive action of the sea and river has removed them to short distances. The Arab merchants who traversed the Roman routes and gradually engrossed almost all the commerce of the East soon turned their attention to Malabar, Ceylon and Moluccas, repaired to their ancient marts in large numbers and developed an exceedingly profitable trade with Europe in pepper and other spices in the 13th and 14th centuries.

The great emporiums of this trade in the Asiatic waters were at Ormuz, Aden, Suakin, Tor, Sofala, Cannanore, Quilon, Calicut, Malacca. Ormuz on the land route and Tor on the Red Sea route were then the gateways of the West. From Ormuz the commodities from Japan, China, Siam, Cambodia, the Spice Islands, Malaya and India were transported in ships up the Persian Gulf and the river Euphrates, and by caravans on to Aleppo and Damascus and Trebizond whence they were distributed all over Asia Minor, and Southern and Western Europe, and throughout Muscovy. The merchandise collected at Mocha was sent on to Tor or to Suez, and thence by caravan to Grand Cairo, and down the Nile to Alexandria and Rhodes from where it was shipped to Venice, Naples, Genoa, Barcelona and other parts of the Mediterranean. Tor, near the head of the Gulf of Suez, was a port of great importance in the trade between Syria and India, but declined with the rise of importance of Suez as the emporium



of the Red Sea. Berbera and Zeila, ports of the Somali territory, and Massowah, the great outlet of the Abyssinian trade, were intermediate stations in this important route to the West. Indian merchants were encountered at Aden by Ibn Batuta, who called it "the port of the Indians" coming from Cambay, Quilon, Calicut, and many other Malabar ports. Massowah is another port visited by the Indians. It is here that the Portuguese first sought trade with Abyssinia at the close of the Middle Ages.

### Spices and Politics

At the beginning of the 16th century the Empire of the Ottoman Turks reached its maximum power. The Turks were formidable not merely by land but also by sea, and their victory over the Venetians at Lepanto in 1499 and their conquest of Egypt in 1516 and of the Island of Rhodes in 1522 established their suzerainty over the Eastern Mediterranean which led to the strangulation of the Indo-European trade. This in its turn led to the adventurous geographical explorations and trading voyages from Europe in the 16th century in which the Portuguese played the chief role. The quest of trade or territory which inspired the bold explorations of John Cabot, Columbus, Magellan and Vasco da Gama laid the scientific and commercial foundations of modern Europe. As Sir George Birdwood aptly observed, "The history of modern Europe and emphatically of England, is the history of the quest of the aromatic gum, raisins and balsams and condiments and spices in India, Farther India and the Indian Archipelago." Thus spices made history as rubber and petroleum are making today. To be more accurate, Christians and condiments made history, since the Portuguese, the earliest European merchants and adventurers in Asia, were inspired as much by religious zeal as by the lure of profits in the Eastern spice trade. As early as 1486-1488, a Portuguese envoy came to the Malabar coast and visited the ports of Calicut, Cannanore and Goa with a view to explore the possibilities of the Indian spice trade. This was a decade earlier than the celebrated voyage of Vasco da Gama and was apparently among the first serious European commercial ventures. This was preceded by the travel in India of the Venetian merchant, Nicolo Conti (1419-1444) who first disembarked at Cambay, saw Vijayanagara, Paliconda, Pudipatana, Quilon, Calicut and Maliapur and also visited the Ganges basin, touching at Cernovi (Konnangara) and Buffetania (Burdwan) and finally reaching the very powerful city

of Matrazia (Mathura). This was only a few years before the fall of Constantinople into the hands of the Turks (1453) that was the first blow to the prosperity of Venetian commerce and was succeeded by the annexation of Syria and Egypt to the Ottoman Empire (1516-17), ruining Italian commercial prosperity and stimulating the epoch-making explorations of Columbus, Magellan and Gama. Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope in 1498 and landed at Calicut in India. It was he who made the first Portuguese settlement at Cochin. The Arab merchants who had long controlled the Asiatic trade resented the advent of the white people.

### The Entry of Portuguese into Asian Waters

There was in fact some amount of concerted Muhammedan opposition to the coming of the Portuguese to the Eastern seas. First, the opening of the sea-route to the West via the Cape of Good Hope meant that the rulers of Arabia and Egypt who imposed duties on goods passing up the Red Sea to Suez and thence by caravan to Cairo and Alexandria would suffer seriously. Secondly, the Muhammedan kingdoms in India, of Gujarat, Bijapur and the rest apprehended that the Portuguese would ultimately seize the northern ports, just as they had obtained the southern from the Hindu rulers. Thirdly, the Portuguese came to seek both Christians and spices, and this aroused religious opposition. But the Portuguese gradually pushed their way in. In 1511 they seized Malacca where all traffic between India, Farther India, the Indian Archipelago and China was concentrated. The city of Malacca had a population of about 100,000 and, according to Barbosa, was the richest trading port, possessing the most valuable merchandise and most numerous shipping and extensive traffic that is known in all the world. Two years later (1513) the Portuguese established their suzerainty over Ormuz, the island at the mouth of the Persian Gulf through which the entire Eastern trade passed on its way to Persia and thence to Europe. About two centuries earlier, Ibn Batuta described Ormuz as the port from which the wares from India and Sind are despatched to the Iraqus, Fars and Khorasan. Fitch (1583-1591) observed: "In this town are merchants of all nations, and many Moores and Gentiles. Here is a very great trade of all sorts of spices, drugs, silks, cloth of silke, fine tapestrie of Persia, great store of pearles which come from the isle of Baharim, and are the best pearles of all others, and many horses of Persia, which serve all India." A link was established with China as early as 1517,



and a settlement established at Macao. Colombo was occupied in 1518. From the advantageous stepping stone of Malacca in Malaya they appeared with a strong force in the Moluccas in 1521, and soon established their monopoly of the trade in spices. The establishment of other far eastern settlements in Kamboj, Sumatra, Java, Borneo and the Celebes also helped to maintain their overlordship of the vast Asiatic route from the Cape of Good Hope to the Persian Gulf and thence through Ceylon and Bengal to the Malay Peninsula and Archipelago which was commanded by war vessels from Goa, the central pivot of the Portuguese Empire in the East. In the Bay of Bengal the Portuguese held Hooghly, Pipili, Chittagong, St. Thome, Negapatam and Jafnapatam. On the Arabian seaboard the Portuguese occupied Diu, Daman, Chaul, Bassein, Mangalore, Cannanore, Calicut, Cochin, Goa and other places. "Golden Goa" was the seat of the Portuguese Viceroy with five captains under him, placed at Mozambique, Ormuz, Muskat, Ceylon and Malacca. Thus the lucrative business, which formerly had been in the hands of the Arab merchants and which was carried on via the Red Sea through Alexandria, Genoa and Venice, was largely wrested from their hands by the Portuguese in the opening decades of the 16th century. For about a hundred years the Portuguese held their own against the Muhammedan world, and carried on their commerce as well as the proselytizing activity in the spread of Christianity in the Eastern world with fanatical zeal.

### **The Foundations of the Portuguese Empire in India**

It is significant that the first European explorer and merchant acquainted himself with the Indies in the coast of Malabar, the only region in India to grow the much-coveted pepper, and in whose ports were sold the diamonds and precious stones of Golconda and the famous Coromandel muslins, of which Marco Polo wrote: "In sooth they both look like tissue of a spider's web; there is no king or queen in the world but might be glad to wear them," and which the Portuguese later on gave the trade name Betecla (veiling). Malabar was the halfway house for the traffic of the Indian Ocean coming from China, the Spice Islands, Pegu and Bengal on the one hand, and the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf on the other, where Arab, Indian and Chinese ships found also a safe anchorage in the backwaters during the monsoon season. Its important ports, viz. Cochin and Calicut, were the sources of the supply of rice and ginger and the whole

of the pepper of Malabar and of precious stones of Narsinga (Vijayanagara), as Albuquerque found in 1513. Malabar in fact was a busy hive of ocean-borne commerce with a vast assemblage of shipping from different seas that must have impressed the newcomers.

Besides, in Malabar, where Hindu Rajahs were ruling in Calicut, Cochin and Cannanore, the Portuguese were safer than if they had landed on the maritime Provinces of Gujerat, Ahmednagar or Bijapur under Muhammedan rulers who would have at once withstood the new challenge to trade monopoly of their co-religionists. As a matter of fact, the most powerful Hindu state of the South, Vijayanagara, stood out against the formation of the coalition of the Muhammedan States against the Portuguese on their advent, while the Portuguese could easily play one Hindu State against its inimical neighbour in spite of their cruelty, frightfulness and high-handed treatment in regard to the prices of pepper they bought for Europe.

In the last year of the 15th century when Vasco da Gama returned to Portugal from Calicut, the King of Portugal wrote in a spirit of banter and bravado to the King of Spain that the real Indies was discovered not by Columbus but by "a nobleman of our household," who had brought with him "cinnamon, cloves, ginger, nutmeg, pepper, also many fine stones of all sorts, so that henceforth all Christendom in this part of Europe shall be able to provide itself with those spices and precious stones." But Vasco da Gama reported that to obtain a share of this lucrative trade a good deal of hard fighting was necessary with the fleet of the Moors of Arabia and Malabar and of the Sultan of Egypt. Nor was there any Christian power in India to aid the Portuguese against the Moors.

### **The Significance of Naval Power in the Old and New Worlds**

Vasco da Gama was the founder of the Portuguese empire in India, and died in 1524 at Cochin where the first European factory and fortress were built in Asia. Almeida was the first Viceroy in India appointed by the King of Portugal in 1505, the "man on the spot" who would remain at his post for three years, thereby systematising the commercial and colonial activity that could no longer be left to the offchance of annual arrival of a fleet from home. He stabilised and extended the Portuguese empire by seizing the strategic settlements of Socotra and Ormuz, defeating the Egyptian fleet at Diu on the Arabian Sea coast and controlling the pepper and cinnamon trade



of Malabar by his command of the Indian Ocean. He was the first empire-builder from the West to grasp the significance of sea power in the Indies. "Let it be known for certain that as long as you may be powerful at sea, you will hold India as yours; and if you do not possess this power, little will avail you a fortress on shore." D'Albuquerque who succeeded him as Viceroy in 1509, founded Goa, the Portuguese capital of the Indies, and seized the strategic port of Malacca (1511), the gateway to the Far East, thus obtaining the command of the entire Asiatic spice, salt and metal trade.

Gradually, under successive Portuguese Viceroys of the East Indies a string of strategic points was secured for directing the entire Eastern trade in silk and spices to Lisbon, instead of through the channels of Alexandria, Aleppo and Venice; Mozambique, Sofala and Melinda on the coast of Africa; Muscat and Ormuz on the Persian Gulf; Mocha and Socotra at the mouth of the Red Sea; Diu, Daman, Goa and Cochin on the Arabian Sea Coast of India; Colombo in Ceylon; Negapatam and St. Thome on the Coromandel Coast; Pipili, Hughli and Chittagong in the Bay of Bengal; Malacca in the East Indies and Macao in China. Gradually, in Indonesia several settlements were later on founded. All were linked up with "Golden Goa" in India, the seat of the Portuguese empire in Asia. Soon what Albuquerque foretold in 1511 came to be true. "If the Portuguese were only to take Malacca out of the hands of the Moors, Cairo and Mecca would be entirely ruined, and Venice would then be able to obtain no spiceries except what her merchants might buy in Portugal."

Meanwhile, Columbus's plan of reaching India via the Atlantic was followed up by other Spanish explorers and adventurers who, however, discovered mines of gold and silver in Peru and Mexico, another empire in another continent. The flow of gold and silver into Europe raised the price level throughout this continent, stimulated industry and big business enterprise by increasing profits and underlay the beginnings of the colonial empire of Europe in the 17th century. In Southern Asia the quest of spices and silk, then the most valuable commodities of world commerce, was linked up with the commercial development and colonial expansion of modern Europe. Much of the precious metals that Europe derived from Mexico and Peru found their way to India, which exchanged these for her various industrial products, especially cloth goods, indigo and saltpetre. The expan-

sion of world commerce, with India occupying the central position, would not have been possible in the 17th century without the improvement of shipping and navigation, due to the frequent naval conflicts in the Asiatic seas far away from the home waters, the adventurous spirit and greed of the European voyagers and merchants, and the abundant supply of bullion or specie transported in European ships from far across the Pacific into the Indian Ocean.

### Portuguese Piracy and Trade Monopoly

Throughout the 16th century the Portuguese sought to hinder as far as possible the Egyptian and Venetian trade between India and the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf with a view to substitute European merchandise for sale in India and divert to Portugal all the trade of the East with Europe. Piracy was resorted to, and Indian ships were plundered and sunk in Western waters without mercy with this end in view. All Arab and Indian merchants were compelled to obtain passports from the Portuguese at Diu before they were permitted to sail any further towards the East. William Finch (1610) writes from Surat in respect of the Portuguese cartaz thus: "None (ships) may passe without the Portugalls passe, for what, how much and whither they please to give licence, erecting a custome on the sea, with confiscation of shippe and goods not showing it in the full quantitie to the taker and examiner." Even the Mughuls were faine to give them heavy sums for cartaz for the pilgrim voyage to the Red Sea. All ships had to pay, besides cartaz fees, customs duties at Ormuz, Bassein and Malacca to the Portuguese, who also, according to Pyrard, "searched all the ships to see if any merchandise is being carried that is contraband and prohibited by their king." Arms, pepper, spices, indigo, tobacco, ginger and cinnamon particularly were prohibited goods that could not be carried in any but Portuguese vessels; while routes to the Spice Islands and the Far East and to East Africa were reserved. English and Dutch merchants were excluded from trading in the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea or even entering their waters. Ships other than Portuguese could ply in the Asiatic waters only with the passes issued by the captain of one of their ports, and then only under stringent and even oppressive conditions. But Akbar's conquest of Gujarat in 1573 threw open the important port of Cambay to both foreign and Indian ships and merchants for trade with the Mughul Empire without the infringement of Portuguese rights. William



Finch (1608-1611) calls it "the mart of Guzurat" "so haunted by the Portugalls that you shall often finde two hundred frigates at once riding there." "It abundeth with all sort of cloth and rich drugges" (especially opium).

### The Great Mughul and the Tudor Queen

A decade after the conquest of Gujarat, the Great Mughul completing the unification of India, sought in 1583 to send an embassy to Portugal and Rome, proposing probably some sort of alliance with Europe against the Turks, but the mission did not proceed farther than Goa, the reluctant ambassador dying there in 1600. This was the first and unique gesture of goodwill of India to Europe. In the same year (1583) Queen Elizabeth from her distant island in the West gave a letter of introduction for Emperor Akbar to John Newbery, who was the first Englishman to make the land journey by the caravan route from Aleppo and Baghdad to Hormuz, and thence by sea as a captive in a Portuguese ship to Goa. In all probability this letter in which the Queen acclaimed Emperor Akbar as "the most invincible and most mightie prince", King of Cambaia, was presented to the Mughul Emperor in 1584 at Fatehpur Sikri, which Newbery reached after his escape from Goa and a circuitous journey to the Imperial Capital via Golconda and Burhanpur. Eight years later an English navigator Lancaster, for the first time, rounded the Cape of Good Hope and the southern point of Ceylon, reached the Nicobars (the Nakuta of Bengalee navigators, from *nagat*, ripe cocoanut), and the Malacca Strait, and arrived at Achin, where he found ships of different nations from Bengal, Pegu, Patani, Calicut, Malabar and Gujarat that had come there to trade. Before that the Spice Islands and the East Indies were already visited by the famous Drake during his great voyage of circumnavigation in 1577-1580. 1600 saw Elizabeth sending another envoy, John Mildenhall, to Akbar in search of trading privileges equal with those of the Portuguese. The same year witnessed the foundation of the East India Company in London for trading in the products of India and the East Indies. Two years later, in 1601, the Dutch United Company was established in Holland that played even a more important role than the English East India Company in the development of European trade and political power in Asia. That year also witnessed the establishment of Bantam in Java as the English capital of their Eastern territories.

**"Mare Liberum"**

No sooner had the Treaty of London (1609) established the principle of freedom of the seas than the struggle for that freedom was localised in the sea-routes, strategic islands and ports of the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean, where the Dutch and the English together challenged the commercial monopoly of the Portuguese, and subsequently fought with each other for the establishment of trade monopolies and privileges in India and the Spice Archipelago. "Mare Liberum" was violated from the very beginning of European traffic in the Eastern seas. It was a strange combination of political and economic circumstances and mutual relations among the Portuguese, the Dutch, the English and the French both in India and Europe that led the Dutch instead of the English, to found their Empire in the East Indies and the English to dominate the trade and carve out their empire in India, and, finally, the Portuguese and the French to lose both trade and empire everywhere in the East. The thriving commercial Provinces of Mughul India in the 17th century were Gujarat, the gateway of Western Asia and Africa, Coromandel and Bengal, through which flowed the rich trade in spices and cloth goods to the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea, and to Europe and Africa via Ceylon and the Cape of Good Hope. Surat in Gujarat, Masulipatam, Madras and Negapatam on the Coromandel Coast, and Hooghly in Bengal represented the principal strongholds where the battle for primacy in trade and acquisition of privileges and monopolies was fought out among the European powers, just as about a century earlier Diu, Bassein, Goa, St. Thome, Negapatam and Hooghly served as the bases of the foundation of commercial prosperity of the Portuguese in India. It was the Portuguese who first wrested from the Arabs and Indians the virtual monopoly of the Eastern trade by their command of Asiatic waters. At the same time, they introduced European luxuries such as Spanish and Canary wines, linen, coral and glass into the Asian markets.

The Portuguese were at the height of their power in the Eastern seas in the middle of the 16th century. But in this period sea-voyages were so long and perilous and the mortality in the small crowded ships so heavy that they never made any serious attempts towards colonisation and acquisition of territory in the hinterland, but confined themselves to occupation of strategic posts, straits and islands and their defence against attack so as to maintain their mastery over



the trade routes and exclusive monopoly over the Eastern trade. Both the Dutch and the English who appeared on the Eastern scene after a century had not merely commercial aims but also colonial ambitions that were manifest from the very start, especially in the case of the former. The Dutch under the leadership of Coen and Van Diemen soon secured an advantageous position in the Indian Archipelago. The English were handicapped in the East by the vacillations of the Directors between mercantile and political aims, the civil war in England, the caution of the English sovereigns and the rapid development of English colonial activities in America. In 1616 the English who had factories at Surat, Agra, Ahmedabad and Broach in Western India, and at Masulipatam and Petapoli on the Coromandel Coast, and carried on commerce from a considerable portion of India, Persia, and the Red Sea ports, reported to the East India Company that it was impracticable for them to open trade "in countries bordering on the Ganges" because of the Portuguese monopoly. In Bengal "for small shipping there were no ports but such as the Portuguese possessed." The important entrepôts of the Portuguese commerce in Bengal at that time were Hooghly, Chittagong and Pipili. Hooghly and Chittagong were called *Portopequens* and *Portogrande* respectively by the Portuguese during the 10th century, referring to the small and big estuaries of the Ganges. Saptagram or Satagam which stood on the confluence of the Bhagirati and Saraswati and was the most famous port of South Asia for more than sixteen centuries, suddenly declined in importance during the last decades of the 16th century due to the silting of the two rivers, and in its place rose Hooghli. In 1585 Ralph Fitch found Saptagram "a fair city, for a city of the Moors, and very plentiful of all things." The last was founded by the Portuguese as early as 1514 and was as important a strategic settlement as Chittagong on the eastern estuary in Bengal and Negapatam on the Coromandel Coast, whence their fleet could protect their commerce from Coromandel and Orissa to Arakan and thence to Malacca and Ceylon. The monopoly of the East Indian trade was successfully maintained by the Portuguese against the challenge of the newcomers almost throughout the 16th century and the first quarter of the 17th century.

### The Phenomenal Expansion of Indian Trade in Calicoes

The competition between the different European powers led to a phenomenal expansion of the Indian trade in calicoes, indigo and

saltpetre with Europe and Asia and Africa in the 17th century. The total volume of India's cloth exports alone may be estimated, on the basis of Moreland's data and other statistics, at about 60 million of sq. yards of which Europe took 32 million (25,000 bales). Of the latter the English trade was represented by about 15,000 bales. It is difficult to estimate the value of this merchandise, since the prices are given according to pieces that varied a great deal in size and quality. Reckoning on an average the value of exported piecegoods at 40 florins per 100 sq. yards, the value of cotton goods exported to Europe would be about £ 1.3 millions, and the total cloth export might be valued at £ 2.4 millions. This does not include the silk goods exported from Bengal where silk manufacture was localised in Cossimbazar which, according to Tavernier, produced 22,000 bales of silk per annum for export. This would amount to something like 44 million sq. yards of silk and would be valued at about Rs. 78 lakhs, besides silk fabrics made at Ahmedabad used to be exported in large quantities, especially by the Dutch, to the East Indies and other neighbouring countries that are not accounted for here. Eighteenth century statistics show that cotton piecegoods valued at £ 2.9 millions were exported to the West. Indian handicrafts industry not only produced the necessities of life as well as luxury articles for the home market of a big and populous empire but also disposed of its surplus to the then civilized world, drawing all its gold and silver. At the beginning of the 17th century, Edward Terry (1616-1619) referred to the vast quantity of precious metals coming from Europe to India. "Many silver streams run thither (into India), as all rivers to the sea, it being lawful for any nation to bring in silver and fetch commodities, but a crime not less than capital to carry a great sum thence." Between 1666 and 1674 the English East India Company exported bullion of the amount of £ 11.6 lakhs. The Dutch annual investment in this period in Bengal was of the order of £ 2 lakhs. The bullion export increased considerably since 1674. Between 1674 and 1694 the average was £ 4 lakhs a year. The same amount could be easily presumed for the Dutch annual export. Davenant asserted that of the total of £ 800 millions of gold and silver brought from America and silver produced from the European mines, £ 150 millions was "carried away and sunk in the East Indies". This vast influx of gold and silver into India profoundly affected her economy. The Mughul mints of Rajmahal, Murshidabad, Dacca and Surat were busy coining the silver bullion



into rupees in ever-increasing amounts. Barter and the use of cowries were completely superseded by silver in the towns and marts of India. India's cotton and silk goods, indigo and saltpetre could now find a world market as foreign merchants explored the interior of the country ready to buy everything with unprecedented amounts of silver in hand. This gave a tremendous fillip to Indian production in general which rose to new heights. India became the hub of world commerce. The political consequences of the influx of silver were not inconsiderable either. It was immediately before Jehangir's death that the Viceroy of Bengal began to send tribute to the Emperor at Delhi to the extent of Rs. 10 lakhs instead of elephants and art objects. From 1688 the Mughul Viceroy Shaista Khan began to send to the Imperial treasury Rs. 8 lakhs annually. It was the vast amount of Bengal's tribute to the Emperor in Delhi that enabled Aurangzeb to carry on his long campaign in the Deccan, just as in the later decades it was the Bengal revenue which helped the English to fight their Maratha and other wars. The flow of gold and silver from Peru, Mexico and Europe into India raised the price level throughout the sub-continent and stimulated industry and big business enterprise by increasing profits and underlay the beginnings of modernisation and technology when these were unexpectedly interrupted by the struggle for mastery among the European powers. India's economy gradually was trimmed to the requirements of European colonial expansion and the fortified European strategic settlements in the coast areas of Gujarat, Coromandel and Bengal became the centres at once of political ambition and commercial monopoly in the wider background of political struggle and trade rivalry among the Dutch, the English and French. But all this was to come in due course of time.

India's inland and foreign trade and shipping also were, in the 17th and 18th centuries, more highly developed than in most civilized countries; while there were rich financial houses which had establishments in the principal commercial centres within the country and also abroad in the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea and the Indian Archipelago. The luxury and extravagance both of the nobility and the merchants were, however, in sharp contrast, as in contemporary Europe, with the poverty and low standards of living of the majority of the population. Yet surveying four centuries of wages and prices we find that real wages in Northern India in terms of five principal foodgrains in 1938 were one-half

to two-fifths of those in the beginning of the 17th century. The deterioration of the standard of living in the 19th century is especially marked by the reduction of use or even omission of clothes and blankets, butter, oil, salt and sugar. The economic conditions of the common people in the 17th and 18th centuries were not depressed by overcrowding in agriculture, the population being estimated in 1600 at only 100 millions as compared with 400 millions of today. "The vacation from agriculture" was amply utilised in handloom weaving and spinning and in various other arts and handicrafts, while the vast volume of export of cottons, silks, indigo, saltpetre and luxury articles maintained a balance of trade in favour of India that became in fact the sink of the world's precious metals.

But the considerable increase of export of cloth goods to England towards the end of the 17th century, coupled with the rise of cotton industry in Paisley and Manchester, indirectly brought about the economic debacle of India. About 2,141,000 pieces of chintz and other cloth goods going from India to England each year (1680-1683) at the end of the 17th century threatened to kill English silk and woollen industries. Thus the year 1700 saw the first imposition of prohibitory duties upon the import of Indian calicoes in England. The Indian trade in calicoes inevitably began to shrink. Meanwhile, the ancient shipping of the Gujaratis, Malabaris, Kalingans and Bengalees in the Asiatic waters was killed by European piracy and monopoly, especially as the Mughul emperors failed to develop a strong navy for the protection of the Indian mercantile marine that used to ply in the Asiatic waters from Sofala, Mocha and Ormuz in the West to Malacca and Macao in the East and that represented a far heavier tonnage per vessel than the average of the European ship of the 17th century. The English monopoly of shipping as well as competition first with the English woollen and silk industries and then with the Lancashire cotton industry ultimately led to the ruin of the Indian handloom industries, and India was started on the road of complete economic dependence on Great Britain. But both the industrial decline of India and the rise of capitalistic industry in England were tardy prior to the Industrial Revolution. The close of the 17th century saw the extension of the wars in Europe to the European colonies beyond the seas, the considerable extension of British colonies in North America and the foundation of the British Empire in India by a trading company. In the ebb and flow of colonial development of the



European powers, British trade and finance prospered immensely through the monopoly and graft system in India and the establishment of the calico-printing industry in England based on the import of Indian calicoes. The phenomenal expansion of British commerce and accumulation of species flowing from the Indian factories-cum-ports contributed not a little to the rise of British capitalism.

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### THE FOUNDATION OF THE BRITISH DOMINION

#### The Anglo-Dutch Conflict in the Indies

It was a historical accident that gave the English East India Company their mastery over India as the Dutch Company preoccupied itself in the Archipelago in the beginning of the 17th century. Until the 18th century it was not India but the Archipelago of the East Indies which was considered the greater prize for the Dutch, the English and the French because of spices, pepper and gold; while in the 17th century the Dutch as compared with the English took up the East Indian enterprises on a much bigger and more ambitious scale. The Dutch East India Company showed the adventure and resolve of a puissant nation that emerged successfully from its fight with the Spanish monarchy; while the English Company suffered at the beginning not only from the vacillation and pusillanimity of Elizabeth and James I but also from the caution of the Directors in Leaden Hall stressing that quiet trading succeeds while the "keep of soldiers beggars a nation". But "the men on the spot" insisted on a policy of fortification, acquisition of lands and a vigorous offensive according to political conditions and opportunities that naturally varied from time to time and in different areas of settlement. The Directors after about six decades thus revised their policy and imitated "the wise Dutch" who used from the beginning the strong arm, and had as many as 170 forts and fortified places in India in 1666.

The Dutch experience in both India and the East Indies was in fact invaluable for the success of the English in India as they, in imitation of their stronger rival, tried to run their factories in such manner as these could pay their own expenses and defend themselves against aggression, if necessary, with fortification and acquisition of adjacent hinterland. The disorder in the country, the harassment and exactions of the Provincial Governors, local Rajas and their officials and the unscrupulous methods of their European rivals, the Portuguese and the Dutch, all encouraged the transformation of their factories and warehouses into forts with armed garrisons; while



the stronger and more numerous the forts and armaments, the more ardently they were sought as allies by one or the other of the various warring rulers in the period of confusion. Thus military power and territorial sovereignty were early sought by the English along with trade in Gujarat, Carnatic and Bengal. Meanwhile the Dutch themselves permitted their naval power to dwindle though even in 1723 the French traveller Lullier reported that "if the Dutch were the richest nation in the Indies they were likewise the most powerful and those who carried on the greatest trade." On the other hand, the decline of the Dutch power in the East Indies was in some measure due to their growing expenditure in the maintenance of numerous fleets, garrisons and fortresses that gradually wiped out the enormous profits from their trade in Surat, Bengal, Coromandel and the Indian Archipelago. The system of commercial monopoly which they inherited from the Portuguese and to which they stuck rigidly, in spite of the wise counsels of several governors-general, hindered the development of the economic resources of Ceylon, Malabar and the Indian Archipelago whose pepper and spices also encountered a reduced demand in Europe due to change in taste and development of mixed farming that obviated the necessity of preservation of beef for the general body of the population. The economy of these tropical and sub-tropical regions, based on monoculture, proved far less flexible in a regime of commercial monopoly and exploitation than that of the rich agricultural and industrial regions of Gujarat, Coromandel and Bengal.

### **Advantages of the East India Company over their Dutch and French Rivals**

The English East India Company enjoyed the obvious initial advantage that it was the might of the Dutch arms that destroyed the Portuguese monopoly in India, Ceylon and Spice Islands and paved the way for prosperous English trade. They had not to incur the vast expenditure on the maintenance of the navy, garrisons and fortresses that burdened the Dutch Company. Nor could any maritime power succeed in the battle of India with their strongest settlements only in Malabar and Ceylon, for the Dutch did not assume responsibilities of sovereignty in Surat, Coromandel and Bengal although it was these areas that were the sources of their greater commercial gains on the whole. In these three regions the English gradually wrested more and more advantageous trade privileges than the

Dutch from the Indian rulers, and their profits went on expanding by leaps and bounds as commercial monopoly and political power aided each other. Even Bengal that yielded annual profits of hundreds of thousands of guilders began to show frequently losses for the Dutch Company after 1720. With diminution of their naval superiority, the Dutch sought to retain trading privileges in India by means of flattery and presents to the Indian rulers; while their other rivals the French, under Dupleix, could even capture Masulipatam much to their chagrin in 1750. The grandiose plans of the French statesman Colbert to share in the profits of the Dutch and the English trade of the East Indies by establishing a string of settlements from Madagascar and East Africa to parts of Persia and India went awry due to the misfortunes of the French fleet on the sea and quarrels among the directors and subordinates of the French Company. The European war in the later decades injured French trade and led to the inefficiency of the Company's factories in Bengal, Gujarat, Malabar and Coromandel, that was aggravated by the incapacity of several successive governors at Pondicherry, and financial bankruptcy.

But it was the French whom the English emulated in certain important matters of Indian policy and army organisation. For the French first began to negotiate political alliances with Indian chiefs and rulers, and also train Indian sepoys in methods of European warfare whom they led for conquests, in the interior far away from their forts and factories on the coast. As a matter of fact among the European powers it was the French who could first establish their dominion over a large territory in the Indian peninsula that lasted, however, for only two decades. The ultimate failure of the French in India who also had their settlements at the strategic positions of Surat, Pondicherry, Masulipatam and Chandernagore was due to the fact that naval superiority could win for the English the maritime province of Bengal with its enormous resources and trade and river connections with the North. Both Dupleix and Clive dreamt of a European empire, arising out of the ruins of the Mughul Empire in India. But Dupleix's vision, which centred round the mastery of the Carnatic, was geographically destined to fail, as Clive's centred round the Ganges delta was to succeed.

For the supremacy over Bengal the English had not merely to defeat Nawab Sirajuddowla at Plassey but also the French at Chandernagore and the Dutch at Chinsura. It was the suzerainty over



Bengal that assured the English the command of the wealth of Hindustan with which they ultimately won the Indian Empire. They, however, themselves pinned their best hopes on the trade with the Arabian Sea Coast for the fortunes of their venture in the East Indies.

A brief survey of the early developments of British trade and enterprise that at the beginning were concentrated in the Arabian Sea and the Coromandel coasts would show this. On the Arabian Sea coast the initial victories of the English over the Portuguese fleet at Surat, Calicut, Cannanore and Jusk between 1612 and 1635 and their capture of the far-famed port of Ormuz from the Portuguese in 1621 destroyed all over the world the prestige of the Portuguese whose armadas had ranged over the Asiatic waters from the Persian Gulf to the China Sea, and opened for the English the gateway to the lucrative Eastern commerce both by land via Cameroon and Basra and by sea via Mocha and the Cape. In the Bay of Bengal the English first obtained footholds in 1633 at Hariharpore and Balasore, for several decades the principal European settlements in the Bay, whence pilots conducted European ships up the river Hooghly; later at Hooghly in 1651 and even earlier (1611) at Masulipatam and Petapoli that were, indeed, of far greater significance for English strategy. The cheap and coloured moorees and percoles from the Coromandel Coast could be easily exchanged for the spices of the Indian Archipelago, and thus an exceedingly profitable trade in spices with Europe could be developed by the English without the transfer of much bullion for the purchase of spices satisfying the demands of the Mercantilists. On the other hand, Bengal's political weakness and natural geographical advantage were Britain's opportunities. But piracy, shoaling on the mouth of the Hooghly and the dangers from the Portuguese and then from the Dutch naval vessels that scoured the Bay of Bengal, delayed the first entry of an English ship into the Hooghly river till 1679, i.e. about three decades following the establishment of their first factory in Bengal at Hooghly (1651). The political and economic significance of this remarkable voyage of Captain John Strafford up the Ganges has escaped the attention of Indian historians. The Captain was instructed by the Company to proceed, with the utmost care, as far as Hooghly, "as a precedent for the Company's ships not to remain in the dangerous road of Balasore at the breaking out of the monsoon but for their

safety and for the better lading of goods to go into the river," and also "to get the best information he can of the shoals, channels and setting of the tides."

The English then gradually obtained differential trade privileges in respect of freedom from custom and transit duties in Bengal and Orissa from the Nawabs of Bengal enabling them to easily oust not only the Portuguese, Dutch and French merchants but also the nationals in trade. This was accomplished, however, not without opposition. First, the Portuguese, after their expulsion by the Mughuls from Hooghly and Hijli, did not easily let go their hold on the trade of Bengal. Secondly, the Dutch constantly resisted the English, and not only jealously excluded the English from their own settlements in Bengal but sought to undermine English trade in stations that the latter acquired by treaties with the Nawab. Thirdly, the Interlopers started a new trade and caused no little inconvenience and harassment. Finally, the local underlings of the Nawabs sometimes hampered the movements of commodities for trade with a view to extort money from foreign merchants. A strong and powerful ruler like Alivardi Khan, while keeping strict control over them, encouraged them in their trade. Alivardi forbade the English and the French to build fortifications in Calcutta and Chandernagore respectively, and urged both these nations as well as the Dutch to observe strict neutrality in Bengal when the War of Austrian Succession commenced in Europe (1740-48). In 1748 Griffin and his crew with the audacity characteristic of sea-pirates, looted and captured some trading vessels of the Armenian and Mughul merchants of Bengal. The Nawab put down this piracy of the English with an iron hand by immediately adopting repressive measures against the East India Company and extorted a fine of Rs. 1½ lakhs of rupees on this account.

The monopoly over the trade and the use of the mailed fist were indissolubly linked in the annals of the East India Company in India. All this happened at a critical stage of the dismemberment of the Mughul Empire when the mastery over trade could be used by a European nation for successful political aggrandizement. That mastery was won by the European nation which was supreme in sea power in the world at that time, and thus the destiny of India was quickly and unexpectedly decided in Bengal, the richest province of the disintegrating empire in respect of natural resources, production and trade, which also gradually opened the way towards Patna, Bena-



res, Oudh and Agra through the network of the Ganges system. The key to India was Bengal and not Coromandel where Dupleix looked for it, nor Gujarat where the British themselves hoped at first to firmly lay the cornerstone of their Empire.

### Occupation of Three Strategic Coastal Regions

The English occupation of the three strategically important coastal areas, viz. Gujarat, Coromandel and Bengal enabled them also to develop their trade and resources in one of these territories whenever there was political confusion or famine in either of the remaining two. The severe famine in Western and Southern India (1630-1635) followed by pestilence, which ruined British trade in Western India, and even led the Surat factors to discontinue their investments, encouraged indirectly their efforts to explore trade prospects in the Indus delta, the Persian Gulf, Malabar and Bengal. This was facilitated in the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf by Anglo-Portuguese amity, sealed at the Convention of Goa in 1605. It enabled the English for some time to develop the port-to-port traffic on the Arabian Sea and the trade with Malabar in pepper and spices, products which could no longer be obtained from Ceylon and the Archipelago due to the stringent Dutch monopoly. Trade was also extended to Laharibander (described by Ibn Batuta in the 14th century as a flourishing fort-town whose customs contributed a big share to the state revenues) and Tatta at the mouth of the Indus in 1635 and to Basra in the Persian Gulf in 1640. In Bengal, too, exploration became easier due to the expulsion of the Portuguese from Hooghly and Hijli in 1632 and 1636 respectively. At Masulipatam and Armagaon, and on the entire Coromandel Coast, there was also experienced at that time a great scarcity of cloth and foodgrains due to the "miserable tymes full fraught with the calamities of war, pestilence and famine." Again, the English considerably improved their position in the Coromandel Coast during Sir Josiah Child's war in Western India and Bengal between 1685-89 and the depredation of the Mahrattas and depreciation of bullion that considerably reduced the English trade in Surat.

The simultaneous development of trade monopoly in strategic settlements on three different coastlines was accordingly of considerable advantage to the English, especially as in each centre the acquisition of territory was sought from the very start along with commercial privileges. Like their compeers, the Portuguese and the

Dutch, the English came to the East Indies not as mere merchants, as is often believed but also as pirates, buccaneers and conquerors using fortified sites, warships and garrisons from Madagascar to Java and the Spice Islands. Four years after their conquest of Ormuz from the Portuguese (1622), the English allying themselves with the Dutch sought to capture also Bombay from the Portuguese, and wrote to the Directors at home about the need of fortification at Armagaon on the Coromandel Coast so that they might "get the whole government of the place into our own hands"; otherwise "the Dutch will never leave us in quiet till they have by one means or other rooted us out." Armagaon was fortified in 1625, and Madraspatam (Fort St. George) in 1641. Similarly, it was proposed to Cromwell by the head of the English factory at Surat that he should send out a naval expedition to the East Indies to capture the possessions of the Portuguese. In 1662 the British obtained as part of dowry for their king what could not be obtained by might, the island of Bombay. In Surat also Sir Thomas Roe (1615) early recommended an aggressive policy "as the nobler and safer part". But here they had to wait for this for about seven decades. It is well known now in Surat that in 1685-86 Sir John Child's aggressiveness was supported at home by his masterful chairman kinsman, Sir Josiah Child, who aimed that the Company "will establish such a politie of civil and military power, and create and secure such a large revenue to maintain both at that place, as may be the foundation of a large, well-grounded surè English dominion in India for all time to come." Sir John Child was, of course, encouraged by Aurangzeb's pre-occupation in the war with Bijapur, Golconda and the Mahrattas as he challenged the supremacy of the Mughuls, leading to a short and disastrous war with Aurangzeb that ended with the latter's seizure of the Surat factory and complete loss of English prestige in India. Aurangzeb in anger issued orders for their immediate expulsion from his dominions.

Similarly, in Bengal the English refused to pay way-dues and customs on the Hooghli on their lucrative and expanding commerce, in the ports of which private English traders also participated, which led to a war with the Provincial Viceroy, Shaista Khan. An expedition of twelve warships set out from England to seize Chittagong entirely failed and in 1688 the English were compelled to leave Bengal altogether. For the time being, the theory of the mailed fist had to be given up. Terms, however, were soon settled between the two



sides, both in Western India and in Bengal. Child's removal of the seat of government (1687) in the course of the Mughul War from Surat to Bombay that was directed to be made "as strong as money and art could make it" was a part of the total plan of defence and offence. Thus was founded the English gateway to the East. Three years later (1690) John Charnock in Bengal acquired by negotiation Sutanati, Govindapur and Kalikatta on a strategic site on the eastern bank of the river, most helpful to the English on their return from the estuary to ward off the Mahrattas and at the same time to fight their European rivals as well as the Nawab. Here was built later on the second city of the British Empire, as the English after a decade (1700) resorted more to "the use of the military" than bribery and presents for successfully rejecting the demands of the native officials and even of the Nawab.

On the Western Coast Mughul arms and prestige were dealt a severe blow by Shivaji whom the English looked upon with fear and respect. But the feebleness of Shivaji's successors and the disorders following the death of Aurangzeb were incentives to the English to resort to force. Surat greatly declined in trade and prosperity all this time, and the English were induced by the people of the city, fed up with local dissensions, to take over possession of the castle, the government and the fleet from the Sidee in 1759. Though the Mahrattas did not interfere, the English in their turn recognised the strategic importance of this possession: Surat which has "ever been considered as the emporium of this side of India, admirably well suited for a general mart connecting the produce and wants of Hindustan, Deccan, Arabia, Persia, Europe and China, is besides the only check to the absolute dominion of the Mahrattas in these parts."

The aggressive policy of the English in the Carnatic and in Bengal needs hardly any emphasis. In the middle of the 18th century Colonel Scott even gave a scheme to the English Company for the conquest of Bengal through "five hundred disciplined troops defending the Sicregully against the whole power of Indostan and securing us from that quarter." Thus the English would not have any threat from either the Mughuls from Delhi or the Mahrattas from the West. While the battles of Wandiwash and Plassey in Coromandel and Bengal were milestones of British political domination of India, their steady aggrandizement and increasing mastery over the Bombay coast

in spite of the ascendancy of the Mahrattas cannot be overlooked as constituting indispensable steps in the battle of India. In the final issue with the French in the battle of Wandiwash and siege of Pondicherry, the supplies of provision and money from Bengal and of grain from the northern settlements of the English were decisive advantages against the French, who were compelled to give battle to Coote's superior force at Wandiwash and capitulate at Pondicherry due to extreme distress and starvation.

### **From a Fort to a Province**

The general notion that the British conquest of India was unintentional or chance-directed is, therefore, wrong. "In India," Seeley observed, "nothing greater that has ever been done by Englishmen was done so unintentionally, so accidentally as the conquest of India. (Here) we meant one thing and did quite another. All along we have been looking one way and moving another." This is altogether a misreading of history. From the first advent of the English in India they sought both trade monopoly and territory in the three strategic coastal regions they occupied, where they could fight from advantageous sites the other European naval powers, the Dutch and the French, and escape from or defy the might of the Mughul Emperors, provincial Viceroys or the Mahrattas. It is true that political power was subordinated to trade for about half a century of their early settlement, when they avoided entanglements and expenditures on garrisoning and fortification that proved too heavy a burden for the Dutch Company. But all this was in a large measure bidding for time and opportunity when with the loss of the Indian Archipelago, where the Dutch obtained their ascendancy, India was the only prize for a young adventurous maritime nation with its traders and buccaneers scouring the seven seas of the earth. All along the soft glove of the trader and the mailed fist of the conquistador were used simultaneously or alternately as the occasion demanded. "The times required that general commerce should be managed with swords in your hands," as Aungier, Governor at Bombay, remarked in 1686. Not mere wealth from commerce, but also "strength, force and honour" were the objectives of the English in India, especially of the Governors and factors on the spot. Otherwise, there would not have been any British commerce nor British commercial monopoly, not to speak of British conquest of



India. The words of Lord Palmerston are true: "The original settlers began with a factory, the factory grew into a fort, the fort expanded into a district and the district into a province."

### **Two Centuries of Economic Monopoly and Imperialism**

Indian history from 1600 to 1800 cannot be adequately understood without reference to the trade rivalry, colonial enterprise and political struggle between the European powers not merely in India but also in Southern Asia in the entire background of the lucrative world trade in pepper and spices of the Malaccas, the cloth and silk goods and indigo and saltpetre of India, and the silk goods and porcelain of China that brought together China, India, the Archipelago, Western Asia, Africa and Europe within a common economic ambit. Long before the Commercial Revolution of the 19th century the world achieved indeed an economic unity, with India occupying the central position as she supplied foodgrains to other parts of Asia and cloth and silk and luxury goods to every part of the civilized world, and directed to herself the entire world current of gold and silver, replenished by the Spanish conquest of Peru and Mexico for being coined into Indian money. India in the 17th century was the magnet of the world's precious metals, her commercial activity far surpassing European commerce, the European merchants of Venice, Genoa and Lisbon acting as intermediaries of traffic in the precious goods that found their way to Europe through the Levantine and Egyptian ports or by the newly-opened sea-route via the Cape of Good Hope. In 1600 neither Portugal nor Holland nor England produced much that could be exported to India and the East Indies in exchange for spices and pepper of the Southern Islands and cotton and silk goods, pepper, indigo and saltpetre of India that were in world-wide demand. Only broad cloth, gold and silver embroideries and a few other luxuries for the nobility, coral, tin and lead were imported to India from Europe that, therefore, had to pay chiefly in bullion or specie for the increasing volume of Indian exports. The Dutch and the English East India Companies since 1600 gradually obtained the monopoly of this lucrative trade after overthrowing the power of the Portuguese first, by using their warships in the Asiatic waters to prevent direct trade between China and the Indies on the one hand, and between India and the Far East, Persia, the Red Sea on the other, and thus wresting the carrying trade from the hands of Arab, Indian and Chinese

merchants ; and secondly, by fortifying and garrisoning their "factories" in different regions of Southern Asia to extort trade monopolies and privileges from weak rulers or compel the people to pay tribute in the form of commodities for export. A whole century of activities of Dutch and British pirates, buccaneers, soldiers, factors and merchants not merely left them in complete monopoly over the trade between the different parts of Asia and between Asia and Europe, but also laid the foundations of two empires in the East, one in India and the other in the East Indies.

### **The Economic Unity of the World in the Mid-seventeenth Century**

The building up of the two Eastern dominions, the British dominion with its capital in Calcutta, and the Dutch dominion with its capital in Batavia, followed the downfall of the Portuguese power in the East after a long-drawn out triangular conflict carried on in the Asiatic waters till the middle of the 17th century. It originated in the same impulsion that led to the Spanish occupation of Mexico and Peru, the Portuguese conquest of Brazil and the establishment of English and French colonies and dependencies in America. The Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Oceans were first unified by commerce by the middle of the 17th century, and until the beginning of the 19th century enormous quantities of gold and silver from Mexico and Peru flowed into India to pay for cloth and silk goods, indigo and pepper she supplied to Europe and also for her saltpetre that made gunpowder for the chronic wars of that continent. It was India that was the hub of this world commerce until the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. But Indian shipping was ruined by Portuguese, Dutch and English piracy in the Asiatic seas, and Indian trade by differential trade monopoly and "extraordinary privileges" at home in favour of the European factors and merchants "as if they were even more than the natives"; while the Indian cotton industry was also hard hit by the loss of the English market due to the prohibition since the beginning of the 18th century of the import of Indian calico and silk, by discouragement by the East India Company of the manufacture of cloth goods of high counts and silk fabrics in India and by the loss of her old markets in the Archipelago, Persia and Africa with the dwindling of the Indian mercantile marine. Towards the end of the 18th century, the annual average value (1786-1790) of Indian cotton piece-goods sold by the East India Company in the English market was £ 1.4



millions. France was also importing annually at that time (1791) £ 1.2 million worth of Indian cotton piecegoods; while a considerable quantity of these was also exported in American vessels (valued at Rs. 5,600,000 in 1816-1817). Even as late as the beginning of the 19th century, in spite of the high tariff and prohibition of import of certain important varieties, India annually exported to England cotton piecegoods valued at about £ 2½ millions, selling at half the prices of cloth goods that were made in England largely in hand-looms employing about five times as many workers as were employed in the powerlooms.

The increase of export of Indian cotton and silk piecegoods to England at the opening of the 19th century when these amounted to £ 2.5 millions as compared with £ 200,000 to £ 300,000 worth of cloth goods per annum between 1677-1680 and £ 1 million between 1697-1702 is remarkable. The reason is that Indian calicoes and silks, muslins and chintz completely replaced French stuffs, which were in fact prohibited in 1678, and set the fashion for the English poor, middle and upper classes "from the greatest gallants to the meanest cook-maids."

### **From Calico-printing to Cotton Manufacture in England**

England then developed herself a calico printing industry at the beginning of the 18th century, borrowing the methods and processes from India and even succeeding to imitate the best Indian work in prints and began to import large quantities of plain Indian calicoes. Even with duties this new calico-printing industry, localised in Surrey, Kent and other southern counties, began to prosper, working on plain calicoes increasingly imported from India and sending out the finished products to the colonies and elsewhere as well as meeting the needs of home consumers in spite of the agitation carried against this new industry on capitalist lines by the domestic woollen and silk-weaving industries. The English calico-printing industry thus thrived on the import of Indian plain calicoes throughout the 18th century; it was only in 1799 that the prohibitive import duty of £ 67-10-0 per cent was imposed on "plain white calicoes". Raw silk and wrought silk fabrics also greatly increased in value, among the items of Indian exports to England since the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th century, to the great detriment of silk and woollen manufactures in England and the

loss and chagrin of the English merchants trading with Turkey. Silk goods thus came under the schedule of prohibitory import duties in the first decades of the 19th century. It was the English who "first set the Indians on that vast increase of silk worms" in Cossimbazar, where the production increased from 4,000 bales to 22,000 bales of silk per year due to the high prices offered by the competing Dutch, English and French exporters. The English East India Company's training of Indian workers by sending out from England dyers and throwsters also contributed to the development of the Bengal silk industry and expansion of the silk export trade. Meanwhile, the introduction of machinery revolutionised the entire textile industry including calico-printing, and Surrey lost ground in competition with Lancashire. But it took several decades. In 1820 when England imported from India £ 1.8 million worth of cotton piecegoods there were only 14,000 power-looms in use, employing not more than 7,000 girls as compared with 240,000 workers at handlooms. It was not till the middle of the 19th century that the great Lancashire power-loom industry could establish its supremacy, considerably helped by the low price of American cotton, the high tariff imposed by England on all Indian cloth and silk imports and the remarkable technical inventions in weaving and printing. Before 1771 England did not produce any cotton cloth at all since the spinners could not make cotton yarns of sufficient strength for the warp, and thus she developed, like Holland and France, the calico-printing industry using the plain white calicoes imported from India. But by 1845 the Lancashire industry became pre-eminent enough to justify the boast of Sidney Smith : "The great object for which the Anglo-Saxon race appears to have been created is the making of calico."

### **The Imposition of Tariffs against Indian Cloth Goods**

Not merely the Industrial Revolution in England but also the British tariff policy accounted for the growth and phenomenal development of British cotton manufacture. It is striking that English economists and statesmen became adherents of the doctrine of free trade as the surest way to the wealth of nations after the rise of the Lancashire cotton industry through the tariff and prohibition against French goods, Irish woollen goods, and Indian silk and cotton imports, and so much under-rated the influence of the tariff for the protection and development of the nascent Indian cotton industry on factory lines in the 19th century. How the Lancashire industry



was aided in its growth will be evident from the following schedule of tariffs at the beginning of the 19th century. Muslins paid on importation to England 10 per cent and £ 27.6.8 per cent for home consumption. Calicoes paid £ 3.6.8 per cent on importation and £ 68.6.8 per cent for home consumption. Prohibited cotton piecegoods paid a duty of £ 3-6-8 per cent on importation and were not allowed to be used in England. On the other hand, English cloth goods could be imported into India on payment of a small duty of 2½ per cent. To secure the position of her infant powerloom textile industry England thus not only prohibited the wear of printed calicoes and gradually increased the duties on imported Indian cloth goods rising upto 80 per cent ad valorem but also prohibited the export of cotton machinery and tools and "artificers" to India lest she might be a competitor by renovating her domestic industry.

### The Stages of India's Industrial Decline

The last fifty years of the 17th century saw the rise to greatness of the English colonial Empire in both Northern America and India which profoundly reacted upon British business enterprise, trade and industry. The last fifty years of the next century witnessed the technological and industrial revolution with the rise and expansion of the cotton industry in Lancashire, entirely transformed by the application of machinery and the factory system, and dependent upon distant markets overseas that were formerly supplied by India and that England's extensive mercantile marine and powerful fleet could now secure and stabilise. No doubt the influx of wealth derived from trade, confiscation and "plunder" from Bengal after Plassey (1757) and the English assumption of Dewani (1765) greatly facilitated England's industrial and commercial expansion through the cheapening of credit. England's economic development was phenomenal between 1760 and 1815. This period also saw India's quick and phenomenal economic decline, although the features of such decline took well nigh a century and a half to be definitely established.

One may reckon the beginning of this economic decline from the middle of the 17th century when the Dutch (1655) and the English (1652) obtained from Shahjahan exemption from all tolls from Surat to all inland centres and from Hooghly or Pipli to Agra and Delhi and the reduction of customs duties (1644), along with other privileges that the nationals did not enjoy (whose inland trade thus gradually

passed into their hands), and at the same time enforced, like the Portuguese, a system of cartasses or passes for Indian ships en route. 1716 saw an extraordinary reduction of customs duties for the English at Surat and in Bengal by a *firman* from Furruckseer, such preferential treatment greatly aiding the transfer of foreign and inland trade from both Indian and Dutch to English hands.

The year 1700, exactly a century after the establishment of the English and Dutch Companies, saw the prohibition of importation of Indian calicoes into England. Protective duties for the English weaving industry against Indian products were gradually raised to about 80 per cent. Other countries of Europe also followed suit to protect their domestic industries. The nadir of India's industrial decline was reached in the middle of the 19th century when the export of Indian cotton piecegoods and silk to Europe entirely ceased and raw cotton began to be exported instead. Charles Traveleyan estimated in 1834 that the amount of Bengal piecegoods displaced in the foreign market was about Rs. 1 crore a year and in the home market the displacement was to the extent of about Rs. 80 lakhs. He referred to the gravity of the problem of unemployment of those people who worked up this great annual amount of Rs. 180 lakhs. Seven years later (1841) Labouchere, Chancellor of the Exchequer in England, observed: "The British have utterly destroyed the manufactures of India by their manufactures. The District of Dacca, the Manchester of India, has dwindled into insignificance before the strides which the British goods have made." By 1846 the tables were completely turned, and India did not export any cotton goods at all, but had to import from England 213,840,000 yards of cloth, as compared with 51 million yards in 1835 and only 8 lakhs yards in 1814. India's de-industrialisation, increasing dependence upon agriculture and the severity of a series of famines for the first time now exposed the weakness of her economic structure due to political dependence.



## CHAPTER XL

### ART AND RELIGION IN THE UNHAPPIEST CENTURY

#### The Poetry of Saktism in Bengal—Bharat Chandra's Ananda Mangal and Vidyasundar

The eighteenth century, full of chaos, convulsion and misery, was the darkest period in the chequered annals of India. The arts and crafts of the country languished due to the loss of patronage of the courts of princes and nobles, the anarchy in the country and the greed and unscrupulousness of European merchants and traders, who obtained privileges and immunities from the Mughul Emperors and Viceroys denied to the nationals. Trade seriously declined due to the insecurity of the roads and highway robbery. Agriculture in many areas was at a standstill due to the combined effects of war, famine, exaction and plunder. Even near Delhi, Aligarh and Mathura vast tracts were abandoned to nature and became wild jungle; villages were deserted. At the end of the 18th century, throughout the whole land, except Bengal and Bihar, whole districts became barren and one acre in fifty was but cultivated. This is the testimony of such contemporary writers as Twining (1794), de Boigne and Tone. Here and there in the courts of a few Mahratta and Rajput rulers Sanskrit learning and vernacular literature as well as the fine arts were encouraged, and poets, writers and saints still flourished. But, on the whole, the 18th century was a period of stagnation and decline for Indian literature.

In the 18th century, in Bengal, where the cup of human misery was full to the brim, numerous poets continued to compose Vaishnava padavalis. The great majority of them, however, showed neither poetic gift nor poignant feelings but used the timeworn clichés and conventionalities borrowed from the poetry of the past in expressing cheap sentimentalism. Exception should be made in the case of the brothers Chandrasekhara and Sasisekhara who wrote lyrics of great elegance and spontaneity of feeling. It was in this century that the legend of Vidya and Sundar became very popular, and at least seven poets, including Bharat Chandra Roy (Gunakar) and Ramaprasada

Sen (Kaviranjan), have been known to deal with the theme. These as well as the current tarzas and kabi-gans show coarseness and even vulgarity, an evidence of the demoralising, nay poisoning, influence of decadent Muslim and Hindu courts on the enlightened mind in the cities.

Such debased taste is not on the whole true of the most distinguished poet of Bengal of the 18th century, Bharat Chandra Roy (1713-1761), author of *Ananda Mangal*, *Kalika Mangal* or *Vidyasundar* and *Annapurna Mangal* or *Mana Singh*. His best lyrics are to be found in the *Vidyasundar* which was completed only four years before the Battle of Plassey. His *Satyanarayana Panchali* was composed in 1737, celebrating the common Hindu and Muslim worship of Satyapir, just as his own style is the best record of the elegant use of words from Arabic, Sanskrit and Persian in Bengali poetry.

Bharat Chandra Roy has been compared with Pope and Dryden. He was a master of diction and rhyme and exercised a great influence upon Bengali poetry towards the end of the 18th and the first half of the 19th centuries. He was well-read in Sanskrit and Persian and passed through many vicissitudes of life, spending some time in jail and fleeing from it as a sannyasi until he won the admiration and patronage of Raja Krishna Chandra Roy of Nadia.

Bharat Chandra Roy, like his contemporaries Kaviranjan Ramaprasada Sen (born 1718), Dewan Raghunath Roy (1750-1836) and Raja Ramamohan Roy (1774-1833), belonged to the Tantrika tradition of Bengal which is as important as the Vaishnava tradition. After the compilation of the famous digest of Tantrika literature, the *Tantrasara* by Krishnanand who flourished in the 15th and 16th centuries, the philosophy of the Tantras was elucidated by a succession of great scholars. Among these the most important were Brahmananda Giri (third quarter of the 16th century), who was the author of *Saktananda Tarangini* and *Tara Rahasya*; Purnanand (16th century), author of *Syama Rahasya*; Sankara Agamacharya (1630), author of *Tara Rahasyavrittika*; Mathuresa Vidyalkara (1672), author of *Syama Kalpalatika* and Raghunath Tarkavagish (1687), author of *Agamatatvabilash*. This comprehensive literature contributed to the assimilation of the worship and ritual of the Goddess Tara or Syama or the cult of Srividya to the Vedanta.



Among the distinguished Bengali poets who were exponents of the worship of the mother Goddess were Mukundaram Chakravarty, Vijaya Gupta and Bharat Chandra. In some of the elegant lyrics addressed to Annapurna by Bharat Chandra, we find a profound note of monism. The Goddess was identified with the Absolute and the Inscrutable beyond the comprehension of Vedas, and Siva was identified with jiva. It is, however, in the devotional hymns and lyrics of Ramaprasada and Kamalakanta that we find a perfect blending of absolute monism and worship of Sakti, of yoga and ritual as in the famous Ananda-Lahiri of Sankaracharya. While Bharat Chandra Roy is the most elegant poet of Saktism in Bengali literature, its great mystics are Ramaprasada and Kamalakanta. Ramaprasada who at an early age acquired an intimate knowledge of Sanskrit, Persian and Hindi, worked as an accountant in the house of a rich man in Calcutta. In one of the account books of the office, he wrote a fine devotional hymn, "Mother, make me thy unpaid accountant," which profoundly impressed his employer. After this he sang and worshipped, worshipped and sang. Maharaja Krishna Chandra Roy of Nadia invited him to his court but Ramaprasada preferred a quiet religious life. He, however, accepted from him the title of Kaviranjan. Ramaprasada wrote besides lyrics, several other poems such as the Kalika Mangal and Vidyasundar in which he showed powers of characterisation even superior to those of Bharat Chandra.

### New Style of Music

In the same period also flourished the musician and composer, Ramnidhi Gupta (Nidhu Babu) (1741-1838), who sang love poems in a new style (tappa) assimilated from the court musicians of Delhi and Lucknow, and made a marked contribution to the improvement of literary taste. The poignancy of Sari Mia's tappa was nourished in Lucknow by the tragedy of the spoliation and conquest of Oudh and the end of the rich and delicate, if somewhat sophisticated, culture of the court of the Nawabs. Nidhu Babu imported spontaneity and intensity of feeling in his notes to a similar tragic situation in Bengal in the mid-18th century.

Far away in the villages in the Damodar-Dwarakesvar Doab, fine Dharmamangal Kavyas were also composed in the 18th century by Ghanaram Manikram Ganguli and Rama Kanta Roy. The

second half of the 18th century saw also the beginning of prose in Bengali literature as the result of the efforts of both the Christian missionaries and of Brahmin pundits. The former were eager to popularise the Bible for the purpose of conversion. The latter undertook the translation into Bengali prose of works in Smriti and law. The East India Company was also anxious to compile the laws of the and after the grant of the Dewani in 1765, and soon a printing press was established in Serampore where Hallhead's Bengali grammar, the first in the language, was published in 1778. In the second half of the 18th century, important developments took place in Hindi prose. The authors are Sadasukhlal (1799) who wrote in khari boli and Insha Alla Khan whose language may be described as either Hindi or Urdu.

### Mystics and Saint Poets of Northern India

Beyond the hearing of thunder and din of the battles that decided the fates of kingdoms and empires, the immemorial life of the Indian cottages and fields went on and the spiritual quest of India embodied in the lives and teachings of great mystics, saints and reformers continued unbroken in the 18th century. Among the mystics and saints of this century were Yari Sahib, a Muslim saint of Delhi (1668-1725) and his line in the United Provinces. Yari is the author of Ratnavali, full of exquisite religious lyrics. One of his sayings is as follows : "The creation is a painting of the creator on the canvas of void with the brush of love. He who has not experienced this joy through love will never know it through reasoning. Men and women are as bubbles on the ocean of Divine Love." His disciples were Sufi Sah, Hast Mohammed Sah, Bulla and Kesava-das. Bulla was a ploughman of Fyzabad but took to religion and wrote fine mystical verses along with Gulal, once a Rajput zamindar and his employer and later on his disciple. We give below a fine lyric composed by Gulal :

The bee of the mind plays Vasanta,  
The unstruck music sounds in infinite space  
The lotus opens and the bees make a noise,  
The light expands its illumination.  
The heart is filled with joy to see it again and again,  
When the mind becomes entangled, then it is enmeshed in  
the net.



The current of light flows in wave after wave,  
 My heart is placed at the lotus feet.  
 It does not come (take birth), nor does it go, the soul  
     dies not  
 Gladly it drinks the immortal nectar again and again,  
 The Lord is beyond reach, beyond perception, beyond  
     sight,  
 I have found the Lord by seeing him with my eyes.  
 Says Gulal my desire is fulfilled,  
 I have triumphed over Yama and obtained an abode in  
     Light.

One of the disciples of Gulal was Bhika who belonged to Ghazipur. The following lyric of his finely expresses his religious outlook :

God himself is the earth, from which a multitude of  
     vessels are made, by the Potter, whose creation has a  
     wonderful variety.  
 The name is like gold, it becomes ornament and appears  
     as other,  
 But whether it is pure or impure, the basis is gold itself,  
 The foam, the bubble, currents and waves are many,  
 Know that the water is the same, whether it is sweet or salt.  
 The soul has one caste, Bhika holds this opinion.  
 The robbers belong to His government as well as the travel-  
     lers.

Another disciple of Yari Saheb was Kesavadas (1690-1765) who belonged to the Vaisya caste and wrote *Amighut* (The Draught of Nectar). Another famous saint was Jagjivandas (born 1682) who was a Thakur of Barabanki and belonged to the tradition of Kabir. He was greatly instrumental in bringing together Muslim and Hindu lines of thought and worship among the lower castes of the United Provinces. He founded the Satnami sect which comprises vast numbers of the lowest caste, or of the reorganised sect of the same name that had been suppressed by Aurangzeb. He wrote in Avadhi Hindi several works, including *Jnana Prakasa*, *Mahapralaya* and *Prathama Granth*. In the following verse, we discern Jagjivandas's strong emphasis on social equality :

O Saint, the one Light shines in all.  
 Think it over in your mind, there is no second,

The blood and the body are the same, there is no Brahman or saint ;

Some are called men and some women  
the invisible Purusha in all.

A most distinguished saint of this age was Pran Natha (1700-1750) who flourished in Bundelkhand where Chattrasal Bundela of Panna was one of his disciples. He emphasised the unity of Hindus, Muslims and Christians and was familiar with the Bible, the Quoran and the Hindu scriptures. In Christian fashion, he regarded love as the entirety of God. "Love is indivisible and eternal. Love is in the body of the Beloved, with the Beloved is Love. In the Beloved's soul is Love. Love it is that makes the eyes see beyond, even the Beyond of the Beyond. Love bestows on one the abode of the indivisible Lord." Again, in almost Christian style, he sings :

Now, tell I of Love, which is God Himself and beyond  
words

God's creation is a fraction of God, but it (Love) is the  
deep-set eternal joy.

His sect was called Dharni, because it regarded God as the Dhama or home. It embraced both Hindu and Muslim followers. Another famous saint was Gharibdas (1717-1778) who was born in Rohtak and worshipped Rama, Hari and Allah together. His catholicity was most striking as his hymns were most ardent. It is curious that his verses contain many Persian and English words. Siva Narayana (born 1710) was a saint of Ghazipur. He had a large number of followers among the Rajput soldiers. His order did not observe any caste distinctions at all. He was the author of various songs and poems of which the most important were Lava Granth, Sant Vilas and Bhajan Granth. The Mughul Emperor Muhammad Shah was his disciple. The imperial seal contributed in some measure to the propagation of this order. Paltudas of Fyzabad (1757-1825) was another well-known saint who was the disciple of Gulal of the line of Yari Saheb and who flourished in Ayodhya. He is sometimes described as the second Kabir. He suffered persecution at the hands of the Bhairagis. He strongly condemned caste and sect differences. One of his observations is that the upper castes have ruined lower castes and ruined themselves too. He is the



author of Rama Kunadaliyas and Atma karma. The Kunadaliya verses are well known for their ardour and beauty. Rituals he considers as of no avail where the inner spirit is lacking. "Of what avail is the unguent, applied to the eyes, if a girl has no beauty." He goes in for complete self-surrender: "But I will soon please my Lord (pleading that) servants commit hundreds of errors." The following verse is entirely in the fashion and spirit of Kabir :

They say Rama is in the east, and Khuda in the west,  
 Who then lives in the north and the south?  
 Where is the Lord, and where is He not?  
 Why do the Hindus and Muslims raise a storm?  
 The Hindus and Muslims have engaged in struggle  
 And the two faiths run into two opposing camps,  
 Paltoo the slave says, the Lord is in all,  
 He is not divided at all, this is the truth.

In the district of Gonda, Sahajananda (born 1780) founded a sect known as Swami Narayana which freely admitted Muslims as well as the lower-caste Hindus. Tulsi Saheb (1760-1842) was another saint, brother of Baji Rao II, who lived in Hathras in Bihar. He was familiar with both Hindu and Mohammedan scriptures and was a sharp critic of ritualism. He is the author of *Ghata Ramayana*.

In Bihar, there was another saint named Dariya of Arrah district who was born of Muslim parents and was the founder of an order that combined the Muslim Kurnish with the Hindu Sijdah in worship.

### **Synthesis of worship of Kali and Krishna in Bengal Sakta Lyrics**

In Bengal the Tantrika tradition produced several poet-mystics of whom the most famous were Ramaprasada Sen (born 1718) and Kamala Kanta Bhattacharya (born 1809). The Sakta lyrics do not yield at all in religious fervour and depth to the Vaishnava padavalis and enjoy equal popularity among the rural masses. A typical hymn of Ramprasada may be given here :

The Fisherman waits after casting his vast net over the  
 fathomless waters of the universe to catch creatures  
 like fishes.

He bides his time.

Whenever He desires He pulls them by the hair.

None can escape from His time-net.

How can one who is time-bound obtain his deliverance?

Call the Time-destroyer Mother and she will rescue you from  
the clutches of Time.

In another hymn, Ramaprasada sings in a note of remonstrance,  
against human inequality :

O Goddess, don't I know of Your great compassion !

Some persons do not have even a morsel of food, while  
others enjoy the surfeit of delicacies and any quantity  
of treasures.

Some go in luxurious palanquins, others carry them on  
their shoulders,

Some wear gorgeous shawls, others do not have even rags  
to cover their nakedness.

Again,

O mind, do not delude yourself about the Goddess,

Don't you realise that the entire universe is Her form?

Why then do you seek to worship Her in an earthen image?

The Mother decks the universe with infinite riches,

Don't you feel ashamed in making a few golden trinkets for  
her idol?

It is She who nourishes the universe,

Don't you feel shamed of making offerings of rice and gram  
before Her?

She protects the universe with infinite care,

How do you offer sacrifices of goats?

The Mother can be worshipped only through devotion.

Celebrate Her puja with great eclat before the public but  
she will never accept your bribe.

In the 18th century, many of the Sakta mystics reached a profound synthesis of the worship of Krishna and Kali, Hara and Hari, in the meditation of the universal Goddess, Sakti or Maya, reconciling the divergence of Vaishnava and Sakta cults. Such a reconciliation was not forthcoming from the Vaishnava fold at all. There is no difference between the blue-bodied Krishna and the blue-bodied



Kali in the songs of Ramaprasada and Kamala Kanta, Dewan Raghunath Roy and Dasarathi Roy. It is the universal attributes of Brahman that take different forms or appearances of Gods and Goddesses in infinite variety. The supreme Reality appears to man in the particular form or image he contemplates. Such is the manner in which devotional mysticism bridges the differences that metaphysics and ritualism foster and accentuate. The identification of Syam (Krishna) and Syama (Goddess Kali) is a notable achievement of the 18th and 19th century Sakta mystics and poets led by that gifted poet-mystic Ramaprasada Sen.

Ramaprasada was really a genius. It was he who seems to have introduced into Bengali poetry and religion the devotional songs of welcome (Agamani) and farewell (Vijaya) sung during the autumn festival of the Goddess Durga in Bengal. The Durga Puja became prominent in Bengal since the middle of the 18th century due to the initiative and patronage of Raja Krishna Chandra Roy of Nadia, who gathered round him the best talents of Bengal. In these poignant Agamani and Vijaya lyrics the deity is conceived as one's own daughter coming home for a three days' glorious stay and then returning with her husband Siva to Kailas amidst the wails of the family. The nuances of parental love for the Divine daughter, Uma or Gauri, are as much inspired by religious exaltations as the romantic love of Radha and the Gopis for the youthful Krishna. Thus the songs are aids to the parents to transform the heart's tenderness into spiritual aspiration. For is not every mother Menaka, the mother of Uma, and is not Uma the Divine Daughter, unknown but loved by all, and the wrench from her after three days' reunion the anguish of separation from God? Every daughter is the reflection of Uma who demands love and tenderness but who alas makes too brief a sojourn on the earth. The Ramaprasadi lyrics symbolise a distinctive mode of approach to the deity and when sung in the Chandimandaps of the Goddess still attract thousands of listeners. The characteristic Ramaprasadi tune of folk music and the devotional hymns as well as the Agamani and Vijaya lyrics of the Goddess have a profound appeal in millions of Bengali homes today, even after a lapse of two centuries. It is remarkable that the tender Sakta lyrics that comprise a permanent contribution to religion and literature in Bengal were composed in the era of Clive (1757-1774) when she was exposed to unparalleled plunder, barbarity and misery.

### The Rural Mysticism and Poetry of the Bauls

The Vaishnava and Sakta traditions of meditation, worship and love still live in Bengal. Far away from the towns and villages live unseen and unknown groups of Sahajiyas and Bauls, whose watchwords in religion are freedom and spontaneity and who shun all ritual and observance, on the one hand, and scripture and convention, on the other. A sincere and spontaneous type of rural mysticism is represented by the Baul sect, which has sprung from the ever-green fields and expansive waters of Bengal, and embraces the Muslim sufis and Hindu saints. Without any metaphysical and theological construction, the Bauls worship through music and song, and naively and directly apprehend the Reality as the super-individual Person—"the Man whom the soul seeks" (maner manush). The unique experience here reveals to the mystic a dual movement of the spirit, of man God-ward and of God man-ward. In eternal communion does the Golden Man dally with the Beloved, closing the gates of the senses and gazing at her eternal beauty. Rarely in the world's religious poetry do we come across such a humanistic vein in the adventures of the Soul. The unknown Person (Achin Purush) is within the heart. This Jewel of Man (manush ratan) can only be realised in the spontaneous Sahaja way through the communion of Love.

Man, Man, every one speaks of man.

What is Man?

Man is Wealth, Man is Life, Man is the Jewel of the Heart.

Very few on earth know the Truth of Man

Man knows love, which other creatures know not.

And Man alone knows the depth of such love.

Man's love helps him to know the real Man ;

Thus Man knows Man ;

The strength of Man-in-Man is understood by Man alone.

Love is the golden touch. Earth seeks to become heaven, man to become God. Cast away the sham Murshid and Guru, the Quran and Tantra, rosary and image, unlock the real self, meet in a true love all fellowmen, and the way shines out clear by illumination of eternal love as all human bonds are snapped and human nature transcended. The Eternal Man in the Paradise of the heart is the Lord of the poor (dina-daradi-svami). Such is the manner in which the Bauls of Bengal who belong to both Hindu and Muslim communities



still carry, to cottages and fields, the gospel of the love of the Divine which is Man, and is found neither in temples and images, nor in symbols and scriptures. Love demands a sympathetic and synthetic response. The finite creature is as much a requirement for God as God is for the finite being. It is Love that holds the Divine and the Human in sweet, eternal communion in the unfolding of life, mind and the universe.

"It goes on blossoming for ages, the soul lotus, in which I am bound as well as thou, without escape. There is no end to the opening of its petals, and the honey in it has such sweetness that thou, like an enchanted bee, can't never desert it, and therefore, thou art bound, and I am, and salvation is nowhere."

The long array of mystics and saints spread over in different parts of India during the 18th century shows the vitality of Hinduism, and especially of its devotional movement, which not only survives all persecution and keeps alive the spirit of the common people even in an epoch of universal misery and suffering but also directs them to the path of true worship and love that transcends all eternal forms and observances of religion and the conflicts, sufferings and despairs of kingdoms and peoples.

### **Differences between Mughul and Rajput Paintings**

In the history of civilization it is often the poignant crises of man's life brought about by war, carnage, famine and sensualism that have elicited the world's supreme artistic expressions. The chosen symbols and motifs of the earliest art of India, viz. Buddhist art, rose from the Brahmanical sacrificial floors, with its thick stain of blood of a thousand animals that Gautama sought to erase. The artistic glory of Hellas was associated with the horrors of civil convulsions and the fury of the Peloponnesian war. The Italian renaissance art was nurtured amidst the chronic civil tumults, internecine quarrels and debauches of the Italian cities. When the Maratha, British and French wars and the expeditions and invasions of Ahmad Shah Abdali were devastating India, and famines, raids, massacres and civil convulsions were spreading horror and sorrow in the 18th century, we see the efflorescence of Rajput and Pahari paintings with their marvellous supernatural visions of sweetness and wonder, rivalling the paradises of Vrindavan and Kailash.

In his well-known work, *Form and Colour*, March Philips stresses that colour is an emotional apprehension while form is an intellectual perception. Consequently, periods of quick and vital thinking would be associated with the unique heights of painting. It is significant that in Europe the highest peaks of sculpture were reached in the classical age of the 5th century B.C. and the three centuries of Gothic art periods were characterised by remarkable intellectual clarity and serenity. In India the intellectual ferment and achievements of the Gupta period have given rise to a serene, sharp and vigorous sculpture that reached its apex in the 5th to 7th centuries A.D., and again when Tantrikism widened the horizon of human understanding and appreciation, the sculpture was remarkable not only for its beauty but also for its frankness, comprehensiveness and joy. Similarly, painting was at its best in India during the two epochs when there was a profound upsurge of emotional tenderness and devotion, the product of the Mahayana Buddha-Bhagavatism in the 6th and 7th centuries, and of the Bhakti movement of Krishna-Bhagavatism from the 16th to the 18th centuries. The frescoes of Ajanta and Bagh and of Rajasthan in both the periods have many common features. Equally, an expressible human sweetness, tenderness and feeling of oneness with the whole of Life and Nature underlie the magical glow and serenity of the Bodhisattva and Krishna-Radha paintings in the two epochs of exaltation of Bhakti in India. The vitality and exuberance of the Rajasthan and Himachala schools of painting in the 17th and 18th centuries were peculiarly a national reaction against both the humiliation and suffering of the people and the sophisticated foreign Timurid idioms of painting prevalent in the capital cities and towns. Rajasthan and Himachala paintings belong to an age in the history of Indian art when the appropriate medium of expression changed from architecture and sculpture to music, doha and painting, and the themes of the Bhagavata and Kalika Puranas were accessible to the common people in the vernacular version of the Prema-Sagara and the hymns and sonnets of Vidyapati, Mirabai, Suradasa and numerous other saints and poets. Similarly, the Mahabharata provided inspiration and theme to Rajasthan and Himachala art that was essentially a folk art saturated with a sense of marvel at the beauty of Nature and of eternal man and woman and embodying a profound repose and tranquillity in its brilliant and yet austere flow of lines and curves and rhythm of colours and compositions. It is the upsurge of spiritual emotions among the common people, embodied alike in Hindi



religious poetry and the multiplication of humanistic and equalitarian mystical sects and creeds, all rooted in the spiritual intimacy between Bhakti and Sufism, that is linked with the perfection of Rajasthana painting—"a blithe school of blithe people", as the kindred Sieneese school of painting (13th to early 16th century) invested with similar warmth and decorative linear quality was characterised.

New discoveries and explorations in various parts of India link up the pictorial art of Ajanta, Bagh, Vadisa, Pithalkora, Sittanavasal, Bhaja and Kanheri of the classic period with the Rajasthana and Himachala schools. Such links are represented by the Saiva and Vaishnava paintings at Ellora and Madanpur in the Deccan, the Buddhist Pala paintings in Eastern India and the Western Indian paintings represented by the Jain miniatures. The Buddhist-Pala school of manuscript illumination is characterised by superb linerism and elegance and richness of colour patterns. It terminated with the Muslim conquest in the 12th century but continued outside the Indian frontiers, in Nepal and Burma. The Western Indian or Gujerati school of painting covers from the beginning of the 12th to the end of the 16th century. There are striking resemblances between the early Jain paintings and the Solanki sculptures in Gujerat and Rajputana. But, on the whole, these paintings show far less sensitiveness and elegance. This has been attributed by Goetz to the foreign filiation and background of the Gurjara-Pratiharas who founded their empire in the 7th century in Marwar where according to Taranath the Western Indian school originated. The Gujerati school of painting was profoundly influenced by the developed miniature painting of Persia with which the rich mercantile class carried on a lucrative commerce from the ports of Broach and Cambay. They patronised artists and craftsmen just as the Dutch merchants did in Holland. When all royal patronage of art and architecture was wiped out by the Muslim conquest it was they who kept alive the torch of Indian art and culture in Western India. A popular religious movement of Vaishnavism and vernacular literature was also sweeping through Gujerat in this age. The cult of Krishna was popular in Gujerat as early as 1291 A.D. Bilvamangal who flourished between 1250 and 1350 A.D. composed the Balagopala-Stuti which was illustrated with numerous miniatures and decorated borders in the middle of the 15th century in Gujerat. Even earlier the Jain manuscript Kalakacharyakatha was illustrated by Daiyaka

of Stambhat-istha or Cambay in 1416 A.D. The introduction of paper and dye-stuff from Persia gave a big fillip to the lavish bourgeois painting of Gujerat, characterised by fine draughtsmanship and bold massing of vibrant colours. Rajasthana paintings are different from Gujerati paintings in their more rigorous rhythmic movement and greater range of colours and composition. These cannot be dated earlier than the mid-16th century. Some of the earliest Rajasthana paintings are miniatures derived from the manuscript of Jayadeva's *Gita-govinda* (N.C. Mehta collection), representing Krishna's eternal love-play with the milk-maids, a series of paintings illustrating the sequence of the seasons (Central Museum, Lahore) and also illustrations of Ragamala scenes (Land's album in the Bodelian Library) representing musical modes known as Raga (male, in the form of Krishna) and Ragini (female, in the form of Radha).

A most significant part of Rajasthana paintings recently discovered in the palace of the Maharaja of Bikaner includes some "primitives," a Rasikpriya set following the same mode as that of the archaic Ragamalas and a Bhagavata Purana series. All these are simple and vigorous in composition and represent a style associated with the beginnings of Rajasthana art. It is suggested by Goetz that a branch of this style reached, via the places of pilgrimage in and around Mathura, the Himalayas, creating the so-called "Basohli" school and its derivatives. All these reveal the Rajasthana ancestry of the Akbar school of Mughul painting which, indeed, was entirely adapted to the artistic genius and heritage of India.

The Rajput renaissance of Kathiawar commenced from the 15th century with the establishment and extension of power of the various Rajput chiefs as the various Muslim rulers were contending among themselves in the Ganges Valley and Central India. With the spread of the Bhakti movement from South to North India and from Gujerat to Bengal and with the rich development of Hindu vernacular literature (1450-1650 A.D.), the 16th century saw in Rajputana the revival of both sculpture and painting, characterised by the assimilation of folk elements and Southern and Western Indian styles, together with a new freedom of interpretation and execution. In spite of the dwindling of Rajput power and influence during the reign of Shah Jehan and Aurangzeb, the artistic and religious revival



in Rajputana that became the favoured home of the Second Religious Reformation initiated by Ramanand and fostered by Kabir, Dadu, Rana Kumbha and Mirabai, kept alive the vigour and idealism of the Rajput style that in fact infiltrated into Mughul court paintings from the end of the 16th century. Once again the folk traditions of the land inspired creative adventures of the mind even under desperate conditions of political subjugation and humiliation. Like the lyrics of the Hindu poets, the mystical exaltations of the saints and the passionate strains of the classical musicians, Rajasthana paintings bore the indelible impress of the unsophisticated creative experiences of the common people in the midst of their political vicissitudes. In the courts of Sujan Singh and Gaj Singh and Chattrasal Bundela in the inaccessible tracts of Rajputana, Bundelkhand and the independent Hill States of the North, the spirit of India through the sensitive drawing and magic pattern of colours of numerous paintings made its vigorous protest against the iconoclasm of Muslim rule and the exotic character of Mughul art and culture.

The difference between the Rajput and Mughul paintings is largely the difference between folk and court art. The Mughul school, associated with the courts of the Mughul emperors, presents portraits of kings, nobles or saints, darbars, episodes of hunting, drinking, playing or other recreations and court scenes. The Rajasthana and Himachala schools, belonging to the states of Rajputana, Bundelkhand, Malwa and Gujerat and the independent Hill States of the North, generally deal with themes from the epics, myths and legends relating to Krishna and Radha or Siva and Parvati and appeal to all classes and depict ideal landscapes with tree-lined river-banks, pastures with cattle, valleys with flowers in full bloom and rugged mountains.

Like Persian painting Mughul painting is tense, severe and methodical; Rajasthana painting is lyrical, vivid and intense. The former is academic and conventional, associated with the opulence and refinement of the upper social classes who find their quiet emotions and distinguished manners reflected in the conventional faces and gestures of the paintings; the latter is full of passion, vitality and poetic imagination, deriving its inspiration from the background of folk-life, literature, music and erotics. In point of technique and

style, the former is characterised by preciseness of line drawing and soft tonality; the latter by swiftness and flow of the drawing and bold colouring skilfully used with the plastic sense of space. The former is in the tradition of a miniature, the latter of a fresco. In this manner the art of the upper social classes and the art of the people represent differences in theme, style and technique, and it is not unusual to have two different schools of painting side by side giving admirable and contrasted expression to the character of each age. Wherever elements of folk art have mingled with an aristocratic court art whether in Delhi and Agra or in Lucknow, Bijapur, Golconda, Ahmednagar and Hyderabad lyrical, dramatic and realistic effects lend a new charm and fluency to a formal abstract and highly specious tradition. As early as 1570 we find in Ahmednagar in the Deccan a notable fusion of an early Deccan style with Muslim idioms. The fineness and elegance of Mughul portraiture are strangely juxtaposed with the clouds, lightning and formal landscape and the figures of Krishna and Radha in the archaic fashion. Especially in the school of Bijapur the folk Deccani art has produced certain Ragini paintings distinguished for their harmonious colour schemes and indigenous decorative patterns.

### **The Religious and Literary Background of Rajasthana Painting**

Rajasthana paintings were mostly the work of painters of the petty states and kingdoms of Rajputana, Bundelkhand, Malwa and Gujerat and the Hill States, West of the Sutlej (the Jammu Kalm) and east of the river (the Kangra Kalm). Both the desert of Rajputana and the snow-clad Himalayas of the North, helped to nurture the traditional spirit of mystical pantheism, symbolism and detachment in the school of Rajput painting. It was a vernacular folk art inspired by the contemporary Bhakti movement and patronised by the Hindu princes and nobles, in which the old metaphysical conceptions of the openness of life and the immanence of the Divine were brought home to the rural masses by Brajbhasha poetry, music and painting in terms of the popular Radha-Krishna motifs. The Astachhap group of Hindi poets, including the blind minstrel Surdas, had been delienating the Krishna-lila in resplendent songs and lyrics. The passionate verses of Biharilal (author of Satsaiya or 700 couplets on the Krishna myth, 1662 A.D.), Kesavadas (court poet of Madhukara Shah of Bundelkhand, and author of Rasikpriya, 1592), Motiram (author of Rasaraja, about 1643), Bansidhar, Ramguni, Gang and



Deva also dwelt on the same theme of human divine love that supplied the emotional inflatus which produced wonderful results in a pictorial art reproducing the poets' descriptions of the erotic moods of heroes and heroines. In the *Rasikpriya*, Kesavadas classifies the various categories of heroines of love (*Nayikas*) who are delineated by painters of Rajasthana and Himachala with great fervour across the decades. Such are the *Nabodha*, a woman too shy to meet her lover alone; *Mughdha*, a woman conscious of her charm; *Sambhoga Nayika*, one who looks forward to union with her lover; *Swadhinapatika*, one conscious of having her lover in subjection; *Rupagarita*, a woman given to affected resentment; *Smarandha*, a woman in blind love; *Vipralabdha Nayika*, a woman frustrated in love; *Abhisarika*, a woman distraught by love who forsakes her home and goes forth to meet her lover; *Vasakasayya Nayika*, the expectant heroine who waits for her lover at the door way of her bedchamber; *Prositapatika* or *Prositapreyasi*, a woman who suffers separation from her husband; *Agata Bhatrika*, a woman meeting her husband after a long separation. Each ideal heroine or *Nayika* typifies a distinct mood of the human soul yearning after union with God. As in the *Ragamala* paintings, so in the love paintings the ubiquitous hero is Krishna, the divine Lover, and the heroine is Radha or the spirit of man exhibiting the entire gamut of nuances of affections—natural coyness, anxiety, expectation, frustration or bliss in which the human and the divine slip into each other—of union with God as the Supreme and Eternal Lover. The *Bhakti* movement led by Ramananda and his ten apostles strengthened and disseminated by the development of Hindi Riti lyrical poetry, found superb visual representation in the Rajasthana paintings. These are characterised by as much spontaneity, directness and abandon of expression of natural feelings in a lyrical vein as are true of mystical devotion and worship themselves.

Art became pure, sweet and sudden, at once heart-captivating and heart-piercing in its revelation as mystical experience. Herein lies the uniqueness in the world's art of Rajasthana painting concentrated towards the representation of the depth, beauty and serenity of man's life rooted in the awakening, maturation and climax of Love, an integral experience, of which one phase, viz. the human passion, derives the true meaning from another—the eternal quest of the Divine (*Bhakti*). It is the metaphysical conception of the eternal character (*nitya-lila*) of the love-sport of Krishna-Radha in every human heart

—the essential faith of the *Srimad Bhagavata* and the entire *Bhatki* movement of Northern India that underlies the soft and serene magical radiance of Rajasthana painting, and its universal appeal. Art was humanised and brought into closer association with the daily routine of life, and love and toil and the ordinary happiness and sorrow of man and woman than ever before. Not only the love-sports of Radha and Krishna and of the Gopis but also the penances of Siva and Parvati were depicted in painting with deep lyrical tenderness and reverence—the symbols of the common man and woman's supreme exaltation in love and faith in the Divinity.

### Characteristics of the Himachala Schools

The schools of Rajasthana painting thrived in different environments. It is noteworthy that while the artists of Jaipur, Bikaner, Udaipur, Orchha and Bundelkhand found a romantic setting in the holy land of Brindavana on the banks of the Jamuna, flowing with milk and honey, for the revelation of the subtle nuances, moods and gestures of the human soul symbolised in the forms of Radha and the Gopis that were painted with bewitching and serene loveliness, the Himachala schools of Garhwal, Basholi and Chamba (collectively called the Kalm of Kangra or Trigarta comprising the triple valleys of the Ravi, the Beas and the Sutlej), revelled in the delineation of the penances of Siva and the devotions and activities of Sakti in her varied manifestations in the austere and rugged background of the Himalayas and mountain lakes—equally representing the transformation of human attitudes and passions into divine moods. The region from Jamuna to Garhwal including the Hill states of the Punjab and the United Provinces, such as Mandi, Kulu, Suket, Bilaspur, Bushahr, Nahan and Garhwal is as much a distinct cultural area as the region from Marwar to Bundelkhand including Jaipur, Jodhpur, Udaipur, Bikaner, Bundi, Kotah, Kishengarh, Gwalior, Datia, Orchha and Pannah. Each region though working on the same common literary and Bhakti tradition developed its own distinctive pictorial art in the setting of its own landscape of hills and mountains or verdant meadows, pastures and lakes. Of the Rajasthana school of paintings the folk variations are important in Amber, Marwar, Bikaner, Bundelkhand, Gujarat and Malwa; of the Himachala school similar variations are significant in Kangra, Kulu, Mandi, Suket, Basholi and Garhwal.



The development of the various Himachala schools was largely due to the migration of artists and fugitive chiefs and rulers to the Hill States from the Rajput courts or from Delhi and Agra. For instance, the Garhwal school owes its birth to the migration in 1658 of Suleman, son of Dara Shikoh, to Srinagar with a retinue of 17 persons, including the Agra court painters, Shamdas and Hardas, to escape the wrath of Aurangzeb. Mola Ram (1740-1833), the most distinguished leader of the Garhwal school, was their direct descendant. He was both a poet and a painter and usually wrote verses on the top of his exquisite paintings. One of his verses runs thus: "I, Mola Ram, care more for sincere appreciation rather than for reward of thousands of villages and tons of money."

A great patron of the Kangra artists was Sansar Chand (1764-1823 A.D.) during whose time some superb miniatures were executed. The different Hill schools show some peculiarities in style and treatment. Kangra and Garhwal are tender, serene, elusive, radiant with a soft magical glow. Basholi and Chamba are vigorous, agitated and dynamic, scintillating with warm hues. There is a remarkable contrast, for instance, between the Kangra miniature of the twilight scene of the cattle being brought home, and the Basholi miniature of Krishna swallowing up the forest conflagration. Tranquillity and sweetness are conspicuous qualities of the former, agitation and fury of the latter; and yet both show distinctive formal and associational values. The theme of the latter is derived from Surasagar. Krishna's quenching of the forest fire that threatens destruction of vegetation, beast and man symbolises the Divine quelling of the flames of passion and lust in the human soul. Up in the secluded mountain heights, social life was much less disturbed than in the plains below, and the serenity and delight of the people, underlined by the Bhakti movement and Brajbhasha poetry as these ascended the hill slopes, embodied themselves in miniatures, counted not by hundreds but by tens of thousands in the Himachala. It is estimated that some 50,000 paintings are still preserved. The artistic renaissance bore a rich harvest for about two centuries—from the middle of the 17th to the middle of the 19th century. Such prolificness is associated with the intellectual and religious upsurge in a relatively isolated region where the indigenous traditions of folk music and dance were much more vigorous than elsewhere.

Once again we find the fusion of spiritual and humanistic values and outlooks giving birth to a supreme and exuberant manifestation of creative art and experience. Siva in Indian metaphysics is the human soul in silence and withdrawal, and his abode is in the forests and mountains. Krishna, the flower-bedecked flute-player and prince of the shepherds, is very different from the ascetic God, clad in tiger-skin and steeped in meditation. He is the human soul in love and action, yet completely detached from enjoyment, and has his home in flowery groves, verdant pastures and tree-lined river banks. Kailasa, the home of Siva and Parvati in the Himalayas, looms large in the pictures of the Himachala schools; while the schools of Rajasthana revel in picturing Brajbhumi on the Jamuna, the romantic pastoral background for the love-sports of Krishna and Radha. Many painters of the Himachala schools have no doubt represented Krishna and Radha themes just as the Rajasthana schools have also dwelt upon Saiva subjects. For Siva and Krishna represent indeed two contrasted eternal archetypes of human approach to the Divinity, of renunciation and of action, comprising different accents of the human soul that the poets and painters of the plains or hills have understood and interpreted. But there is no doubt that the sombre Himalayan landscape with jagged cliffs, deodars, pines, weeping willows, snow ranges, flights of cranes, torrential streams and camp fires of the North, familiar to the Himachala schools, has shone with greater vividness in their paintings of Saiva and Sakta themes and of romantic subjects from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata as well as from such folk tales as Sohni-Mahival, Hamirahatha and Vikramacharita.

### **The Paintings of Musical Modes (Ragamala)**

Equally local and charming is the background of flowering mango, champaka and Kadamba trees, lakes with rose lotuses, green meadows with deer, cranes and peacocks, sunshine, heavy cloud and rainfall, characteristic of the paintings of musical modes in the school of Rajasthana. Here the integration of the values of Nature, metaphysics and concrete daily experience is more profound. The nuances of human love, the modes of melody and the elements, the landscape, all become perfectly fused in a generic stable feeling and attitude in which the distinction between the self and the rest of the universe, between Man and Nature, is completely abolished.



In Jayadeva's *Gita-Govinda*, of which there are several illustrated manuscripts, we find an intimate association of Ragas and Talas with different moods and nuances of love. Thus the Raga Vasant is used in the lyrics of the *Gita-Govinda* for the delineation of the charm and rejuvenation of the spring season and playfulness of Radha and Krishna, Raga Gujari for the expression of the agitation of Radha or Krishna being slighted, Raga Kedara for the exhortation to Radha to meet Krishna at the trysting place by her companion and Raga Karnataka for the delineation of Radha's supreme desolation and misery. Maharana Kumbha of Rajasthana wrote a famous commentary on Jayadeva's *Gita-Govinda* in the 15th century which, therefore, supplies for painting the traditional background of the association of different Ragas with the entire gamut of human passions, especially the love-sentiment (*sringara*).

Indian musical tradition associates an appropriate melody not only with the nuance of love, but also with the season and hour of the day and night. In the Indian system of music each major melody or Raga is in tune with a generic love attitude and sentiment that Nature in a particular season and time of the day elicits among the entire gamut of human sentiments. The songs of early dawn, morning, noon, twilight and midnight differ in their characteristic notes in Indian classical music. Rajasthana as an important home of classical music in India was indicated by the *Sangitaraja*, of which the author was Maharana Kumbha. Rajput painters fully understood the appropriateness of particular Ragas and Raginis for arousing the universal mood or sentiment characteristic of the season.

Consider the representation of the morning melody, Ragini Bhairavi, in one of the Rajput primitives from Orchha as the consort of Siva, dressed in the colour of the rising sun on an autumn morning and proceeding to the temple of Siva for worship as her companions dance to the accompaniment of drum and cymbal. The hymn of worship of Siva is sung in the early dawn by Indian musicians in the Bhairavi tune (subordinate to the Raga Bhairava or Siva) that arouses a poignant sense of futility and impermanence of life and the mystery of the Infinite.

Ragini Bibhash is also a morning tune, represented in painting by a scene in which the Lord of Love strikes with his arrow the cock disturbing with its shrill cry in early dawn the repose of the Nayika after her night's love carousal. Lalita Ragini depicts the Nayika still asleep or she responds to the call of the day and leaves her home carrying the night's garland of love. Take also the representation of the melody, sung in spring, Ragini Basanta or Raga Hindola, depicting the universal lover, Krishna, dancing with his flute in hand, while two milkmaids play on the drum and cymbal. The scene full of the excitement of love and youth in the spring season, is appropriately placed on the bank of the river Jamuna under a tree in full vernal blossom. The flowers seem to dance in unison, while a tender creeper rhythmically twines round the tree in the spring-tide of love. Consider again the Megha-Mallara Raga, sung in India during the rainy season. The pictorial representation here is that of a woman, draped in a skirt of leaves agitated by the high wind, and sitting on a lotus on an island of a lake filled with flowers, geese and other wild birds.

In the rainy season as it drips and drips, the entire universe feels an inexpressible agony of separation and another song that is sung is Hindola Raga and Madhu-madhavi Ragini. Hindola is represented in Rajput painting as a swinging scene in the forest grove during the rains, the pair of swingers being the Divine Lovers, Radha and Krishna. Madhu-madhavi (literally honey-sweet) is represented as a twilight scene of the early rains when dark clouds and flashes of lightning all on a sudden appear on the horizon and surprise the love-heroine who runs back to her house. Or she gives the honey spilled from her fond heart to the peacock, the bird of the rains, that approaches her and knows her expectancy. No better imaginative transfigurations of Nature during the rains in India can be conceived, translating into the vernacular of line and colour a universal mood in profound unison with Nature that both lyrical poetry and music seek to express and elicit. The traditional six seasons of the Indian scene (*shar-ritu*) are symbolised by the six ragas in the Indian musical system, viz. Bhairava, Malara, Sri-Raga, Hindola or Vasanta, Dipaka and Megha.

Each of the thirty-six ragas is associated with concerts or raginis symbolising the attitudes and sentiments appropriate for



the season and hour of the day or night, and giving superb scope to both musician and painter for presenting the diversified imagery in melody and brush. The Indian man revives in the procession of seasons through his appreciation of the appropriate raga and ragini, the joy and hilarity of lovers in union during spring, their languor and intensity of repression during summer, the delight of expectancy and refreshment during the first rains, their deep, unutterable grief of separation in the long rainy season and fullness of heart, home-coming and merriment as the bounteous harvest is reaped in autumn. The raga painting pictorially sets forth, consolidates and universalises the appropriate emotion and sentiment of the season and establishes a profound rapport between the human mind and the environment, using the symbolism of the different phases of human love in union or separation for the expression of the dialectic of the human soul. On each miniature are also written the appropriate lyrical stanzas from a well-known poetical work or folk-song that provide the perennial undefiled springs of the people's religious and lyrical imagination and experience.

### **The Lyrical Paintings of the Seasons (Baramasi)**

In India there are appropriate melodies for the various seasons, viz. Ragamalas or paintings of musical modes and also Baramasi or lyrical paintings of the seasons in which each illustration takes the form not of a symbol or icon but of a dramatic situation conceived in the abstract and expressive of the universal mood or sentiment appropriate for the season and the time of the day or night. With great vitality and simplicity of lines and organisation of places by means of deep colours, the aim of painting here has been to analyse, epitomise and consolidate abstract moods and situations in a vigorous, yet, impersonal style rather than to illustrate an episode or produce picturesque effects. Music is essentially an abstract art; its linkage to painting aids the latter in achieving a degree of abstraction that is normal to music, directing the human soul to Being, who is behind all patterns of sounds, shapes and colours. The descriptive imagery in the lyrical poem, the harmony in the Raga or Ragini and the scenic representation in the painting, all alike and collectively symbolise and evoke the eternal and universal sentiment of wholeness, wonder and thrill, associated with the experience of the noumenon or Being in the realm

of Nature. The Being is the deity of the Ragamala painting, and his fiancée the feeling of wonder and awe that the human soul through lyrical poetry and melody expresses and symbolises in the cycle of the seasons and hours.

### The Fusion of Painting, Music and Poetry

For about three centuries, from the 16th to the 18th, three aspects of folk art, viz. poetry, music and painting, developed in India parallel with one another expressing the same impersonal moods in different idioms. All were impregnated with religious motifs from the legends of the Bhagvata and the Puranas that reached the masses through a galaxy of mystics, poets, musicians and painters. Rarely in the history of the world's culture has there been such collaboration of the arts expressing the communal vision of a whole people and epoch as was then witnessed in Northern India. In the marvellous procession of the seasons in the Indian scene—the languor of summer, the fruition of autumn, the intoxication of spring and the longing and pain of separation during the rains—become deeply felt the universal experiences and attitudes. These are celebrated not only in popular rituals such as the dance of Krishna and the swinging of Krishna and Radha in heavy rain, the spring dance of Krishna and his sport with the milkmaids with coloured powder or the penance and worship of Siva and Parvati but are also represented as Ragas and Raginis in paintings, mainly based on the motifs of human and spiritual love in its various nuances, either in union or separation. These paintings reveal the spirit of the particular season and time of day and night, and thus help towards consolidating the same universal feelings and sentiments that certain appropriate notes of music evoke in the receptive consciousness in India. It is noteworthy that in the Basholi school the classifications and compositions in the Ragamalas are somewhat different from those of Rajasthan due obviously to the differences of climate and season in the Himalayan region. In the music paintings of India, Indian art has achieved interpretations of the landscape something different from the Chinese landscape painting, symbolical and dramatic rather than philosophical. Chinese landscape art shows us the infinite in the mists, the waters and the mountains. Indian landscape art reveals the infinite in human love, delight and sorrow that spill from the undefiled soul into the heart of Nature throbbing



in sympathetic resonance. It is thus that the region, metaphysics and collective feeling and vision blend in the creation of art work that has a unique place among the great arts of the world.

As in China so in India too the same apprehension was used to compose poetry and paint scenery of surpassing depth and delicacy and abstraction as in music. In the ancient days the Ajanta frescoes were inscribed with verses from Aryasura's Jatakamala; while in the 17th and 18th centuries verses from the Gita-Govinda of Jayadeva, the Rasikpriya of Kesavadas and Nayika poems, dealing with the classification of heroines (nayaka-nayika-bheda) according to their temperament, age and circumstances, were quoted by painters of the Rajasthana school in their works. The eight Nayikas of literature and painting are the following : Svadhinapatika, Utka, Vasakasayya, Abhisamdhita, Khandita, Proshita-patika, Vipralabhda and Abhisarika. For an illustration, we may quote the Hindi poet Sundara's description reproduced in many a Rajasthana painting of the Vipralabhda or the frustrated heroine who is grieved because her lover does not come to the trysting place and the messenger (duti) comes back disappointed. "She came out all dressed, to meet her lover at the trysting place, leaving her own room empty," says Sundara, "she looked for him in and out, but not a trace of Kanar (i.e. Krishna) could be had. Meanwhile, Cupid, the enemy of Siva, has put arrows to his bows. And oh! Comrade! when she knew she had none to save her, she could only sing at her heart a hymn for Hara."

Vaishnava poetry, comprised often of the couplet (doha) and the quatrain (chaupai) and pregnant with deep thought and intense feeling, is of the nature of the most delicate miniature painting, and thus poetry and painting interpreted and interpenetrated each other. Man sang and danced what he felt in the lyric and saw in the painting the sports of Krishna and the passions of Radha in the universal love drama of Nature. In China as well as in India painting was akin to literature, and what was achieved by calligraphy for Chinese painting towards abstraction was achieved by music for Indian painting. Just before the modern all-pervasive movement of technology, industrialisation and standardisation caught India's culture in its grips, her basic concept of the intrinsic unity of the arts was most charmingly rendered as the last prophetic artistic revelation of her ancient faith of non-duality in human knowledge and experience.

## PART IX

### INDIAN CIVILIZATION IN THE WORLD CONTEXT

#### CHAPTER XLI

#### THE CLASH BETWEEN INDIAN AND EUROPEAN CIVILIZATIONS DURING THE BRITISH ERA

##### Colonialism in its Earliest Phase

British rule and Western impact should be distinguished in their respective effects on the economic and cultural life of India in the 18th and 19th centuries. The earliest Europeans, the Portuguese, who occupied fringes of the Indian sea-coast sought along with the monopoly of spices, pepper and gold the conversion of the people to Christianity and thus establishing a Christian civilization in the East. A mixed Christian population grew up especially in the south-western coast of India, Arakan and Chittagong. It reflects much to the credit of Albuquerque, the second Portuguese Viceroy (1509-1515), that he maintained the village communities in power and established schools for the education of the natives who were admitted to service as law-agents, solicitors and scribes. There was no colour discrimination; the children of mixed descent were not held in disesteem. But the social experiment of a hybrid Eurasian culture was short-lived in Portuguese India as compared with Java and the Philippines. The Dutch, English and French originally came to India as traders, factors and conquistadors like the Portuguese but developed into warriors, administrators and Nabobs, carving out territories of their own through the use of the soft glove and the mailed fist, as local opportunities or conflicts and struggles in Europe demanded. This was largely the result of European commercial and colonial rivalry in the 18th and 19th centuries. European colonisation assumed from the closing decades of the 18th century, as the result of the rapid industrialisation, a pattern far different from the preceding phase of overseas adventure, trade and migration. The expansion of European powers, seeking industrial raw materials, markets and territories in Africa and Southern Asia came to be rooted in the



now familiar distinction between *colonies d'exploitation* and *colonies de peuplement*.

Colonial exploitation accepts no social or cultural responsibility for the subject population and disrupts the existing social fabric without building a new society. British colonial policy in India first asserted itself against the monopoly of the East India Company which obtained huge profits from the distribution of Indian calicoes, indigo, saltpetre and other commodities throughout the world, and also encouraged the manufacture of high-class cloth and silk goods in the regions under its control. Not merely European tariffs but also mercantilist theories restricting the export of European bullion, especially to pay for the import of luxury goods, ruined Indian industries. India would probably have developed modern science and technology, and built her railways and established factories even without British rule. The modern economic development of Japan is a pointer in this direction.

### The Economic Debacle

India reached her peak of industrial and commercial supremacy in the world prior to the industrial and commercial revolution and absorbed the bulk of its gold and silver. But the period covering the early decades of British rule (1760-1815) witnessed her quick economic decline as it was also associated with Britain's phenomenal economic progress.

First, the English and Dutch companies ruined the Indian commercial community through managing to obtain reduction of customs duties and other privileges from the middle of the 17th century as a result of which both foreign and inland trade gradually shifted from Indian to foreign hands.

Secondly, English and Dutch piracy ousted Indian shipping from the routes to Persia, the Red Sea and the Indian Archipelago. Both the Dutch and English, since the middle of the 17th century, followed the policy of monopolising Indian overseas trade, "intercepting all such shipping as they (the Dutch) shall encounter bound thither (Achin)." A Madras letter in 1658 similarly "laid down that for the future none but the (English) Company's ships were to be allowed to trade to Achin, Bantam or elsewhere." Seven years before

this (1651) the first Navigation Act was passed in England helping the British merchant marine to gain supremacy over the Dutch. The Navigation Acts of England from 1651 to 1673 applied the mercantilist doctrine to colonial trade and, backed by Adam Smith in the 18th century, struck a decisive blow at Indian along with Dutch shipping. The decline of national shipping reacted most unfavourably upon India's manufactures that depended upon overseas markets.

Thirdly, British colonial policy encouraged "the supplanting of the chief manufactures of India by the manufactures of England not only in the market of this country (England) but in that of India itself" and promoted "the improvement of the productions of the soil," as we read in the remarks of the Select Committee of the House of Lords in 1830. The imposition of tariffs against Indian calicoes and silk and the loss of European markets due to the French Revolution and the Berlin decrees, coupled with the mechanical revolution in the British textile industry and the importation to India of British cotton goods at nearly nominal ( $2\frac{1}{2}$  per cent) duties led to the ruin of our handloom weaving industry. The displacement of population from the country's most considerable industry caused widespread unsettlement and misery.

Fourthly, Indian economy had rested, across the centuries, on a favourable balance of trade and regular inflow of the precious metals. This trend was completely reversed due to the ruin of cloth and silk weaving and other industries and the European prohibition of the export of gold and silver in the regime of mercantile capitalism. Simultaneously, the acquisition of rich and extensive Indian territory by the English enabled them to buy Indian products for world trade from the revenues that accrued without importing precious metals. This had a sudden, disinflationary consequence, choking the currents of trade and industry, and greatly aggravating unemployment and poverty.

Petrie wrote in the last year of the 18th century: "Until their territorial acquisitions the Europeans purchased the manufactures of India with the metals of Europe; but they were henceforward to make these purchases with gold and silver of India, the revenues supplied the place of foreign bullion and paid the native the price of his industry with his own money. At first this revolution in the



principles of commerce was but little felt, but when opulent and extensive dominions were acquired by the English, when the success of war and commercial rivalry had given them so decided a superiority over the other European nations as to engross the whole of the commerce of the East, when a revenue amounting to millions per annum was remitted to Europe in lieu of the manufactures of the East, then were the effects of the revolution severely felt in every part of India. Deprived of so copious a stream, the river rapidly retired from its banks and ceased to fertilize the adjacent fields with its overflowing water." (Minute to the Madras Committee of Reform, India Office Records, 1799).

The disinflationary trend manifest since the middle of the 18th century was preceded by the English attempt to scour the colonies for any commodities that India would accept except silver and for finding the silver not in England but by the sale of slaves in the West Indies and Spanish America. It merged in the drain of the "tribute" money between 1765 and 1784 after the Company acquired the revenue of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa estimated at £4 millions and the profits of trade monopoly. Every year about 33 percent of the revenues of Bengal, i.e. about £40 lakhs, was remitted to England as "tribute," apart from the fabulous fortunes brought by private traders and officials engaged in unabashed exploitation in league with the local banias and gomasthas of the Company. The enormous drain for about two decades of vast sums that were from £16 lakhs to £40 lakhs per annum and the increase of the land revenue from £8 lakhs to £30 lakhs, greatly impoverished the country. De-industrialisation, disinflation and drain completely undermined the country's economy in the closing decades of the 18th century; while the virtual isolation of India from the rest of Asia aggravated her cultural dessication.

### **Subordination of the Cultural Aims of the British Dominion**

From the very start the pattern of Anglo-Indian relations came to be dominated successively by European mercantilism, colonialism and nationalism—three of the world's mischievous theories that warped the development of Western civilization for three centuries. Economic exploitation and imperialist aggrandizement became the twin objectives of British occupation. Any aims in respect of the compromise or assimilation of European and Indian culture were

at discount. The merchants and administrators of the East India Company used to participate in Hindu and Muslim festivals and observances and showed respect to Hindu deities, the Company serving as "wet nurses to Vishnu" and "church-wardens" to Juggernaut. But the new British administrators, nurtured in the school of Bentham and Mill and Whig Liberalism, were too impatient with the customs and manners of a "decomposed society" whose archaic survivals such as Suttee, female infanticide, slavery and polygamy aroused public attention in England in the first decades of the 19th century. The impact of British individualism, the transformation of the class structure as the result of the capitalistic industrial development and the cityward drift, the far-reaching social legislation and the Wesleyan Church Movement in England—all contributed towards producing a new outlook in the next generation of British administrators in India who had nothing but contempt for Indian society and culture. In respect of these Sir Thomas Munroe remarked in 1817: "Foreign conquerors have treated the natives with violence, but none has treated them with so much scorn as we; none has stigmatized the whole people as unworthy of trust, as incapable of honesty, and as fit to be employed only where we cannot do without them. It seems not only ungenerous, but impolitic to debase the character of a people fallen under our dominion." Racial superiority was fostered by the social distance between the handful of British officials, soldiers and merchants who never settled down but were "birds of passage" and the vast body of subject population who spoke a different tongue, by the upbringing of their families in Britain and by their contempt for the Eurasians who might have provided real contacts with the Indians. Thus, with the cultural aims of British occupation kept in the background, and the colonial policy permeating every sphere of administration, a rapid industrial decline set in along with an unprecedented deterioration of the standard of living of the people; this obtained philosophical support from the prevailing *laissez faire* doctrine in Britain that excluded the State from assuming educational and ameliorative responsibilities for half a century since the assumption of the Dewani. Yet not a few intelligent British administrators discerned the imperative necessity of state patronage of education according to old and respected national traditions. Lord Minto wrote to the Directors in 1811 that unless such encouragement was extended "the revival of letters may shortly become hopeless from a want of books or of people capable of explaining them."



Not before four decades had elapsed, however, did the State feel the importance of primary education in the vernacular in the famous Despatch of 1854. But within three years the partial recognition of the benefits of the policy of public amelioration received a rude shock and was almost nullified owing to the great uprising of 1857. Racial bitterness was enormously aggravated by the Indian rebellion which was sometimes attributed in England to governmental functions stepping beyond the sphere of law and order. All this stereotyped the narrow economic aims of colonial exploitation in the British dominion of India.

### **The First Colleges and Educators**

The consolidation of the British Empire was accompanied by a process of gradual de-industrialisation, and the deflection of capital to the land through the development of the institution of landlordism which became the most profitable profession for all classes of people with ready money. Landlordism for the upper class and government service for the educated and semi-educated middle class filled the gap left by the decline of industry and trade at the end of the 18th century. The English founded two important educational institutions at the close of the 18th century, one was a Madresa founded by Warren Hastings at Calcutta in 1781 and the other was a Sanskrit College established by Lord Cornwallis at Benares in 1782. The aim was to produce Maulvis and Pandits to assist the English judges in meting out justice to the people according to the laws of the land. It took, however, several decades after the Permanent Settlement for the establishment of the English schools in India that were started in the thirties of the 19th century and that offered the intelligentsia an opportunity of employment in the public service. The Charter Act of 1813 contained a provision, thanks to the intervention of William Wilberforce, empowering the Government to spend not less than a lac of rupees on the revival and encouragement of learning but this amount remained unspent. Another section, though it did not specifically mention the missionaries, empowered the Board of Control to encourage the residence of such persons that were formerly refused by the Court of Directors and these latter belonged to the missionary class. Bishops and Archdeacons were also instructed at the same time. It was these missionaries who played a significant part in the spread of the new education and learning in India. The British

missionary, William Carey, established himself at Serampur in 1799 in Danish land where he was more welcome than in Company territory. It was there that he started the first printing press in India which published many books in Bengali prose, including translations of Sanskrit works by pandits working under his supervision. Carey subsequently received the patronage of Lord Wellesley who appointed him a teacher of language in the Hindu College.

Another great educator was Henry Louis Vivian Derozio who joined the Hindu College staff in Calcutta in 1826. The Hindu College, or rather School, was the very first English seminary in Bengal or even in India and was started in 1817 through the efforts of David Hare, an illiterate English watch-maker, in cooperation with other Europeans and Indians, the latter including Ram Mohan Roy and Dwarka Nath Tagore, the grandfather of Rabindranath Tagore. The institution was founded and supported by public subscriptions and carried on for some time in opposition to the various activities and measures of the Government; and it was not till 1832 that on the recommendation of a committee of the public appointed by the Government of Bengal it obtained an annual grant from the Government that assured its success. One of the famous teachers of the Hindu College, now the Presidency College, Calcutta, was Derozio who had a tremendous hold on the rising generation of intellectual Bengal. He wrote impassioned verses and took part in lively social and religious discussions that captured the imagination of the student community. Later on, however, his radicalism caused his dismissal from the College. There was another great teacher in the same College, Dr. Richardson, who also wielded great influence on young Bengal, leading the youth of this province though often violently and recklessly, against any kind of dogma and superstition.

Meanwhile, in the South, Munro instituted an enquiry into the state of education and also considered the advisability of employing Indian officers in positions of trust and responsibility. The Charter Act of 1833 removed the ban of race and religion for any of the Company's services, thus fulfilling the intellectual aspirations of the upper class. Before the Act was passed, however, Lord William Bentinck already began recruiting Indian Deputy Collectors. The attitude of the people towards employment in the Government services was clearly stated thus by one of India's greatest men, Ram



Mohan Roy (1774-1833). He was an intellectual giant who knew Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic as well as Hebrew, Greek and English, and became in many respects the precursor of the comparative method of study of social institutions. He expressed the fears and aspirations of the people of India under the Company Raj as follows :

"The peasantry and villages in the interior are quite ignorant of and indifferent about either the former or present Government, and attribute the protection they may enjoy or oppression they may suffer to the conduct of the public officers immediately presiding over them. But men of aspiring character and members of some ancient families are very much reduced by the present system, consider it derogatory to accept the trifling public situations which natives are allowed to hold under the British Government, and are decidedly disaffected by it. Many of those, however, who engage prosperously in commerce, and of those who are secured in the peaceful possessions of their estates by the permanent settlement, and such as have sufficient intelligence to foresee the probability of future improvement which presents itself under the British rulers, are not only reconciled to it, but really view it as a blessing to the country. But I have no hesitation in stating, with reference to the general feeling of the more intelligent part of the native community, that the only course of policy which can insure their attachment to any form of Government would be that of making them eligible to gradual promotion, according to their respective abilities and merits, to situations of trust and responsibility in the State."

Bengal was at this time in the midst of a revolutionary intellectual ferment in which the ideas of the French Encyclopaedists and the English Romantics were mingled together to discredit all old customs and institutions and shape a new enlightened conscience. Elphinstone thus described in 1822 the intellectual upsurge among the Bengalees who represented indeed the vanguard of progress in India.

"The wonderful improvement of the natives begins to be discernible in Bengal especially. There is a Bengalee newspaper which discusses all subjects, and is interesting even to the English readers, though of course often puerile and often mistaken. Ram Mohan Roy, wisely retaining the name and observances of a Hindu, is writing books in favour of Deism, and many natives begin to discover curiosity and interest about the form of their Government

as well as its proceedings together with a strong spirit of reform as applied to the science, religion and morale of their nation."

The social distance between the English and the Indians was, however, too great to permit an understanding of and sympathy with the liberal ideas that were sweeping through Bengal. Ram Mohan Roy (1774-1853) may be considered as the first of the great Indian moderns and the father of the Indian Renaissance in the 19th century. An intellectual giant, who was familiar with Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic and Bengali among the Oriental languages and with English, Greek and Hebrew among the Occidental ones, he was the first exponent in the world of a science of comparative religion and at the same time, a free thinker of great courage, and moral earnestness. He attacked idolatry, suttee and other superstitions of popular Hinduism in scathing terms and returned to the Upanishads and the Vedanta for the correction of its errors. Ram Mohan conceived the idea of a Universal Church, combining the best spiritual traditions of Hinduism, Christianity and Islam, and accepting the teachings of the great founders of all religions with equal reverence. This was the Brahmo-Sabha which attracted persons of the highest intellectual calibre of the time. As leader of the reform movements of the time, Ram Mohan became the founder of a Bengali-English journal and a weekly paper in Persian and wrote numerous articles showing depth of scholarship, vehemence and the modern outlook. He was a pioneer of Bengali prose and of serious literature reconciling Sanskritism with a lucid argumentative style and created a new class of readers in the Bengali language. Ram Mohan was not only India's first social reformer but her first feminist. In his treatise on "Brief Remarks Regarding Modern Encroachments on the Ancient Rights of Females" (1832), he advocated the rights of women with great acumen and moral fervour. It was largely due to his advocacy in England between 1830-33 that the suttee was abolished. He also advocated the freedom of the press, the reform of Hindu law and protested against the injustice and impropriety of the land system introduced by the British. Studying English privately when he was about thirty years of age, Ram Mohan wrote the famous "petition" that was largely responsible for the final decision in respect of advancing Western education in India through the medium of the English language, although his plea for the cultivation of the natural sciences was far ahead of his age. Ram Mohan was one of the world's great humanists, and for



this reason won the friendship of Jeremy Bentham who acclaimed him as "his intensely admired and dearly beloved collaborator in the service of mankind." One of the harbingers of internationalism, the Raja once wrote :

"It is now generally admitted that not religion only but un-biased commonsense as well as the accurate deductions of scientific research lead to the conclusion that all mankind are one great family of which the numerous nations and tribes are only various branches. Hence enlightened men in all countries feel a wish to encourage and facilitate human intercourse in every manner by removing as far as possible all impediments to it in order to provide the reciprocal advantage and enjoyment of the whole race."

### **The Versatile Dwarka Nath Tagore**

The liberal spirit of the age also found a bold and vigorous expression in the life and work of Dwarka Nath Tagore (1794-1846), one of the founders of the Hindu College, who after resigning his appointments as Dewan of the Salt and Opium Department, one of the highest offices which an Indian could hold at that time, turned to trade, industry and politics. He established indigo factories and sugar plantations in his estates, bought a colliery, founded a bank and established a business house in Calcutta with extensive overseas connections. Abjuring Government service, he declined the titles of Raja and Knighthood. With a unique courage and foresight he condemned the English as having "taken all which the natives possessed ; their lives, liberty and property, and all were held at the mercy of the Government," and pleaded for representation of each Presidency of India in the Parliament of Great Britain.

### **The Employment of Indians in Government Services**

Dwarka Nath Tagore constantly demanded the employment of Indians in the higher services in India before his steady friend, Lord William Bentinck. Bentinck whose own impulses were those of a liberal reformer, tried to employ Indians by creating such posts as those of Principal Sadr Amin, Deputy Magistrates and Deputy Collectors. But the total number of Indians who found employment in Government services in India remained below three thousand. The distribution of those posts is shown below. 1828 was the year in which Lord William Bentinck came to India.

	1828	1849
Principal Sadr Amins	..	64
Sadr Amins	157	81
Munsiffs	86	494
Deputy Magistrates	1	11
Sub. Collectors' Assistants	..	27
Deputy & Assistant Collectors	..	86
Abkari (Excise) Superintendents	..	15
Tahsildars	356	276
Sheristadars	375	155
Mamlatdars	9	110
Daftardars	2	19
Kamavisdars	57	..
Adalutis	5	5
Mir Munshis	..	1
Educational	14	479
Various other posts	149	990
Total	1,197	2,813

Of the above posts, less than a thousand were those of honour and responsibility. In 1857 there were, according to Thompson and Garrett, some 256 Indian officials drawing over £ 360 a year and 2,590 held various appointments of a lower grade. "Nearly every civil case was by this time being tried originally before an Indian judge." The emoluments were, however, very inadequate for the Indian judges, Munsifs receiving only £ 120 a year, while an English judge received £ 3,000 a year. On the other hand, the opinion was expressed by the leading Barristers of India and cited as evidence before the Lords that "the judgments of the native judges were infinitely superior to the judgments of the Company's judges who sat in appeal." The police were even more meagrely paid. The Daroga obtained only Rs. 25/-; his clerk or muharrir only Rs. 8/-, the Jamadar Rs. 8/- or Rs. 10/- and the constables Rs. 4/- to Rs. 5/-.

For several years after Lord William Bentinck left India little progress was achieved in the direction of the employment of Indians to higher posts. In fact, there had been a reaction against this. This resulted in a spread of frustration and depression among the people of India, that in the words of Malcolm "be-



comes more alarming as our power extends." This was also recognised much earlier by Munro, who in one of his minutes to Lord Hastings written in 1817 observed as follows :

"No elevation of character can be expected among men who, in the military line, cannot attain to any rank above that of a Subedar, where they are as much below an ensign as an ensign below the Commander-in-Chief, and who, in the civil lines, can hope for nothing beyond some petty judicial or revenue office, in which they may, by corrupt means, make up for their slender salary. The consequence, therefore, of the conquest of India by the British arms would be, in place of raising, to debase the whole people. There is perhaps no example of any conquest in which the natives have been so completely excluded from all share of the government of their country as in British India. Among all the disorders of the Native States, the field is open for every man to raise himself, and hence among them there is a spirit of emulation, of restless enterprise and independence, far preferable to the servility of our Indian subjects. The existence of independent Native States is also useful in drawing off the turbulent and dissatisfied among our Native troops. Their exclusion from offices of trust and emoluments has become a part of our system of government, and has been productive of no good. Whenever, from this cause, the public business falls into arrear, it is said to be owing to the want of a sufficient number of Europeans and more European agency is recommended as a cure for every evil. Such agency is too expensive; and, even if it was not, it ought to be abridged rather than enlarged, because it is, in many cases, much less efficient than that of the natives. For the discharge of all subordinate duties, but especially in the judicial line, the natives are infinitely better qualified than Europeans."

### The Facile Optimism of Macaulay

The system of education that was sponsored by Lord William Bentinck on the basis of Macaulay's minute of education of 1834 was largely a passport to public employment rather than a channel of acquisition of higher knowledge. It must be said to the credit of Macaulay that he conceived education for India in a higher sense and his emphasis of English as a medium of instruction in preference to Sanskrit or Arabic aimed at popularising among the intelligentsia Western science and learning that would not en-

courage idle dogma or silly superstition but would be useful to them in actual life and action. In his minute Macaulay observed :

"It is impossible for us to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the Western nomenclature, and to render them by degree fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population."

For a whole generation the intelligentsia of India were fed on the above liberal ideal, characteristic of England of that epoch which saw the abolition of slavery, the reform of the penal code, and the religious revival associated with Keble and Newman. But in India the class of intelligentsia kept aloof from the masses, and with the spread of English education the social distance between them increased. Very little money was spent for rural education. The enquiries of Munro and Elphinstone established that early in the 19th century, education was much more diffused in India than in contemporary Europe, and that Indian boys, attending their indigenous schools, shared great powers of mental calculation in simple arithmetic. This was largely due to the existence of schools in the villages with Brahmins and other upper classes as teachers maintained by temple endowments and rent-free lands, and the efforts of the mercantile classes in the cities to train their boys in letters and accounts. This widespread indigenous system of mass education was ignored by the British. Western learning, which the Indian upper classes aspired after and quickly assimilated for entry into the services, became responsible for increasing the traditional cleavage in India between the classes and the masses. It was over-literary in both its content and bias.

Science occupied but an inferior place in the curriculum and was hardly utilised as an instrument of rescue of the masses from the sway of myths and superstition. Macaulay's optimism was, however, justified in some measure by the development of the Indian languages and literatures that made the scientific and democratic ideas of the West accessible to the great mass of the



population, especially those living in the cities. The English language also became the binder of the different provinces and regions in different tongues. The English-speaking class did not play indeed the role of interpreters for the English rulers as Macaulay forecast, but became the potent carriers and exponents of nationalism that gradually tied together the heterogeneous races and cultures of the vast continent. The English language also formed a bridge between India and the Dominions. In this respect also Macaulay's vision was true. "In India, English is the language spoken by the ruling class. It is spoken by the higher class of natives at the seats of Government. It is likely to become the language of the commerce throughout the seas of the East. It is the language of two great European communities which are rising, the one in the South of Africa, and the other in Australia, communities which are every year becoming more important and more closely connected with our Indian Empire."

### Social Europeanisation and Counter-Movements

The one reason why the battle between the Anglicists and the Orientalists was decided in favour of the former was that Wilson, who was the head of the Hindu College and was fighting on behalf of the Orientalists, declared himself opposed to the abolition of Suttee. This proved too much for the temper of the Bengalis who, at that time, declared an open rebellion against ancient dogma and superstition, went about in the streets of Calcutta proclaiming their conversion to Islam and Christianity and even flung beef-bones into the homes of the fighting Brahmans. A certain reckless and vociferous section of the new intelligentsia lost all moorings and took pride in aping Western manners, intemperance and vice, and openly and indiscriminately defied traditional customs, usages and values in the name of a new enlightenment, inspired by such a gospel as Paine's Age of Reason. For some time it was indeed apprehended that in the tide of Anglo-Indian philistinism the ancient codes of morality and religion would be completely swept off. P. C. Mazumdar, referring to the demoralization that set in, observed : "Intemperate drinking and licentiousness of thought, taste and character were fearfully rampant. Infidelity, indifference to religion and point-blank atheism were unblushingly professed. Education had degenerated or never developed into anything higher

than a frivolous pursuit of rhetoric and dilettantism." The epoch also saw the first conversion of ardent Hindus into Christianity as real religious seekers under the influence of Alexander Duff, who founded in 1845 the General Assembly's institution. The first sincere converts were Lal Behari De, author of "Folk Tales of Bengal" and "Bengal Peasant Life," Kali Charan Banerji, orator and educationist who became later on one of the founders of the National Congress, K. M. Banerji, also a great orator and religious teacher and the distinguished poet, Michael Madhusudan Dutta. For some decades it appeared that the dissemination of Western learning would bring about a complete social Anglicisation and wholesale conversion of the people to Christianity in Bengal.

But a cultural counter-movement soon started in the form of the Brahmo Samaj, founded by Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Debendra Nath Tagore, the father of Rabindranath Tagore. Brahmanism stood for a pure theism rooted in the Vedas and the Upanishads, discarded idolatry and sought to eliminate myths, ritual and observances that in orthodox Hinduism hid the core of a living spirituality. Many noble souls in India belonged to Brahmo Samaj in Bengal and the Prarthana Samaj in Western India and their influence contributed materially towards stemming the tide of Western social and religious influences and reorienting India's ancient wisdom to the new cultural needs. Particularly in Bengal the early Brahmo evangelists, led by the Tagore family of Calcutta and the followers of Kesav Chandra Sen, stood out against sham and hypocrisy in all fields of life and became the torch-bearers of a new ideal of social purity and uprightness in individual conduct. The schism in the Brahmo Samaj, led by Kesav Chandra Sen (1838-1884), was based on the faith that many Hindu rituals and usages could be re-interpreted and restored with new symbolic meanings for a mass religious and social movement towards which the Brahmo Samaj in its new dispensation oriented itself. Bengali literature of the day was also permeated with an intense social sincerity and a newly aroused individual conscience as polemical in the poetry of Madhusudana, Navin Chandra and Hem Chandra and the writings of Iswar Chandra and Akshay Kumar. Social life and literature equally groped after a new individualistic ideal of Western society without, however, completely breaking away from the Hindu social pattern. In Rabindranath Tagore the various literary and cultural



trends of the country ultimately found their culmination and synthesis. Tagore stood head and shoulders above all literary men of the country and exercised the dominant modernising influence on its provincial literatures. His literature and philosophy epitomised the best elements of the broad liberalism of the Indo-British renaissance, as it progressed through the decades while it also brought the message of the new intellectual objectivity and refined aesthetic taste to all Indian literatures.

In Northern India, the Arya Samaj, founded by the erudite and zealous teacher, Dayananda Saraswati (1827-1883), promulgated the simpler creed of the Vedas as the basis of reconstruction of religion and society. The gods, myths and symbols of the Puranas were discarded with an iconoclastic zeal, and the social distance between the different castes sought to be abridged by a reference to the verities in the Vedas that alone represented the revealed scriptures, and by the cultivation of a new sense of spiritual brotherhood in the eternal Universal Person of the Rigvedic text. From the West came also great teachers with a message of reorientation of India's ancient spiritual wisdom and culture. Mme. Blavatsky, the mystic, steeped in Buddhist love and meditative practice, and Mrs. Annie Besant with her liberal social and political outlook and silvery eloquence made theosophy a cult of many an intellectual home in India, strengthened the reaction against social Europeanisation and interpreted Indian faiths and doctrines afresh for the intelligentsia.

These intellectual and spiritual movements were greatly aided by the series of social reforms introduced during and since the administration of Lord William Bentinck, especially the prohibition of widow-burning (1829) and of female infanticide, and the suppression of the Maria children sacrifice. A clear lead from the English officials in suppressing usages and customs that had the sanction of Hindu religion and yet were indefensible from the viewpoint of civilized conscience supported the growing movement towards an intense individualism, social sincerity and integrity and fairness in social relations. The protestant movements of the Brahmo, the Prarthana and the Arya Samaj that re-interpreted the ancient religious texts and fought against both Christianity and Hindu institutional religion, the renaissance in Bengal that sponsored intellectual movements throughout the country, the rise of theosophy

that engendered a new moral and spiritual earnestness and the growth of Indian literatures that propagated a gospel of individualism and social revolt saved India from social Europeanization. These gradually built up a social order rooted in the dignity of man and equity in human relations. The new mental pattern waxed stronger and stronger with the spread of science and technology and the social ferment associated with urbanisation and the breakdown of the ancient rural communalism. Ideological and economic forces both remoulded India's social life on the foundations of individualistic justice, and her political life on those of national unity—the ethos of Western civilization.



## CHAPTER XLII

### ECONOMIC AND INTELLECTUAL IMPACT

#### **Influence of Whig Individualism on the Indian Land System**

British administrators in India in the later Victorian age were somewhat different from their predecessors. They strove after purity and efficiency of administration and equality of all men irrespective of caste and creed in the eyes of law. But as disciples of Bentham, Mill and Lecky, they also developed a new enthusiasm for social reform and economic welfare of the people, supported by the new educational system and engineering enterprise that were reaching the far corners of India. No doubt it took many decades for the establishment in India of freedom of speech and of the press and the full complement of the rights of men that were enjoyed by the British people. Several of the British officials, however, took a leading role in fighting against ancient customs and superstitions while the new system of education spread an all-round social scepticism, the first attack on caste coming however from the educators such as David Hare, Derozio and other persons associated with the Hindu College in Calcutta and the missionaries of Serampore led by William Ward. Unlike such successful older administrators as Elphinstone, Munro and Malcolm, who would depend on Pax Britannica and gradual education of the Indian officials for the elimination of archaic, cruel customs, crimes and barbarities, the new administrators, especially those of the recently conquered Punjab, who began their careers in the fifties were too full of social zeal and responsibility to brook any delay in the reconstruction of "decomposed" Indian society, and were often ruthless in their methods of reform. This attitude was in large measure the result of the dominant Benthamite tradition and doctrine of *laissez faire* in Britain according to which India, the home of medieval feudalism and archaic village community, was to be directed towards individualism and freedom of competition and enterprise; for that was the inevitable next step to social progress and to the greatest happiness of the greatest number.

The new British Whig individualism introduced the free purchase and sale of land and rackrenting along with landlordism. It did

not see any harm accruing to a backward agricultural community from the landlord's demand of an economic rent nor from his distraint of plough, cattle and cooking pots of the defaulting tenant. The permanent settlement no doubt promised the security of tenants, but this was left to the operation of agreements or contracts that were in vain expected to be made between the two parties. But such agreements did not materialise, and the established purgana rent rates gradually disappeared in the absence of survey and record. Meanwhile, the regulation of 1799 gave the landlord harsh power of distraint that was much abused. On the other hand, when the occupancy status for a tenant on a proved 12-years' continuous occupation of a holding, first suggested by Bentinck in 1832, was finally created for both Bengal and North-Western Provinces in 1859 for protecting him against arbitrary rents and evictions, its transferability provided the basis of the dominance of the moneylender and shopkeeper in the rural economy at an economic stage when barter was giving place to cash transactions. The English were anxious only about the regular collection of revenue in cash and on given dates, and did not bother as long as the land revenue was duly paid on their account that the free disposal of Zamindari and occupancy rights of land led to the emergence of an array of inferior proprietors or intermediaries below the landlords who squeezed the actual tillers of the soil.

In the ryotwari areas, where the Government dealt directly with the tillers of the soil, the assessment was heavy and the holdings frequently changed hands often coming into the possession of the sedentary and non-agriculturist groups. Again a set of parasitic middlemen was created depending upon the fruits of cultivation.

But the English administrators were self-complacent in the belief that "the replacement of an owner who has shown himself to be thriftless and incompetent by one with superior intelligence and greater command of capital cannot be otherwise than beneficial". Alike in the zamindari and ryotwari areas the structure of the village community and customary rights in respect of irrigation and pasturage, was permitted to be obliterated and disintegrated, much to the detriment of agriculture.

Meanwhile, there was a phenomenal increase of population. Between 1750 when India's population might be estimated at 130 millions and 1881, when the first systematic census was undertaken, there



was an addition of about 125 millions. This caused an excessive overcrowding on the land that was aggravated by the disbandment of large bodies of irregular soldiery, the suppression of gangs of dacoits and thugs who took resort to agriculture, the movement of the forest and aboriginal tribes to the land and the wholesale destruction of rural handicrafts and industries.

Due to the Hindu and Muslim laws of inheritance that would divide a holding, orchard, tank and even trees equally among the heirs of a deceased cultivator, the evil of fragmentation that was formerly checked by the village coparcenery system and the law of pre-emption, became more manifest. The average holding in India was indeed much bigger in the 18th century. Buchanan's survey in Mysore in 1800 showed that the poorest cultivator had two ploughs and the richest cultivator had fifteen. With five ploughs the ryot cultivated  $12\frac{1}{2}$  acres of wet land and 25 acres of dry fields. Land has since been very much subdivided and scattered into tiny irregular bits throughout South India. It is estimated by Harold Mann that the average size of a holding has been reduced to less than half during the seventy years following the Mutiny. In north Bengal Buchanan found between 1808-1815 that holdings of 55 acres were considered very large ones, those of 15 to 20 acres were comfortable and easy, while the poorer cultivators who, with their families formed the bulk of the population, had holdings of 5 to 10 acres. Thus, agricultural holdings were at the beginning of the nineteenth century about double the size of the average holding at present.

The gradual increase of the proportion of uneconomic holdings, the cumulative increase of an immense agricultural debt, and the multiplication of small holder-cum-labourers and of the landless poor began in India even before the Mutiny. The British land system too prematurely and quickly brought the Indian village and its cultivators into the maelstrom of world economic forces without economic safeguards with the result that the peasant easily came under the tight and relentless grips of the grain-dealers and moneylenders. These latter were the only channels through which the cultivators' produce could be transformed into wealth and measured in terms of the ascending urban economy that was victimising the rural.

It was during the successive famines that the weakness of the Indian rural economy was completely exposed through wholesale

unemployment, rural exodus in search of food and appalling mortality. The famines that visited different parts of India in the nineteenth century are listed below :

<i>Year</i>	<i>Area affected</i>
1799-1804	N. W. Provinces, Bombay, Central India and Rajputana.
1806-1807	Carnatic.
1812	Bombay, Agra and Madras.
1819-1820	N. W. Provinces, Rajputana, Deccan and Broach.
1820-1822	Upper Sindh.
1824-1825	Deccan, Bombay and Madras.
1832-1833	Sholapur, N. Madras.
1833-1834	Gujarat, N. Deccan and part of N. W. Province.
1853-1855	S. Madras, Deccan and parts of Bombay and Rajputana.
1860-1861	Parts of N. W. Provinces, Punjab and Rajputana.
1862	Deccan.
1866-1867	Orissa, Bihar.
1868-1870	N. W. Provinces, Punjab, Gujarat, Deccan, Central Provinces and Rajputana.
1873-1874	Bihar.
1877	Madras, Mysore, Hyderabad, Bombay, United Provinces and part of Punjab.
1890	Bombay.
1896-1897	United Provinces, Central Provinces and Gujarat.
1899-1900	Punjab.
1900-1901	Bombay, Gujarat, Rajputana, Central Provinces, Central India and Hyderabad.
1907-1908	United Provinces.
1911	Bombay and Gujarat.
1913-1914	United Provinces.
1918-1919	United Provinces, Central Provinces and Deccan.
1943	Bengal.



The mortality from these famines has been estimated by Digby, Lely, Loveday and others as follows :

<i>Period</i>	<i>No. of famines</i>	<i>Estimated mortality</i>
1800-1825	5	1,000,000
1825-1850	2	400,000
1850-1875	6	5,000,000
1875-1900	18	26,000,000
1901	1	1,000,000
1943	1	3 to 4,000,000

Thus, during the last century, the total toll of life on this account was represented by the figure of 32.4 millions.

In the famine of 1901, one of the worst of the recent years, one million people perished. The loss of life in British districts was 3 per cent of the population, as against 33 per cent in the Bengal famines of 1770, when ten million persons perished.

The attitude of the East India Company towards the starvation and mortality of the Bengal famine of 1770 was described as follows by the 1880 Famine Commission :

"While breathing a tone of sincere compassion for the sufferings of the people (the Company) were busied rather with the fiscal results as affecting the responsibility of the Company towards its shareholders than with the scheme which would have seemed wholly visionary for counteracting the inevitable loss of life."

1868, 1877, 1901 and 1943 may be considered as signposts in the development of a famine policy in India. 1866 saw the organisation of famine relief on a considerable scale in Orissa that, however, failed to combat heavy mortality due to lack of foresight and inadequate communication in an area that was "between pathless jungles and an impracticable sea", traversed by rivers whose floods prevented relief. Two years later when famine occurred elsewhere, the Viceroy John Lawrence declared that his aim was "to save every life" and that all district officers should see to it that no preventible deaths occurred.

The older view that the public was responsible for the relief of the destitute and the infirm was entirely given up. In the previous

big famine of 1860 in the North Western Provinces, the newly-constructed East and West Jumna Canal system and the new railway from Calcutta prevented a large mortality. It was in 1866 that Lawrence introduced the policy of financing canals and railways from loan funds as protective works. From this year the modern expansion of irrigation commenced in India.

By the year 1877 the network of railway transport was considerably developed in India. But the famine of that year clearly showed that mere importation of grains into the famine tract was not enough to prevent a heavy mortality due to the starvation and the disease that came in its wake. Deaths from this famine were estimated at between five and six millions. It was clear that the principles and methods have to be clarified and clearly laid down and the operations undertaken on some uniform well-thought out plan. The Famine Commission of 1880 laid down the general principles of famine prevention, protection and relief on the basis of which the Famine Code was promulgated in 1883.

It recommended that both large-scale public works as well as local village works should be started for employing the destitute for a considerable period and this before their physical efficiency is seriously impaired by privation. Gratuitous relief should also be given in villages under competent officers with whom non-officials should be associated, especially for distributing relief to persons at their homes and the purda-nashin women. The recovery from famine is as important as famine relief. Loans on easy terms should be advanced for purchase of seed, grains and plough-cattle. The Famine Commission also directed the assignment of an annual sum in the budget under the item, Famine Relief and Insurance, with such items of relief, protective works and reduction of debt, or prevention of debt which would otherwise be insured for construction of railways and canals.

The mortality of one million persons from the famine of 1901 in which the total expenditure on relief exceeded £ 6 million and that of 3 to 4 million in the Bengal famine of 1943 shows that a Famine Code is not enough. It merely lays down the tactics and strategy of the battle in a blueprint, and a mere blueprint cannot win victory. Battle against famine requires not only the perfection of famine organisation but sympathy, courage and self-sacrifice of all



famine officers and the cultivation of self-reliance, morale and unselfishness among the people. In the Bengal famine of 1942-43 even the Famine Code was not made applicable and English and Indian officers made no preparations as the symptoms of the famine manifested themselves, opened few test relief works and looked callously at the accompanying misery, starvation and death of the people in their thousands.

In the 1901 famine there was a vast movement of foodstuffs which the railways carried to the famine-stricken zones from the seaports and from the surplus areas. Bombay took over 30 million maunds, the native states of Rajputana and Central India obtained 23 million maunds, the Central Provinces imported about 12 million maunds, Berar about 4 million maunds and Hyderabad imported about 2½ million maunds. In Bengal, during the famine of 1943, the congestion in the railways, the complete cessation of imports from Burma and Siam, the selfishness of the surplus provinces, the widespread profiteering in the black market and excessive stocking in army stores contributed to the disaster. The preoccupation with the Afghan War and the Army's demand on supply and transport accounted for the considerable mortality in the 1877 famine. In the 1943 famine the exigencies of the world war similarly prevented relief, but the total resources of the Indian continent were not available, as in the economic strategy of the past, for fighting the famine due to the virtual economic segmentation of India and the absence of a strong central food policy.

The 1901 famine was remarkable for bringing into significance "moral strategy" in the fight against mortality, i.e. the creation of morale and resistance among the famine-stricken population. The 1943 famine was remarkable for showing the complete failure of both economic and moral strategy.

The most important feature of the economic strategy against famine is irrigation development. There were ancient reservoir tanks, built by Hindu kings, princes and nobles in Eastern, Central and Western India, while the Mughuls built canals in the east and west of the Jamuna that were later on renovated by the British engineers. Cornwallis took considerable interest in the preservation and repair of tanks in Bengal whose condition deteriorated due to the chaos of the preceding century and the zamindars were pressed to restore and preserve those works. In 1823 the West Jumna Canal was renovated and

yielded water to Delhi after a lapse of about half a century. This proved a great standby during the famine of 1837. The East Jumna Canal was also renovated about 1830. In Southern India the Colebrook Dams were constructed under Arthur Cotton about 1836 and the Anicuts across the Godavari and the Krishna were begun in the fifties. By 1856 the Ganges Canal and its terminal branches covering 525 miles were constructed. At that time, it was claimed that this canal system was unequalled among the efforts of the civilized nations. When the Punjab was conquered in 1849, the English found in that region canals of two kinds, inundation canals and permanent canals. At the instance of John Lawrence, the Baree-Doab Canal of more than 326 miles was constructed in 1856. Lord Lawrence as Viceroy inaugurated in 1866 the policy of financing irrigation works from loan funds. This ushered in an era of rapid development of irrigation in the country. The Sirhind canal system, with a total length of 3,700 miles, was completed in 1882. The Lower Ganges Canal in the United Provinces was completed in 1878. The Agra Canal was excavated earlier in 1874. The Upper Baree-Doab Canal and the West Jumna Canal were also improved and extended.

In 1890 work began on the Lower Chenab Canal which extended to about 2,700 miles and was completed in 1899. The Second Colony Canal, the Lower Jhelum, was begun in 1898 and completed in 1902. Between 1905 and 1915 the Triple Canals Project, comprising the Upper Jhelum, the Upper Chenab and the Lower Baree-Doab Canals, was constructed with a total length of 3,400 miles. Other irrigation works completed since 1900 were the Sind Canal Colony Works, the Sarda Canal in the United Provinces, the Lloyd (Sukkur) Barrage and Canal in Sind, the Sutlej Valley Project, the Nira Valley Canal and the Mettur-Cauvery Project in Madras. It should be pointed out that irrigation is of permanent importance for agricultural security of India, where, however, railways were built faster and more considerably than irrigation works. This was largely due to the influence of the British capitalists, who obtained interest and profits under the guarantee system. As the latter was gradually abandoned and the state acquired the old railways, new guarantees were given to British Companies for the construction of fresh railways. Thus, in England even the Parliament looked askance at the considerable investment of state resources in irrigation development.



Upto 1902 the total expenditure on irrigation works in India amounted to £ 24 millions as against the total expenditure of £ 226 millions on railways by Guaranteed Companies and the state. Yet the Famine Commissions were emphasising that railways were almost completed, covering a mileage of 25,000 in 1901 as compared with 5,000 in 1871, and that the first place must be given to works of irrigation for giving the country adequate protection against famine.

The Famine Commission of 1897 observed that more railways would not imply greater security from the effects of drought but that greater protection will be afforded by the extension of the irrigation works. Besides, the railway alignment in India largely followed the big rivers and the ancient high roads of the past and led towards the chief ports for the quickening of the foreign trade rather than the development of inland trade. All big agricultural countries in the world such as the U.S.A., Germany and the U.S.S.R. follow a policy of systematic canalisation and river development that have been largely sacrificed in India in favour of construction of railways along the main lines of communication. The policy followed in India was railways *versus* waterways, instead of dovetailing navigable canals and rivers into the railway network for the purposes of cheap transport and development of trade and industry in the hinterland. It is remarkable that Arthur Cotton, the builder of the Cauvery and Godavari works in Southern India, realised the importance of navigable canals all over India as early as 1878, and pleaded vigorously for the latter in England where he was supported in the Parliament by John Bright. Arthur Cotton recommended the following principal lines of navigation, (1) from Calcutta to Karachi up the Ganges and down the Indus, (2) from Coconada to Surat, up the Godavari and down the Tapti, (3) a line up the Tungabhadra to Karwar on the Arabian Sea, and (4) a line up the Penang by Palaghat and Coimbatore. Many of the rivers have now seriously deteriorated due to neglect, silting up and building of railway bridges and embankments. The above programme of navigable canal construction cannot accordingly be completely carried out. It should, however, be remembered that Germany's all-round economic development was based on a co-ordinated pattern of railways, rivers and navigable canals. The U.S.S.R. also has very recently adopted an ambitious programme of canalisation, interlinking the Volga, the Don and other river systems. Great Britain's ignorance of canals in the past decades,

coupled with the British capitalists' pressure for pushing considerable investments in railways accounted for the comparative neglect of irrigation and waterway development for the benefit of rural areas and agricultural security. It is only in the last decade that multiple purpose river control schemes have been launched ; but even in these, the facilities of navigation hardly come into the picture due to the deterioration of the regime of rivers on account of past neglect.

While agricultural and irrigation development has not kept pace with the development of railway transport in affording adequate security to the cultivator, India has been prematurely brought into sudden and intimate contact with world economic forces. As her international trade developed the prices of agricultural commodities rose and this associated with the increase of population and pressure on land led to an increase in land values. This was apparent, particularly in the sixties of the last century by which time land settlements in many Provinces were completed. In all such land settlements whether in the ryotwari or the zamindari Provinces, the village communities were disintegrated, customary rights in tanks, irrigation channels and pasture lands of the community abolished and sometimes old proprietary rights, hereditary and transferable, obliterated. Simultaneously, the system of village services by a whole host of officers and functionaries who were paid in kind was permitted to lapse. Formerly, as the village owned the uncultivated waste, an increase of population and migration led to the creation of new family holdings out of the meadows but the wastes under the new settlements were gradually usurped by the landlords or superior proprietors or tenants or were allotted by the state that wanted more and more revenue, irrespective of the requirements of the agricultural population in respect of fuel, timber and grazing.

The distribution of common pastures and woods brought about a serious decline in the breed and efficiency of cattle and hit agriculture both directly and indirectly. This had also been the experience in the tsarist Russia where the village pasture lands and forests were appropriated by the landlords from whom these were taken back during the Revolution. The class of village officers and functionaries, generally belonging to the lower castes, soon found that the rent-free service or inam lands set apart for them were too inadequate and distress was followed by wholesale migration in large parts of India, especially Madras and the Deccan.



Land assessment was also heavy in the beginning, due to high agricultural prices and the optimistic outlook in the post-mutiny period, in Bombay, Madras, and the Punjab where every field was separately assessed, and the cultivator lost the protection, either of the owners of the estate or the village collectively, who could adequately represent their cases before the Settlement Officer. Thus the way was paved in a different manner for the dominating influence of the moneylender and the merchant in rural economy.

An era of high agricultural prices was followed by a slump in 1870. Prices of all grains fell heavily, the way being first shown by cotton for which America now became a big exporter. On the other hand, the era of good prices engendered the social habit among the peasantry of spending lavishly on marriages, funerals and other social ceremonies by improvident borrowing. Thus, as the slump developed, agricultural indebtedness became chronic and acute, and mortgages and transfers of land enormously increased. Formerly, the law of pre-emption prevented the intrusion of strangers and non-agriculturists into the villages. But the law of pre-emption was abolished by the British who also introduced a complicated Civil Procedure Code and Law of Evidence based on English models. The cultivators in large parts of India, especially where land tax was heavy, found themselves defrauded and expropriated by the moneylending and middle classes. The situation became serious in the Bombay Presidency where agrarian disturbances took place in 1874. The Deccan Riots Commission was soon appointed and on its recommendation the Deccan Agriculturists Relief Act of 1879 was passed for restraining moneylenders. This Act enabled courts to go behind the letters of contract in the case of small debtors and to scale down debts. It also abolished arrest or imprisonment for debt as well as sale or attachment of immovable property unless it has been especially mortgaged. The court could also reduce the rate of interest and give debtors the full protection of the Insolvency Act. The Famine Commission of 1880 recommended the extension of this Act to other provinces. All over India these measures as well as the Usurious Loans Act of 1918, amended in 1926, could not give relief to agricultural indebtedness that cumulatively increased, strengthening the position of the moneylender, and this situation was aggravated due to high assessment and rent rate, the increase in the proportion of uneconomic holdings and the combination of lawyers and money-

lenders to defeat the aims of law and equity on the basis of legal technicalities.

By 1880 it was found by the Famine Commission that "one-third of the land-holding classes are deeply and inextricably in debt and that at least an equal proportion are in debt, though not beyond the power of recovering themselves". In the Punjab which has now become at once the wealthiest, the most indebted and the most litigious province in India, mortgages were rare in the Sikh regime. But by 1880 seven per cent of the Punjab was pledged and "the unequal fight between the peasant proprietor and the moneylender had ended in a crushing victory for the latter, and as someone said, *apropos* the wealth that was pouring into the country, the moneylender got the oyster, while the Government and cultivator each got the shell. For the next thirty years, the moneylender was at his zenith, and multiplied and prospered exceedingly, to such good effect that the number of bankers and moneylenders (and their dependants) increased from 53,263 in 1868 to 193,890 in 1911." In 1900 after a good deal of investigation and controversy, the Punjab Alienation of Land Act was passed, restricting the transfer of land to non-agriculturists that include most of the professional moneylenders. Such legislation was later on found necessary also in Bundelkhand, where it was introduced in 1903. In Chhota Nagpur and the Central Provinces where the backward or aboriginal tribes and castes were expropriated by the moneylending and middle-classes, the sale of land was similarly prohibited. In 1892, Frederick Nicholson investigated into the conditions of agricultural indebtedness in Madras and evolved a scheme for land banks in the Presidency. He took up this work in a missionary spirit and his enthusiasm ultimately prevailed upon Lord Curzon to pass the Co-operative Societies Act of 1904 for giving facilities of credit to the cultivator. This Act was later on superseded by the Co-operative Societies Act in 1912 which in addition to credit societies provided for other forms of co-operation such as those of marketing, supply of seeds and implements, etc.

Co-operation has, however, touched a mere fringe of India's economy. It has been unable to combat the supremacy of the grain-dealer who usually combines this occupation with money-lending and sometimes with proprietorship. It remains an exotic movement and completely ignores various indigenous forms of co-operation that yet persist in agriculture and irrigation even though



village communities have disintegrated and panchayats ceased to be an effective means of economic control and management. Village Panchayat Acts have been introduced in many provinces, but these have few effective local powers nor are they assimilated into the structure of the Indian village. British individualistic laws and economic notions, as introduced into the Indian rural economy, whether by the Courts of Justice or by the decisions of settlement officers, have disrupted the solidarity of the village communities without the effective control of which not only many useful collective agricultural practices and customary regulations in respect of village service, irrigation and pasturage lapsed, but the way was also prepared for excessive fragmentation of holdings and distribution and allotment of much of the village commons and woods. The law and the new land system also favoured the middle class and the moneylending groups who by unscrupulous lending obtained possession of rights of proprietorship over land that should have belonged only to the actual tillers of the soil.

Even in the ryotwari Provinces of the Panjab and Bombay, an unprotected tenant class under the proprietors has multiplied and the latter has also ceased to take active part in agriculture. Or again, the moneylenders have taken hold of the land which was cultivated by the peasants now transformed into peasants-at-will or mere farm-hands. Through all these transformations, the landless class, new to India, multiplied from some 33 millions in 1901 to 42 millions in 1911 and about 70 million in 1941. Today for every 10 cultivators there are as many as 5 agricultural workers in India.

The economic disadvantages that small-scale peasants suffer from as the result of the disintegration of village communities or displacement of superior proprietors of the past can only be counteracted by the rehabilitation of the ancient and essential rural communalism without which Indian agriculture cannot recover. Whether this will take the form of rehabilitation of the village community or co-operative farming represented by peasant holdings with state aid in various directions of collective farming with a pooling of land, labour and capital resources is as yet uncertain. Perhaps various patterns of farm organisation will develop according to the particular cropping, stage of agriculture and social ideology of the people.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, unless villages were actually abandoned, agriculture and craft and a peaceful tenor of life in the fields and cottages continued much as usual in spite of wars, oppressions and famines. This was largely due to the stability, nay the permanence, of the institutions of the joint family, caste and village community that regulated the entirety of social relations in India. The disruption of village communities and Panchayats due to British centralisation and zamindari system and the phenomenal increase of the landless class, due to the imbalance in the economic structure, a faulty land system and multiplication of population, now make the Indian village considerably more vulnerable and responsive to outside storms as never before. The proverbial stability of Indian civilization has been seriously undermined by the profound changes during the last half a century in the agrarian system and economic relations of the Indian village. The war on rack-renting, nazrana and begar of the last two decades is today succeeded by the war on landlordism, rural capitalism and finance. To what extent rural autonomy and economic management can be revived under the present Constitution, and Western science, technology and organisation can modernise the Indian village without uprooting and disrupting its ancient solidarity, time-honoured habits and institutions depend upon careful social planning. On these largely rest the vitality and continuity of Indian civilization.

India's future will largely depend on the measure and manner in which her village community can rehabilitate ancient democratic methods and procedures, under the Constitution of Republican India and assimilate modern science and technology to the essential communal habits and traditions of the people and the humane values and virtues so distinctive of her civilization. The proper balance between authority and freedom, social integration and initiative and enterprise of the individual ultimately depends in this age of magnification of the state and of central, social and economic planning, regulating the major interests of life, upon the vitality of myriads of small groups and institutions in the multi-group state, achieving a true democracy of culture. Perhaps it is to the vigour, spontaneity and loyalties of small groupings—village panchayats, co-operatives and regional associations—that India has to look to for the solution of the ever-deepening conflict between personality and organisation between



individual liberty and social cohesion, that underlies the world crisis in this century.

The nineteenth century was a period of conflict and substitution of cultures and institutions in India. There has been a free and wholesale borrowing of foreign culture elements in the wake of modern industrialism, individualism and centralisation which have neither been adapted nor assimilated into the Indian pattern of living, a tendency which has its parallel in other Asian civilizations as China and Japan. The Indian literatures of the period similarly reflect the disharmony between ancient and modern modes and conceptions, and even today, some Provincial literatures alternate between the cheap and incongruous adaptations of Ibsen, Morliere, Maupassant and Poe and the medieval devotionism, romanticism and moralising. National escapism is echoed not merely in such slogans as back to the village, the spinning wheel and the bullock-cart but also in the tawdry sentimentalism and unabashed conservatism of many a modern, novel and the wistful, gushing pseudo-mysticism of many a modern poem. Yet the range, depth and variety of forms of the Indian literatures that developed within the brief compass of only a century, are perhaps amazing in the history of world literature. Their rise has been synchronous and, indeed, has kept pace with the dissemination of Western education and learning, and the rise of capitalism and a new middle class under the British.

From the very beginning of the 19th century the Indian literatures entered their modern phase. 1800 saw the establishment not merely of the Fort William College in Calcutta but also of the Baptist Mission Press by Carey and his colleagues. It was the printing press, established in India after more than two centuries of its work in Europe, that accelerated the dissemination of literature through the supersession of the oral tradition and of hymn and poetry that are recited or sung, by prose. In Bengali literature prose originated with the pandits and munshis who were associates of Carey. It was later on given a definite shape by Rammohan Roy and Isvar Chandra Vidyasagar and Akshay Kumar Dutta. Simultaneously, Hindi prose works in khari-boli first emanated from the Fort William College where Carey, Lalluji Lal and Sadal Misra indefatigably worked to that end. Two of the founders of Urdu prose were the Principals of the Fort William College, Gilchrist and Amman Dehlvi.

The greatest literary genius of the 19th century in India was Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya (1838-1894), the father of modern Indian fiction, whose novels exercised a most stimulating influence on all Indian literatures, besides Bengali. Profoundly influenced by the English romantic movement, Bankim through his historical novels revived the past and delineated the glories of Hindu heroism against foreign tyranny with a warm human fervour that at once opened new vistas of beauty and imagination for the Indian people and aroused the national spirit as did the historical novels of Walter Scott in Scotland. In his social novels too, Bankim struck a tender passionate note, dealing with the problems of widowhood, incompatibility of marriage and physical defect. All through he suffused his heroes and heroines and the daily occurrences and human relations with the radiance from another world where *kapalikas*, *bharaus* and *fakirs* as well as dreams and visions play their dramatic roles. The famous "Anandmath" has in the background of devastating Bengal famine of 1769-70 and the Sannyasi Rebellion of 1772, treated the theme of political revolution far ahead of the age and has almost served as the gospel of revolutionary patriotic movement. It comprises the famous hymn of Indian nationalism, *Vande Mataram*, sung before Mother-goddess.

Mother India is here symbolised in her three aspects of the gaunt Kali as she is today, the fighting demon-killer Durga as she is worshipped by the ascetics and the wealth-giver Jagaddhatri as she will be in the future. In the nineteenth century Bengali prose, the other outstanding writers include Aksay Chandra Sarkar, Kali Prasanna Ghosh, Rameschandra Dutt, Haraprasad Shastri, Aksay Kumar Moitra, Ramendra Sunder Trivedi and Hirendranath Dutt; and in drama Dinbandu Mitra, Girish Chandra Ghosh, Dwijendralal Roy and Amritlal Basu. Saratchandra Chatterjee is the most gifted novelist in India in the latest phase of literary development. His characterisation of women in general and of the fallen women in particular, reaches a high watermark in literature. His realism, broad social sympathy and tender humanity have unleashed a remarkable train of successful novelists in Bengali and other Indian literatures, focussing attention on the realism, humanism and vitality of the unfortunate masses. But Bengali literature has shown its highest reaches in poetry and there is an entire galaxy of poets, viz. Madhusudan Dutta (1824-73), Hemchandra Bandopadhyaya, Kamini Roy,



Girindramoyee Dasi, Satyendranath Dutt, Korunanidhan Banerjee, Jyotindramohan Bagchi, Kalidas Ray and Kaji Najrul Islam.

In Rabindranath Tagore, the various literary and cultural trends of the country have found their culmination and synthesis. Tagore stands head and shoulders above all literary men of modern India, and exercises a dominant modernising influence on the provincial literatures of the country. It is impossible to comprehend in a short compass the many-sided and prolific creation of Tagore. The numerous facets of his literary creation may be represented, though very inadequately, the historical novels by *Bon Thakuranir Hat* and *Rajarshi*; mythological plays by *Valmiki-Pratibha*, *Chitrangada* and *Sacrifice*; social novels by *Chokher Bali*, *Naukadubi*, *Gora*, *Ghare Baire* and *Sesher Kavita*; Social comedies by *Chirakumar Sabha*, *Goray Galad*, and *Vaikunther Khata*, symbolical plays by *Raja*, the *Post Office*, *Phalguni* and *Rakta-karabi*, lyrical poetry by the *Crescent Moon*, the *Gardener*, the *Gitanjali*, the *Fugitive* and *Other Poems*; *Balaka* and *Last Songs*; short stories in verse by *Patataka* and *Punasecha*. Tagore has also composed an infinite number of songs touching the entire gamut of human feeling and destiny which will continue to find response in the human soul for the deepest longings and aspirations. The concentration and sincerity of his treatment of frustrated love that defies conventions and that sanctifies itself through endurance and renunciation as in *Srikanta*, *Devadas* and *Charitrahin* place some of his novels besides the modern classics of Tolstoy, Dostovetsky and Hardy. Rabindranath was a poet, novelist, dramatist, short-story writer, essayist, literary historian, philologist, composer of songs, musician and painter. His versatility is greater than even of Victor Hugo and the variety of his literary experimentation which he carried to the last days of his long creative career, is unique in the history of world literature. The serenity and poise of the Upanishads, the dignity and majesty of classical Sanskrit *kavya*, the depth and elusiveness of medieval Indian mystical poetry, the poignancy of the Vaishnava *padas*, the directness and simplicity of Bengali *baul* and folk-songs are all integrated in the wide-minded, capacious literary adventure of Tagore, who has always sought the ever-new and everlasting together, in his search for Truth and Beauty. Tagore is a much-travelled man and also spent some youthful days in London. Into Tagore's literary creativeness has also mingled the best and universal elements in literary tradition

and venture from Shelly and Browning to Macterline and Yeats, from the Japanese Neo-poets to the proletarian fiction of the U.S.S.R. Just as he carried India's message of human fellowship and solidarity to the West and Asia, so does he bring the message of broad social intellectual objectivity, vision and refined aesthetic taste and manners to India and her literatures.

Equally potent have been the influences of the intellectual renaissance in the development of modern Hindi literature. Swami Dayananda was the pioneer of a vigorous prose style. Raja Siva Prasad (1845), Raja Lakshman Singh, Bharatendu Harish Chandra (1868), played important roles in the enrichment of the Hindi language. The dominant tendency of dealing with mythological themes saw a welcome change with Kishorilal Goswami, who wrote a number of historical novels, and some social sketches drawn from historical epochs. Devi Prasad Purna also attempted plays half-historical, half-fictitious. A new note of humour and satire was struck by Pratapnarain Misra. An early attempt at the neo-romantic form by Sridhar Pathak was however foiled by the powerful influence of Mahabir Prasad Dwivedi, who fostered a new interest in the modes and canons of Sanskrit poetry and helped to blend these with the intellectual outlook along with a reasonable infusion of popular expression. Mahabir Prasad Dwivedi inspired many young Hindu writers to creative work in the domain of Hindi. In recent decades the romantic and patriotic note in poetry has found expression in the poems of Hari Awadh, Maithilisan Gupta, Nirala, Mahadevi Varma, Jaishankar Prasad and Sumitranandan Pant.

Modern Tamil prose began earlier than in the North Indian languages. The father of Tamil prose and fiction was the missionary, Beschi or Virama Muni, who wrote between 1680 and 1742. Other pioneers were Thandavaraya Mudaliar and Arumuga Navalar. Sundaram Pillai, Lakshmana Pillai and Saraslochana Chettiar have enriched the drama in modern Tamil. Vendanayagam Pillai and the nationalist poet Bharati are poets of unusual talent.

As in the case of the other literatures, Telugu prose developed about 1800 as a result of Christian missionary activities and establishment of the printing press and of schools. K. Veersalingam, who was influenced by Raja Rammohan Roy, published in 1878 the first Telugu novel and drama in which he vigorously pleaded for social



reform. Other important writers who followed were K. V. Lakshmana, C. L. Narasimham, Guruzada Appa Rao, Gidugu Ramamurthy, C. R. Reddi, Pantulu, Tirupati Venkateswara and Venkata Sastri. Both Tamil and Telugu writers while they strike a modern note both in the direction of picturing social life with all its simplicity, beauty as well as its malaise and materialism and of glorifying the native land, have not lost their moorings in their great classics, that are perennial sources of inspiration.

With the publication of Carey's grammar and translations of the Panchatantra, the Hitopodesh and the Bible at Serampore, modern Marathi prose had its birth in the first decade of the 19th century. Hari Narayan Apte was the first novelist, who was succeeded by writers of talent, Professor Phadke and Dr. Ketkar. Early drama was based on mythological themes dealt with by Vishnudas Bhawe. The change set in with Kirtane's historical plays, and Kirloskar plays on the model of the opera. Secular and romantic poetry had its early votaries in Govindraj, Chandrashekhara Sadhudas and Madhav-Julian.

Urdu literature has endeavoured to harmonize the outlook, spirit and thought of Persian brought to India during the Muslim rule, and of the speech and dialects of Hindusthan. The English have since the early 19th century shown interest in and familiarised themselves with Urdu. Urdu has been favoured by a large number of poets of talent right from the time of the famous poet Ghalib. The makers of Urdu prose were Sir Saiyid Ahmad Khan, Altaf Husain, Shibli, Maulvi Nazir Ahmed, Sarshai, and Sharar, Mirza Muhammad Hadi, Khwaja Hasan Nizami. More important were the large number of talented poets who inspired generations of readers such as Saiyed Akbar Husain, Meer Anis, Chakbast and last but not the least, the poet-philosopher, Muhammad Iqbal. The younger poets include 'Josh' Malihabadi, and 'Hafiz' Jalandhari.

Certain broad and common trends underlie the growth of modern Indian literatures which to some extent reflect the formative cultural forces and ideas that have shaped modern India.

The contemporary romantic spirit in European literature has been the main inspiration whether of Bankim Chandra, Romesh Chandra Dutt, or of Hari Narayan Apte and C. L. Narasimham

bringing the rosy and heroic past to India's drab scene of poverty and slavery, and arousing national feeling in the country as did Walter Scott in Scotland, Sienkiewicz in Poland and Jiraoekin in Czechoslovakia. But the historical novel in every provincial literature soon gave place to not very successful attempts at social themes, in Bankim Chatterjee and Taraknath Ganguli in Bengali, in Veeresalingam in Telugu, Apte and Khandekar in Marathi, Kishorilal Goswami in Hindi and similarly in other literatures. This failure was largely due to the limitation of the Indian social milieu, with its rigid family and caste restrictions that were entirely incompatible with the new idea of liberty and equality that came in the wake of the French and American Revolutions. The narrow conservative outlook of the upper middle class was no less responsible for sacrifice of the integrity of characters or natural development of situations to the need of bourgeois morals and manners and of British liberalism and individualism in many a social novel even of the great masters. Dramas and social satires were also attempted, lashing at outworn social customs as well as modern vices, and these gradually superseded the older mythological themes. Girish Chandra in Bengali, Vishnudas Bhawe in Marathi and Harishchandra in Hindi, for instance, had produced mythological plays at the beginning. The historical dramas of Girish Ghosh, Khsirod Vidyabinod and Dwijendralal Ray, and of Kirtane gained greater popularity but social plays and satires such as those of Amritlal Bose and S. Mudaliar eliciting tears and mirth became in every provincial literature much more living and vigorous.

In poetry the most striking common note of all Indian literatures is the stress of romantic fervour and passion and an exaggerated subjectivism where these have freed themselves from the traditional mystical-devotional pose and context. The European nature poetry has also been thoroughly imbibed and assimilated. But far more potent is the influence on other Provincial poetry of Tagore's romanticism and his profound love, a continuation of the Valmiki tradition, of the beauty and wealth of Mother Earth and Nature, in the sequence of seasons and hours of day and night. In Tagore the love of Nature, the love of Man and the world and the love of God are accents of the same intense awareness of the Cosmic Infinite Whole. Where Tagore's mature lyricism or philosophical poetry has set the model of poetry, whether of Bengal or of other Provinces, it has achieved authentic spiritual expression although it might still



lack his exquisite metre and verbal rhythm in Bengali; while his burning indignation against social inequity and sympathy for the victims of social injustice and distance in many stories in verse stimulate everywhere a realistic handling of social issues in poetry, drama or fiction. A new mode and conception are represented in both Bengal and elsewhere by rural folk-poetry drawing its inspiration from the ancient ballads and folk-songs.

On the whole, modern Indian literatures have been the hand-maids of the middle class, due both to its western inspiration and outlook and the cleavage between the elite and the masses, as a result of widespread illiteracy. The bourgeois character of modes and themes of modern Indian fiction is too evident. The self-complacency, tawdry sentimentalism and social inertia of the gentry (*bhadralok*) are the bane of Indian novels, not even excluding the masterpieces that too easily uphold the current morals and conventional values and too often introduce working class men and women as parrots of bourgeois notions and as human deformities eliciting insidious mirth. Similarly, the pseudo-mystical predilection and vagueness, so obviously unreal in contemporary life and representing an escapist attitude, is yet an established pose with many Indian poets.

But promising trends towards the creation of new values and patterns of expression are on the horizon. Modern fiction in the writings of Saratchandra Chatterji, Prem Chand and Tara Sankara Banerji is neither sentimental nor didactic but psychological and imaginative and is impregnated with the consciousness of the common and the forgotten man. The primness and facile optimism, born of the freedom of care of the upper class or of its wishfulness, characteristic of the older fiction are submerged by a serious, even sombre note true to the travails of the work-a-day world. The novelist achieves a new integration with a sick, acquisitive or rebellious society, according to his social circumstances, class origins and ideological affinities. His artistic integration as well as intensity are also expressed by a happy blend of colloquialism and dialect that introduces freshness, vigour and even fierceness into the novels and plays no longer written in the ponderous florid semi-classical languages of the 19th century. The older romanticism, the bourgeois sophistication, snobbery and Bohemianism or the new proletarian cult yield to a kind of literature which is not only a mirror but also an evaluation of life

as is lived in Indian cottages, fields and factories. Such literature is not a substitute for nationalism or socialism but has its own aim and standard. More than the creative genius of the individual it is the collective mind with its stresses, sufferings and sorrows in the fluid social situation characterised by chaos in the family, the caste, the village, the town and the nation that becomes the seed-bed of new aspirations and values which are today groping for literary modes and expressions. The promise of the Indian literatures largely lies in the life-giving impact of the common people of the land on the upper and middle classes that are today the sole repositories of literature, the conventional ideals and modes of which are being transformed and recreated by the touch of the living, creative reservoir of values and experiences of the common man. The new democracy and universal education will be indispensable aids to the consistency and coherence of literature grounded on the integration of culture and harmony among the different activities and interests of men. Not before the parent cultural lag, characteristic of different sectors of social development and the divorce between the values and aspirations of the intelligentsia and the common people are bridged, can our literature show fresh vitality and pulse of creativeness.



## CHAPTER XLIII

### MAIN SPRINGS OF INDIAN CULTURAL SYNTHESIS

#### Roots of Indian Civilization, Indus and Vedic

Indian civilization was founded by the vast currents of migration and culture from the Eurasian steppes that one comes across right from the Stone Age. Egypt, Sumer and the Indus and the Ganges basins were all participants in one common culture. The children of the Sun and Fire, of the Bull and the Snake, of the Phallus and the Mother Goddess, whether proto-Australoid, Mediterranean or Alpine, covered the greater part of the inhabited globe in the middle and south-east. The rich Indus valley civilization of the fourth millenium B.C., with its fortified cities, crafts and network of commercial relations was a fine flower and focus of this widespread cultural movement. It supplied the grass-roots of Indian civilization. About the middle of the third millenium B.C. the Aryan nomads, with their horses, battle-chariots and swords came into the Indian scene. They are the real builders, organisers and artificers of Indian civilization. If the Himalayan north-western passes at the fringe of the Eurasian steppe have made history and politics in India, the Himalayas and the expansive plains of the Saptasindhu and the Ganges in Northern India have made her civilization. That civilization which rose about 2500 B.C. continues to the present day. The heritage of the sacredness of familial life and institutions, of self-government of villages by sabhas and samitis, that elected the king on behalf of the whole people (Visah) and of the ordering of the social groups or varnas in a spiritual hierarchy that the Rigvedic culture bequeathed to India, is much more significant and living than the kingdom of the Bharata monarch Sudas or even the empire of the Mauryas. But more than the external social heritage the culture of the Sarasvati has fashioned the Indian mind through its grandiose myths and symbols of the Five Obligations and Sacrifices and other Sacraments and the identification between the self and the not-self. History is the continuity of society and civilization, the inheritance and sequence of its common frame of reference, and values of life. Both the framework of the family and the social

order and the metaphysics which underlies them as the way to enlightenment, the gate through which the Indian man enters the cosmic totality, are the abiding gifts that link India of today with Brahmvarta of the 15th century B.C.

The Indian man lived in peace in Aryavarta for more than a millenium. Kingdoms were founded and the frontiers of the Indo-Aryan civilization extended to the east up to the frontiers of Bengal where lived the Angas, the Magadhas and the Pundras, and to the south where lived the Pulindas and the Savaras in the Vindhya forest. The kings had their Vajapeya and Asvamedha sacrifices and styled themselves universal monarchs after their conquest (*rajavisvajanina*) but the rural commonalty organized in *sabhas* and *samitis* was an effective check on the royal power. In the hermitages, schools and assemblies, was developed the vast Vedic literature, comprised under six branches: phonetics, ritual, grammar, etymology, metrics and astronomy. The elite were concerned merely with metaphysics, revolving round the dual conception of Brahman and Atman. In the 7th century A.D. Hiuen Tsang found that the four Veda treatises comprised an integral part of Brahmanical education in India; while I-tsing adds that the Vedas were handed down from mouth to mouth there being some intelligent Brahmans in each generation who could recite 100,000 verses. The Vedic literature was the perennial seed-bed whence germinated the metaphysical and religious ideas of India for nearly two millenia. Agriculture, trade and industry also thrived, peasant proprietorship was established and 3000 years back the same type of agrarian problems, met with today, cropped up with the transfer of arable land and supersession of small holders by a class of landlords. The Ganges Valley was also trading with Babylon at that time. The pattern of Indian civilization was on the whole formulated and stereotyped by Vedic culture.

### Three Great Movements against Vedic Ritualism

With a strong emphasis on metaphysics born of the cosmic sense of India, the gift of the Himalayas and the expansive plains of Aryavarta, India's history is largely a history of philosophical schools, religious movements and social integrations. In the eastern part of the Ganges Valley, where Brahmanical culture did not strongly entrench itself, and where there was a chronic struggle of republican states and kingdoms and where the Magadhan empire was being born of the sword and fire, there was an outburst of asceticism and



of rebellion against ritualism, priesthood and the system of classes that were forming themselves into castes. Ajivism or Sudra Sanyasi, Jainism and Buddhism, three great socio-religious movements, which rejected the authority of the Vedas and preached new cults of the dignity and the majesty of man, were evolved in this social transition and had an abiding influence on philosophy and religion and social and political institutions in India. From the eastern part of the Ganges basin, where thrived centuries back the schools of Yajnavalkya, Uddalaka-Aruni and Janaka-Vaideha, some of the foremost celebrities of the Brahmana period, who developed for the first time the doctrine that the world is only Appearance and not Reality and that the only Reality is the Atman, came Mahavira and the Buddha. The 6th century B.C. was a period of great spiritual ferment in the whole world. It saw the teaching of Confucius in China, of Pythagoras in Greece, and of Mahavira, the Buddha and a whole host of wise ascetics in India. In the eastern Ganges Valley the rise of the new Mauryan empire, with its struggle, conquest and power politics, provoked large-scale ascetic movements, perhaps, as a reaction against the accumulation of riches, materialism and violence of the age. Of these Buddhism and Jainism were the most celebrated products.

In the Buddha humanity found a sage and a practical man of love and service, whose influence upon its thought has been far greater than that of any other single man in the world. Buddhism and Jainism are a part and parcel of Hindu religious thought and tradition. The spirit of compassion and non-violence, the sense of impermanence of life and the way of self-control and right speech, thought and deed of the Sangha have now become ingrained in the life of the people.

### Imperialism, Metaphysics and Religion

Within two centuries of the Buddha's death, as Buddhism was fast spreading in the lower Gangetic Valley, India was threatened with the peril of conquest by the Iranians and the Greeks. The Mauryan empire, the greatest empire that India has ever seen, including in the north-west Kabul, Herat, Quandahar and Baluchistan, represented her response to the Iranian-Hellenic invasion and domination. The Arthashastra, attributed to Kautilya, the traditional minister of Chandragupta, the founder of the Mauryan empire, developed the doctrine of Hindu imperialism (the Chaturanta

Chakravarti kshetra, the empire of the Supreme Monarch extending to the limits of the four quarters) on traditional Vedic lines. The conception of universal sovereignty (Ekarat, Rajasarvajanin) is as old as the Aitareya and the Satpatha Brahmanas. Such technical terms indicating the conceptions of paramount power as Maharajya, Sarvabhauma or Samrat, which have been used throughout the history of later imperialisms, are met with in the Vedic texts. The Indian approach to politics was essentially metaphysical. From the dominating basic conception of the unity and totality of life stems the doctrine of the Ekarat or paramount sovereignty, that is defined "as the sole single sovereignty of the earth upto its limits in the ocean uninterrupted". Age after age it was the impact of foreign invasions and conquests that led to the emergence of big empires in India, usually from the Ganges Valley. Such were the Gupta empire which freed the country from the menace of the Sakas, the Abhiras and Huns, the empire of the Vardhanas of Kanauj, which resumed the Indian universal state under the umbrella of one authority as defence against the Huns of the Indus Valley and Ghandara, the Lats of Gujarat and Malwa and the Gurjaras of Saurashtra; the empire of the Gurjara-Pratiharas of Kanauj, converts to Brahmanical culture and defenders of the middle land against the invasion of the Arabs, who reached the Indus basin by sea and were pushing their way both up the Indus basin to Multan and into Gujerat, Kathiawar, Malwa and Rajputana; and the Pala empire, the first Sudra (Mahisya) empire in India, which revived the glory of the imperial Mauryas and Guptas and defended Aryavarta against the Huns, the Gurjaras and the Pratiharas of the West. In the cases of both the Gupta and the Pala empires a universal religion, viz. neo-Brahmanism of the classical Gupta age, the Tantrika and Vajrayana and Sahajayana of the Pala period were systematised and played an important role in the colonial and cultural expansion of India as the Mahayana did under the Kushan empire and the Himayana under Dharmasoka. All through religion and politics aided each other in both the defence of Indian land against foreign aggression and the spread of Indian culture towards Central and South-east Asia from the beginning of this millenium to the 11th century A.D. No doubt the oceanic policy and colonising enterprise of the maritime kingdoms of the South and of Bengal and Kalinga, carried out for a thousand years, contributed towards maintaining the vigour of the civilization in the homeland.



Both the Mughul and British empires of India depended for their stability upon the cultivation of a national outlook, the use of one language, viz. Persian in the case of Mughul Raj, and English in the case of the British Raj, and the common manners and ceremonials of the upper classes. Similarly, the Mahratta empire that intervened between the Mughul and the British Raj, took upon itself the mission of the revival of the traditions of the Satavahana and Vijayanagara empires, and the protection of the Hindu Dharma, scheme of values of life. The Hindu Pad-Padshahi of Bajirao I won the political support of Malwa, Gujerat, Rajputana and Bundelkhand, and produced a significant cultural renaissance in Maharashtra and the Deccan. Once again the rallying cry of the Indian people was religious and cultural nationalism, reacting against the theory of a Muslim state and religious intolerance of Aurangzeb, that simultaneously transformed the Sikh sect into a militant nationality in the Punjab and a small hill race in the western coast into the dominant power in the 18th century which would have established a permanent empire instead of the British but for a series of errors and accidents.

### The Ideal of Dharma-rajya

The tolerant, forbearing universal state in Indian Niti Sastra (political philosophy) though won by might (parakrama) is grounded in Dharma, in compassion and in kindness to the subject population (lokanugraha) on the one hand, the enforcement of the duties and obligations of individuals (svadharma) and classes (varnasrama dharma) by the terrible application of *danda* or punishment, on the other. The universal emperor, "conquering the earth rules it justly, needing no rod or sword nor violence. By ordering all impartially, he causes the clans to grow in fortune. Theirs are all the pleasures. His are the seven gems." In the words of Kalidasa, "he is the hump (nripati kakuda), as it were, of the bull whose component limbs were made by the lesser kings or chiefs"; he is the navel of the wheel of twelve kings (mundala navitamupagatah) — the tributary chieftains — (Samanta) who were regranted their territories after conquest by fresh imperial charters. The above is the traditional notion of Indian monarchy. The celebrated Allahabad Prasasti, while mentioning that might is "the only ally and insignia" of Emperor Samudragupta reiterates that he consecrates it to the supreme mission of unification of the earth (dharani-bandha)

and that he has restored many a kingdom that was destroyed and many a dynasty that was exterminated. Not only their liberties but also their properties were restored and imperial officers constantly employed on this difficult work of reparation. The Gupta political ideal followed the Mauryan tradition in combining paramountcy with local autonomy, and Kalidasa, the poet of Gupta imperialism, extols the virtues of the Emperor, who following the middle course of being neither too ruthless nor too soft and makes the neighbouring princes bend to him without uprooting them, just as the wind does with the trees. "His is the conquest of the righteous (*dharma vijayi nirpah*)"; "he is satisfied with mere obedience and takes away the sovereignty of the conquered foe, but not his territory" (*Rahuvamsa*, IV, 43). His paramount sovereignty is attested by "there being only one royal umbrella (*ekatapatram anuditariya sitatapabararanah*) and by his edicts (*sasananka*) being coloured by the crest jewels of his feudatory chiefs as they bowed in allegiance (*samanta manli mani ranjita*)" (*Vikramorvasi* III, 13). Thus the Imperial Guptas had for their objective Dig-vijaya and Dharma-vijaya according to conditions and circumstances. To his subject population, the Emperor was "the very incarnation of compassion whose mind busied itself with the support of the miserable, the poor, the helpless and the afflicted". Three centuries later the poet Bana thus speaks of Harsha who "brought the Five Indies under allegiance and proclaimed the ideal of the establishment of Dharmarajya (*dharmarajya nama nuttamam*)". "Beneath his rule the Golden Age seemed to bud forth in close packed lines of sacrificial posts, the evil time to flee in the smike of sacrifices meandering over the sky, heaven to descend in stuccoed shrines, Dharma to blossom in white pennons waving over temple minarets, the villages to bring forth a progeny of beautiful arbours erected on their outskirts for meetings, alms-houses, inns and women's marquees". Asoka, Samudragupta, Harsha, Dharmapala, Krishna-deva Raya, Shivaji and Baji Rao through successive centuries combined the supreme qualities of courage in war and compassion to mankind. This conception of the state as the embodiment of collective purpose, which in India is defined as Dharma, and of the ruler as the pillar of such Dharma (*Dharma prachira bandhas* was the epithet of Harsha) who by his thought, word and deed dedicates himself to the welfare of all sentient creatures and grants safety, peace and happiness to all, is born of India's cosmic sense of the totality of life. Her earliest



rhyme and poetry sprang from the compassion of the poet of the Ramayana at the agony of the bird Karuncha, who has lost his mate shot by a cruel hunter in the forest. Buddhism and Jainism have contributed materially towards the inculcation of the Law of Compassion to all sentient creatures.

### The Indian Philosophy of History

The 19th century histories of civilization from the works of Ranke, Treitschke and Marx to those of Burckhardt, Seeley and Acton stressed the power concept in human history. Burckhardt repeated three times the sentence, "power is evil by its very nature", and added, "power knows no rest ; it is a lust and therefore insatiable." Similarly Acton while admitting that "a generous spirit prefers that his country should be poor and weak and of no account, but free, rather than powerful, prosperous, and enslaved" took for granted the power factor. It is he who gave a true revelation of the evil character of power though it is associated with many of highest values and achievements of nations. "Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men." The above is a truly tragic view of civilization nurtured in an epoch that has been the bloodiest in the history of human culture.

Such a view, rooted in the belief that man's highest values can grow and thrive only where these are buttressed by power and are lost without it, is anachronistic in this age of "one world", and of man's re-integration in a conscious, organised international community and a clearly conceived cosmos. History is the history of human values, of the development and perfection of philosophies, of the fine arts and religion and the ways of social living, with their changing significance for the perfection of human quality. Like human personality, history is multi-dimensional and an integration of the trends of politics and war, technology and economic development, art, education and religion. Man's achievements in different phases of social life express themselves in the total movement of history, just as behaviour in his family relations, class, church or state is built up into that enduring harmony of mental pattern which is called character. It is a false interpretation of history which deals separately with different fields of human activity and values, such as political, economic, religious or social. For there is a correspondence of stages, forms, values and cultural patterns that have to be under-

stood in their integralness in human development. The autonomy of special histories such as political history, economic history, religious history and the history of intellectual ideas has been disastrous for the interpretation of human cultures and their development. The categories for their true understanding are the dominant values of life that build up, and are sought to be realised by, a social culture in a particular stretch of time. The greatness of a major culture is to be measured not by its duration but by the quality of its unique structure of values that it contributes to the value configuration of humanity. Its vitality is tested by its capacity to evolve without the surrender of its central core of values, and disturbance of its life structure in which these are sheltered and nurtured in the changing drama of its struggle with the external milieu, now going in favour of human quality, now going against it. Thus is history the study of the super-individual values of life in their long, chequered procession understood and appreciated through sympathy and insight.

### **The Indian Theory of Cultural Cycles or Four World Ages**

Many historians regard history as cyclical in its recurrences of progress and decline. The philosopher Morris R. Cohen observes: "There is a real insight in the notion that both progress and degeneration occur in human history, that neither is of infinite extent, and that in so far as we can subject various periods of history to abstract questions with a limited range of possible answers, some of our answers are bound to recur. Recurrences relative to a given abstract factor are not a sufficient guide to the writing of history, since they cannot exhaust the concrete fullness of any event or period, but they are the stuff out of which generalisation in the social sciences emerges". India has conceived of the division of each cycle of history into a procession of four Yugas or world-ages, Krita or Satya, Treta, Dvapara and Kali, following each other in slow irreversible succession from perfection to imperfection, from the acme of Dharma or righteousness to the nadir of unrighteousness. Man and culture are at their lowest depth in the Kaliyuga "when society reaches a stage, where property confers rank, wealth becomes the only source of virtue, passion the sole bond of union between husband and wife, falsehood the source of success in life, sex the only means



of enjoyment and when outer trappings are confused with inner religion . . . .” The above quotation is from the Vishnu Purana which, however, also provides a note of hope and deliverance “That which one obtained through meditation in the Satya-yuga, through sacrifice in the Treta and through worship in the Dvapara, may be obtained in the Kali-yuga by reciting the names of the Lord.” Besides in the progress and fall of Kalpas or ages, which are only single days in the reckoning of the Progenitor Brahma, the embodiment of the Universal Spirit, when cyclically unrighteousness prevails and the anti-gods or Asuras dominate there are the incarnations of the Deity or Avatars who restore Dharma. Accordingly, in the continuous history of the cosmic organism Dharma rises and falls in an unending procession, and the interludes of human defeat as well as the momentous deliverances of the Saviours of Mankind that punctuate world history, are unchanging links in an eternal chain of Karma and fruition.

India’s sense of time and history and her vision of the rhythm of the diastoles of birth and death, creation and destruction, are cosmic, infinite. A complete cycle of the four yugas makes one mahayuga representing 4,320,000 years. One thousand mahayugas make a Kalpa or a single day of Brahma. Brahma’s life-time covers only a century and eight of Brahma years of Brahma days and nights, followed by the Great Dissolution (pralaya) or merger into the Absolute. Then another Kalpa, with its mahayugas and yugas of processions of man and the world, commences afresh. The Brahmavai-varta Purana magnificently observes: “Brahma follows Brahma, one sinks, the next arises, the endless series cannot be told. There is no end to the number of those Brahmas—to say nothing of Indras (kings of gods). But the universes side by side at any given moment, each harbouring a Brahma and an Indra—who will estimate the number of these? Beyond the farthest vision, crowding outer space, the universes come and go, an innumerable host, like delicate boats they float on the fathomless, pure waters that form the body of Vishnu. Out of every hair-pore of that body a universe bubbles and breaks. Will you presume to count them? Will you number the gods in all those earths—the worlds present and the worlds past?

### **Puranic Histori-graphy**

In “eternal” India’s conception of human life, task and destiny, the majestic, slowly wheeling cosmic cycles of endless ages rotate in

the process of Being and Becoming, the round of imperfection, perfection and reabsorption into Being. In the West, Hegel, Marx, Spengler and Sorokin have envisaged the cyclical fluctuations of human culture. Spengler in his theory of the mysterious birth, maturation and inevitable senility and death of social cultures is mythical and profoundly pessimistic. Sorokin finds in the cyclical movements of the Ideational, Sensate and Idealistic culture types no cumulative progress. The Marxian philosophy of history is one-sided in its theory of social causation and development, and is dogmatic and unacceptable in its theory of human values and social ideals. The Hegelian view of the unfolding of the spirit of the Universal Humanity through thesis, antithesis and synthesis is a truer vision though Hegel's emphasis on the nations and glorification of the national state as "the Idea of Spirit in the external manifestation of human will and its Freedom" represents a European, and specifically a German particularist view of world history in the 19th century. The Indian theory of cultural oscillations or four world-ages, with their rhythms of human perfection and degeneration covering vast eons succeeding each other in the endlessness of time, is a proof against excessive optimism and pessimism. The vicissitudes of human history, the ups and downs of endeavour, progress, fruition and decadence find their due places in the ageless single day of Brahma, a single Kalpa. In Brahma's reckoning of time, the triumphs of history lose their pomp and excitement and the tragedies of history become lessons or foils of the larger good of humanity.

The Indian philosophy of history as developed in the Vishnu and Brahmavaivarta Puranas judges the cycles of human culture from the Indian conception of Dharma or righteousness and finds these as real as the Dharma. The Wheel of Dharma, the round of birth, maturation, decadence and death, moves on endlessly in the course of the cosmos and the history of mankind. Every episode of human history, every moment of human existence is judged against the endlessness of Brahma's days and nights. Yet it is the chief task of the historian to reveal both the norm and the long-range balance and total movement of forces which make human culture in its limited space-time.

### Dual Sources of Indian Cultural Synthesis

The Puranas and Itihasas do not banish the episodes of human culture to the world of maya or illusion but measure their proper



role in the oscillating play of endless life. Perfection and imperfection, progress and decadence, are no less glorious or tragic because of their finite scope ; each of these has its appropriate role in the long, unending march of time. The Indian philosophy of history judges man or his procession of culture as a Process or Becoming, the approximation towards or deviation from the Norm. The continuity and vitality of Indian civilization, which has outlived the civilizations of Egypt, Babylon, Greece and Rome, is primarily due to the emphasis of the Norm or Perfection of the Individual and the ethos of his Group, on the one hand, and of the extension of boundaries of the Social Culture, on the other. The two norms, individual and cultural, are linked with each other in abstract thought and social practice in India, and, have indeed guided the entire trend of her civilization. The spiritual enlightenment and perfection (*mukti*) of the individual and the *dharma* of Society and Culture are the same. Both bring about the widest expansion of the social culture—the unlimited earth community. The moral progress of the individual, the refinement and enrichment of human values and culture and the advance from the closed society to the commonalty of mankind are phases of the total progressive adaptation of mind, society and culture. Thus does the Indian *arthasastra* envisage the dual norms of human culture—the *dharma* of the individual and groups and the metaphysical identification of human culture with the eternal, boundless order of the universe. The first norm is responsible for the fact that in spite of foreign invasions and conquests and dynastic struggles and revolutions, Indian schools of metaphysics, religion, sculpture and painting could reach, even in epochs of foreign rule, high and glorious peaks of subtlety and sublimity. The second norm has encouraged a magnificent ethnic and cultural synthesis through the assimilation down the ages of hordes of foreign barbarians and *mlechhas* that overran and destroyed whole empires, such as Achamenid, Sassanian and Roman.

The *Dharmasastras* in India were responsible for the assimilation of such foreign tribes as the Yavanas, the Sakas, the Huns, the Abhiras, the Gurjaras and other foreigners into the Hindu social structure, and the basic presuppositions of Bhagavatism, Mahayana Buddhism and Tantrikism greatly favoured the acceptance of Indian religion and culture by the foreign-born. Only a geographical synthesis of *Bharatavarsha* as the land of virtuous deeds and spiritual progress (*Karmabhumi*) on the basis not of race or colour but of culture,

religious eclecticism, grounded on the acceptance of many strands of cults and beliefs, and an overall emphasis of the immanence of the deity in every human being, could withstand the avalanches of successive barbarian migrations, invasions and conquests and facilitate their gradual absorption in the Hindu body politic.

All this synthesis was consummated under two centuries of Gupta rule, when India was freed from the menace of the Huns and showed one of humanity's peaks of perfection in religion and metaphysics, literature and art as well as the phenomenal expansion of commerce and colonial enterprise. Two centuries of the Imperial Guptas have given to India her broad frame of reference, her rich and vigorous code of morals, her tolerant worship of many gods and heroes and varied Puranic and Tantrika rituals as handed down by the redactions of the major Puranas and the Mahabharata, the Kavyas of Kalidasa, Bharavi and Magha and the Dharmasastras of Narada and Brihaspati. The present-day Brahmanical culture of North India retains the features it received under the Gupta empire just as the Vijayanagara empire has given its impress on the culture of South India.

### **The Proliferation of Sects and Philosophies**

Yet another three centuries passed after the fall of the Imperial Guptas during which India maintained her religious hegemony over Asia through her great cosmopolitan Buddhist universities of Nalanda, Taxila, Vikramasila, Udanapura, Vallabhi, Anuradhapura and Sri-vijaya. As India extended her commerce with the Mediterranean region in the West and the Indian Archipelago in the East, gold and silver began to flow abundantly from the Roman empire and from Sumatra (I-tsing called Sumatra the Gold Isle where golden lotus flowers were offered to the Buddha) while she was also Hinduising the whole of south-eastern Asia as well as Tibet, Khotan and Turkestan. The history of Indian civilization includes the cultural achievements of Greater India for well-nigh two thousand years. The monuments of Borobodur and Angkor-vat are as much a part of the Indian mind and soul as those of Amaravati, Kalina and Vikramapura that contributed to their making. In the colonies of Champa, Kambuja and Java a variety of sects and schools of thought were thriving in full freedom and amity as in the Indian homeland. Bana's Harshacharita and the Manimekhalai testify that by the 7th century the following sects and schools of thought were studied, disputed over and



explained throughout the length and breadth of India: the Vedic, the Vaishnava, the Saiva, the Ajivaka, the Jain, the Buddhist, the Sankhyana, the Vaiseshika, with its incredible freedom of thought and discussion which set the model for the other Indian Universities as well as for the smaller schools, hermitages and seats of learning until their destruction or disorganisation by the Muslim conquest. About nine centuries later Jaisi, in his famous poem *Padmavati* (1540 A.D.), mentions the following categories of religious sects in India: sannyasins, devotees of Rama, Masavasins; Mahesvaras, Jangama, Yatins, worshippers of the left-hand and the right-hand Devi (saktas), Brahmacharins, Digambaras, Santas, Siddhas, Yogins, Pessimists, Sevaras, Vanaprasthas, Siddhi-sadhakas and Avadhutas. The names of Hindu religious sects or creeds are legion. India's essential tradition and freedom of thought have been responsible for the proliferation of sects and philosophies living side by side in concord across the centuries.

Broadly speaking, the development of Indian civilization is a story of the development of sects, philosophies and ideologies. Except in periods of great upheavals the course of intellectual development went on uninterrupted. Larger kingdoms and empires, on the other hand, became the spearheads of a many-sided intellectual and cultural advance. The Gupta Empire, of course, witnessed the efflorescence of Brahmanic culture, art and learning blended with the leaven of religious tolerance that stimulated benevolent activities of varied forms among a heterogeneous population. The Vardhana Empire of Kanauj with its University of Nalanda and systematisation of Buddhist schools of metaphysics and logic; the Gurjara-Pratihara Empire, with Dhara and Kanauj as the important seats of learning and culture, the Pala Empire of Bengal, with its magnificent achievements in temple architecture and sculpture and the missionary enterprises of Dharmapala and Atisa-Dipankara, the Chalukya Empire of Badami with its contributions to the art of Ajanta and Badami; the Rashtrakuta empire with its contributions to the art of Ellora and to the classical literature in Kannada; the Empire of the later Chalukyas, famous for the development of the Chalukya architecture and the works of Vijnaneswara, Bhaskaracharya and Bilhana; the Pallava and the Chola Empires with their striking contributions to temple architecture and sculpture and their colonial enterprises and finally, the Empire of Vijayanagara famous for its Ashtadiggajas in literature

and the perfection of the arts of sculpture, painting, music and dance—all these Empires gave to India down the ages something in philosophy, culture, art or dharmasastra, that is enduring in Indian culture and way of living.

### The Metaphysical Synthesis of Sankara

Now and then in Indian intellectual adventure a master scholar-metaphysician arises who gives a new slant to Indian thinking by an intellectual digvijaya. Such was the celebrated Sankaracharya whose metaphysical synthesis and re-interpretation of ancient doctrines, rituals and social ideals still dominate the thought of the elite of India. For generations Indian philosophical theories developed by starting from the notions of Sankara, who must be regarded as one of the world's greatest intellectuals. In social life Sankara gave full recognition to the rights of the Sudras to the highest spiritual development, mentioning the cases of Vidura and Dharma-vyadha in the Mahabharata, who attained moksha. Rightly understood, the Advaita Vedanta is egalitarian in social ideal and practice. "Knowledge," says Sankara, "is open to anyone who is desirous of it, and prayer alone qualifies for knowledge." The Sudrahood of Janasruti and Jabala Satyakama was no barrier to Brahma-vidya and the full realisation of its fruits. The influence of Sankara's evangelisation mission on the contemporary intellectual world was so great and it rallied together discordant Hindu sects and schools as well as the lay intelligentsia to such an extent that a political reawakening, such as that of the Gupta Vakataka period, would have followed the spiritual ferment but for his unfortunate, premature death on the eve of the Muslim penetration.

When Sankara was marching out of Malabar for his spiritual digvijaya at the beginning of the 9th century, the Moslems who had already settled down as traders in the important ports were engaged in missionary and proselytising activities that proved a menace to Hindu culture in Western India and the Deccan. The Arab occupation of a desert territory in Sind in 712 had little influence on the political history of India at the time. The expeditions of Mahmud of Ghazni which had to all intents and purposes little connection with the Arab kingdom followed three hundred years later. Another century and a half separates the invasions of Mahmud, and the conquest of Muhammad of Ghor. Another full century also passed before the Sultanate



of Delhi could overrun the Deccan, and make a real conquest of the country.

### Islam and Hindu Resilience

Meanwhile, the Gurjara-Pratihara Empire in Central India, Gujerat and Kathiawar, the military confederacy of the Rajputs which rose to be the major power of north India and the empires of the Chalukyas and the Rashtrakutas in the south were holding aloft the torches of Hindu civilization. The resilience of Hindu culture is demonstrated by the systematic efforts beginning from Sind towards the reconversion of enslaved or overpowered men and women and of adjustment to mlechha or Muslim social intercourse as embodied in the rules and regulations of Suddhi and prayaschitta in a larger number of Smriti works of this period, the Devala-smriti and Atri-samhita being the most significant amongst them. Where opportunities for cultural intercourse between Hindus and Moslems were greater in the outlying Muslim kingdoms of Bengal, Bijapur, Gujerat and Malwa, Indo-Saracenic architecture, glorious in its blending of Hindu, Sassanian and Byzantine traditions, developed side by side with Hindu architecture. The latter along with remarkable achievements in the fields of literature, philosophy and music was associated especially with the Rajput renaissance in the 13th and 14th centuries in the north and the rise of the Vijayanagara empire in the south. Vijayanagara was the focus of resistance of the Hindus of the South against Moslem conquest and aggression, and the religious heads at Sringeri of the Sankaracharya school, led by the famous monk-scholar Vidyaranya, assisted its foundation. The temples, maths and seats of learning in South India fostered the spirit of Hindu unity and revival of ancient dharma. For more than three centuries the Vijayanagara empire was the impregnable bulwark against Muslim aggression and stimulated a many-sided cultural progress in the fields of art and literature, trade and industry, religious movement and constitutional development. The power of Vijayanagara induced the Bahmani empire and its successors the Shahi kingdoms to follow a policy of religious toleration and cultural cooperation that indeed set subsequently the model for the Mughul empire of the north.

### Ramananda and Five Centuries of Socio-religious Movement

If the idea of a Hindu-Moslem composite state was transmitted to the Mughul emperors from the medieval Moslem states of the

South, and ultimately became the accepted pattern in India in spite of the bigotry of Aurangzeb, who identified the interests of the state with those of Islam, the South produced in Ramananda a spiritual teacher and leader of the first rank who initiated an egalitarian socio-religious movement that dominated India for full five centuries and has given the country the present pattern of a casteless society, just as the Bahmani kings and Akbar bequeathed to the British Empire and the Indian Union the political ideal of a secular state. India knows very little of two of her greatest men, Mahavira and Ramananda. The spiritual depth and achievement of Mahavira were totally eclipsed by the humane personality combined with supreme courage and practical commonsense of his greater contemporary, Gautama the Buddha. Ramananda has not obtained his dues because of the prejudice of the high-brow intellectuals of India swearing by the name and doctrines of the scholastic Sankara.

As the leader of the second great religious reformation Ramananda wields today, through his disciples and successors from Kabir to Nanak, Dadu to Mirabai and Namadeva to Chaitanya, far greater influence on the common man in India than the leader of the First Reformation, Sankara and his churches. The ardent emphasis of bhakti which he brought from the land of Adiyars and Alvars to the north, the use of the vernaculars in religious hymn-making and discourse, and the admittance to the religious order of the untouchable castes and women, comprised both a religious and social revolution in the country. But Ramananda's synthetic genius mingled with the philosophy of the Vedanta, as embodied in the Adhyatma Ramayana, with the bhakti of Ramaism, the nirguna yoga of the medieval Siddha and Natha tradition with ritualistic worship. Thus his teaching inspired most of the mass religious movements, that waxed stronger and stronger, through the 14th century during his long countrywide ministry and the 15th and 16th centuries, bringing joy and solace to the people of the cottages and the fields, and cementing the bonds between the Hindus and the Moslems.

Bhakti was no escape from national slavery under the Muslim rulers but a movement for the religious freedom and equality for the masses of India. Such was indeed the consequence of the teaching of bhakti of Kabir and the whole school of Nirguna saint poets from Dadu and Malukdas to Palatu and Sivadayal. The Sikh movement of the north led by Nanak, borrowing profusely from Ramananda



and Kabir, was in some respects, a revolutionary, social, egalitarian movement. Similar trends of abolition of caste barrier, and egalitarian influences also emanated from the emotional love abandon of Chaitanya and his disciples, Advaita and Nityananda in Bengal, Assam and Orissa. In the Deccan the mystical movement of Jñanesvara and Namadeva and other Maharashtrian saints, into which flowed the medieval Gorakhnath and Ramanandi tradition from the North and the South respectively, was also socialising.

### **Hindu-Muslim Concord through Bhakti and Sufism**

From Northern India, Bengal and Maharashtra, the ardent, god-intoxicated soul of India poured itself forth in many an ecstatic hymn of Dadu, Mirabai, Palatu and Tulasi-sahib in Hindi, of Jñanadasa and Govindadasa and their two-hundred successors in Bengali and of Namadeva and Ekanatha in Marathi. One result of this mystical movement is the development of vernacular literatures throughout India in the 15th and 16th centuries. The celebrated Tulsidas, who wrote towards the end of the 16th century, is one of the greatest of India's poets, who combines ardent bhakti with profound spiritual insight and morale earnestness and till today moulds the life of millions of men, both householders and saints, in Northern India. The Ramacharita Manasa, the Bible of popular Hinduism in Northern India, is a masterpiece in world literature from the pen of bhakta and a philosopher who was also an accomplished poet and singer with a profound appreciation of drama and pathos in human life. The bhakti movement is the legacy of the common people from Bengal to Gujerat and from Orissa to the Punjab. The entire continent participates today in the common devotional ideas and imagery of the bhakti cult, that are largely derived from family and other primary group bonds and allegiances in rural culture, and that have easily migrated from one region and vernacular to another, renovated by direct intuitive experience of the Real and the Universal in Man.

Another result was that the emphasis throughout India of simple faith and worship, rather than ritualism and priesthood, and of the equality of all men irrespective of caste and creed before God, strengthened the movement of dissent not only in Hinduism but also in Islam from the 16th century onward. Bhakti and Sufism are both born of a spontaneous upsurge of the soul that breaks through the hard, outer shells of Hinduism and Islam, and oversteps the bounds

of racialism within which both the religions were practically circumscribed. Thus India in her own way effectively met the religious and cultural challenge of Islam. The religious faith and devotion of modern India are grounded largely in the eclectic teachings and ardent spiritual insight and experiences of the dissenting spirits of both Hinduism and Islam—Hindu bhaktas and bhairagis as well as Moslem sufis and faqirs. Sufism would have been a spiritual solvent of Hindu-Moslem conflicts through the change-over from the dogmatic monotheism and racialism of Islam but for the communal cleavage and outburst due to the importation of narrow, exclusive rich and middle class interests and attitudes into the slowly strengthening mass movement of integration of the two communities.

## Two Generative Epochs of Indian Civilization :

### The Gupta Age and its Legacy

Thirteen centuries which separate the Empire of Samudragupta from the Empire of Akbar brought about a complete change in the cultural configuration of India. Yet India belongs to both the Gupta and the Mughul cultures. The Gupta epoch was a spacious, magnificent period of two centuries, full of the glamour and glory of imperialism and conquest when India through the might of arms, which the Brahmans wielded side by side with the Kshatriyas, freed the country from the Huna menace, and gave lasting peace to the land that extended its frontiers far into the north-west. The Vishnu Purana, the saga of Gupta Imperialism, fully appreciative of the importance of natural frontiers, includes not only Gandhara and beyond so as to include the white Huns or Indo-Scythians, the Ambastas and the Parasikas within the political boundaries of India but also the nine Hindu dvipas east of Tamraparni or Ceylon ; while Kalidasa, the national poet of the age, speaks of the Indian kings' conquest of the Saptadvipas and of the world (*pura saptadvipam jayati vasudhama pratirathab*). The Allahabad Prasasthi definitely states how Simhala and other islands were bound to Samudragupta in ties of political allegiance by "offering him various gifts, applying to him for charters recognising their sovereignty and finally, by tendering them personal loyalty (*atmanivedanam*).” Those far-off islands in Indonesia, that are inaccessible (*agamyā*) due to separation by the sea (*samudrantarita*), belong to the realm of India, and the inhabitants of all the dvipas (*sarvadvipa*) are also the inhabitants of India (*Bharati-praja*) under a common Hindu Samrat. The inscription says that "the all-powerful emperor unit-



ed the entire earth under his hegemony by the prowess of his arms" (vahu virya prasara dharani bandhasya). The national expansion was not only carried out by the might of arms of the Gupta emperors, which Kalidasa, the bard of the Imperial Guptas, celebrated in his *Raghuvamsha* where he speaks of Raghu, the conqueror of India, overthrowing the Parasikas, Yavanas, Hunas and Kambojas and his war-steeds rolling on the sands of the Oxus, but also by the missionary enterprises of Kumarajiva and Gunavarman in China and of Kaundinya in Kamboja.

There developed in Gupta India a legitimate national pride which expressed itself in the majestic and elegant Kavyas of Kalidasa, Bharavi, Bhatti, Magha and Kumaradasa, the grand Kavya style of the Prasasthis of Vatsabhati and Harisena, the self-conscious, sharp and vigorous classical Gupta sculpture of Mathura, Vidisa, Benares, Eran (Airakinya) and Dasapura, the gorgeous, yet tranquil, painting of Ajanta and Bagh, the revival of the imperial Asvamedha sacrifices by Chandragupta and Kumaragupta, the restoration of Sanskrit as the language of the state and of the aristocracy of learning, and finally, in the Indian national anthem of the *Vishnupurana*: "Bharata is the best of the divisions of Jambudvipa, because it is the land of virtuous deeds: the others are places of enjoyment alone. The gods themselves exclaim. 'Happy are those who are born even from the condition of gods, as men in Bharatavarsha, as that is the way to the pleasures of paradise or the greater blessing of final liberation.'"

The Gupta Empire built up the bureaucratic system of administration and the land system for the whole of Northern India which acted as models for later kingdoms and empires. Many Gupta institutions—administrative, economic and social—have come down to Modern India. Modern India also has obtained not only its numerous gods and goddesses,—Vishnu, Mahesvara, Surya, Devi in her multiple forms and the ten avatars from the Gupta period but also the present idol worship and system of Vratas, observances and sacrifices (panchamahayajna) reoriented from the older Vedic rituals, as well as the general caste pattern, leavened by the metaphysical interpretation of varna by the *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagvad-Gita*. The Gupta age has also bequeathed to the present time its high moral and spiritual tone. The Indian man's scheme of life is that delineated by Kalidasa for the sons of Dilipa, themselves manifestations of Vishnu—brahmacharya and study during the period of youth; marriage and vo-

cation in manhood ; solitariness and contemplation in old age and the final release by yoga. The gradation of vocations in life according to the varnasrama scheme, rightly understood as a social obligation governing man's total life, is Gupta India's rejoinder to the Buddhist celibacy. Appalled at the racial admixture and the spectacle of the various foreigners and Sudras infringing the rules of Varna and accepting Brahmanic spiritual discipline and yoga, thanks to the spread of Bhagavatism in the Gupta age, Kalidasa no doubt gave a staunch support to the varnasrama-dharma and reiterated the condemnation of the Ramayana on the Sudras who transgressed the integrity of the established scheme of life. Yet the poet emphasised the dignity of every calling, high or low, on the lines of the teaching of the Bhagvad-Gita. The Kshatriya is not to quarrel or fight at every opportunity, but his prowess is intended for protecting others from harm. Peacefulness (samana), declares Parsurama, is the proper quality of his Kshatriya paternal descent. In the Sakuntala, the fisherman replying to a gibe in respect of his calling by a guard observes that everybody from Srotriya to the fisherman pursues his sahaja karma derived from his birth. The Brahman learned in the Vedas has to be cruel in his Vedic sacrifices and this forms a part of his sahaja karma. So also does the fisherman catch and kill fish, not because he is naturally heartless but because he has to undertake his sahaja karma. The true recognition of the worth of every man and of every profession or calling in life stressed in the Smritis, Puranas and literature, was in consonance with the broad humanism of the Gupta age. The status of Indian women suffered on the whole in the centuries under Buddhism. The Gupta period restored to the Indian woman her true dignity, as is abundantly illustrated by the association of the Gupta queens (Devis, Rajnis, Mahisis) with imperial coins and inscriptions. On the Asvamedha type of Samudragupta's coins, the chief queen (Mahishi) Empress Dattadevi figures. Instead of the Emperor there is the horse standing before a sacrificial post. The Gupta Emperors took pride in their queens' participation in the celebrated horse sacrifice ritual. On the coins of Chandragupta we also find the Empress (Mahadevi) Kumara-devi depicted. Kalidasa's emphasis of the bliss and obligations of marriage and parenthood in the Raghuvamsa, of penance and worship of Uma as sanction for the passionate married love of the divine pair, Siva and Uma, in the Kumarasambhava, and of the maturation of the romantic love of Sakuntala to married love through suffering and asceticism also indicate the spiritualisation of the home and the



family. At the sight of the chaste Arundhati, wife of the sage Vasishta, the ascetic Siva's desire for a wife became stronger; "wedded love alone produces successful results in religious performances" (Kumarasambhava, VI, 13). While the chaste wife shows a perfect devotion to her husband, her living god, the latter shows a profound deference to her (archita tasya kousalya). The woman, in the words of Kalidasa, is "matron, counsellor, companion, dear pupil in fine art; in taking thee, tell me what of me has not pitiless Death taken" (Raghuvamsa, VIII, 67).

Man is himself deified in the Gupta age. He is compared with the gods and gets better of them. Never has the Indian man in the past attained such sense of self-competence. His feet are on the solid earth, true to the four-fold goals and values of his whole life, piety, wealth, desire and wisdom (dharma, artha, kama, moksha). "Even his pursuit of desire and wealth (arthakaman) is scrupulously correct and righteous and subserves the goal of piety (dharma)." (Raghuvamsa, I, 25.) There is a complete balance between enjoyment (bhoga) and withdrawal (tyaga), between activity and detachment; the antagonistic attributes are harmonised in the personality—wisdom and silence, power and forbearance, charity and humility (Raghuvamsa, I, 22). Due to the integration of all the four values of life, without the exclusion of any, it is possible to reconcile happiness with impassion, acquisition of wealth with charity, sex with parenthood and the fulfilment of the desires of life (yatha kama charitarthi) with ritualism, self-discipline and piety. By using the Sadtras as his eyes he can foresee and accomplish the unattained and subtle goals of his endeavours (Raghuvamsa, I, 6, 7, IV 13). His mind is set towards the universals, Brahman, Vishnu or Paramesvara. Thus his god, Vishnu or Siva, also stands solid and erect in Gupta sculpture upholding the earth and the heaven. The verticality, simplicity and massiveness of the Gupta images embodying man's supreme faith in himself, have their counterparts in the Gupta temples simple, stone-built, rock-cut and square-sized with their small sanctum (garvagriha) and devoid of ornamentation, the plain porticos and solid pillars sometimes underlining the spiritual strength. The majesty and dignity of man and woman reflected in Gupta literature, culture and politics embodying really its *zeitgeist*, are India's precious inheritance today. Finally, Gupta India is modern in its emphasis of bhakti in Vishnu that obtained its memorable utterance in the Bhagvad-Gita, which is

India's most important single scripture, read in every home, and which is also reiterated in the Allhabad Prasasthi of Samudragupta.

### The Legacy of the Mughul Age

The contrast between Samudragupta's and Akbar's India could be well drawn by a comparison of the representative literary creations, Kalidasa's *Raghuvamsam* on the one hand, and Tulsi-dasa's *Ramacharita-manasa* and Navadas's *Bhaktamala* on the other, representing the idealisations of the human quality of the respective ages. The Imperial court of Akbar was as cultured, magnificent and luxurious as the Court of the Imperial Guptas and perhaps more cosmopolitan, resembling in this respect the courts of Asoka, Kanishka and Harsha. The Imperial Guptas as well as the Great Mughul dreamed of the national monarchy uniting the different races, creeds and sects of India. If Sanskrit was the official language of the whole of India under the Guptas, Persian was the official language throughout the Mughul Empire, and intercourse between India, Middle Asia, China and the Pacific and the exchange of Buddhist monks and scholars, there spread those religious and aesthetic impulsions that had such momentous effects on the culture of China and Far East during the golden centuries of Gupta Renaissance. Mughul India similarly witnessed, on the basis of peaceful commercial and cultural interchange with Middle Asia and Persia and her suzerainty over Afghanistan and the North-western gateway, a renaissance of literature, painting, architecture and handicraft based on the assimilation of Indian, Chinese and Persian elements and traditions.

Both the Gupta and Mughul states grounded themselves in toleration of the various faiths of India; not an expedient toleration like the toleration in the Roman Empire but rooted in respect for sincere faith. In the Gupta empire this was the result of decades of religious eclecticism and synthesis that found expression in the redactions of the Puranas and the *Bhagvad-Gita*. In the case of Akbar it sprang from the synthesis characteristic of the Hindu *Bhakti* and the Sufi movement of his age. Though Akbar had in him the blood of the Timurids and sometimes showed a wild temper and indulged in colossal hunts, he had also mystical vein, which led to his intimate contacts with some of the great Sufi, Jain and Hindu saints. The seed of Krishna-Bhagavatism which was the cult of the Imperial Guptas, styling themselves as *Parama-Bhagavatas*, bore a rich and bountiful harvest through



these twelve intervening centuries ; and a new ideal of the Indian man was set forth in the 16th century by Tulsidas and Nabhadās, not bards of Imperialism like Kalidasa but popular minstrels of bhakti. Tulsidas did stand for the same varnasrama-dharma which Kalidasa declared was the central duty of the Indian ruler to safeguard. Sita on her banishment in the forest, where she would live as an ascetic, "expects protection of Ramachandra not as her husband but as the guardian of all hermits according to the law of Manu." In Kalidasa's Brahmanical vision, the Sudra, who performs penance by exposing himself head downwards from a tree to the fire underneath, acquires no virtue but is punishable. Kalidasa, like Valmiki, makes Ramachandra sever the head of the violator of the varna-dharma. Such an episode is in some measure a historical anachronism, of which Kalidasa was guilty as he followed the steps of Valmiki. For an ideal king to mete out such condign punishment of the Sudra, who adopts Brahmanical spiritual discipline, is incompatible with the religious catholicism of the Gupta age with its sharing of power and prosperity among all classes.

Nevertheless, Kalidasa's uncompromising support of the Brahmanical scheme of life was the reaction against the spread of Buddhism and Jainism, and the degradation of the twice-born within the Hindu fold who not only gave up the study of the Vedas and the performance of sacrifices but also adopted many dishonourable occupations, including service to the Sudras. "They forsook their own dharma, became wandering mendicants in hundreds and thousands and worshipped gods with popular songs but could not attain the Supreme Brahman", observes the Karma Purana. On the other hand, the Sudras amassed wealth through trade as well as through their traditional vocations of agriculture and craft, acquired knowledge of dharma and artha, read the Vedas and looked down upon the Brahmans who were dependent on them for livelihood. The Puranas associated such reversals of the status of varnas with the advent of the Kali gae. Baudhayana declared loss of caste for the Brahmans who served the Sudras, and Vishnu imposed penance on them for expiation. But Kali progressed and many Sudras became soldiers, traders, high officials and even kings, who performed "horse sacrifices". The Mahabharata said that the Sudras could follow vocations of the Vaisyas—trade, animal raising and handicraft of various kinds (Santiparva, 29, 54). Yajnavalkya have an

exactly similar ruling. Thus the entire range of occupations in a complex, expanding economic life, came under the grips of the Sudras, while the other castes were confined only to a few lines. The admixture of castes also went apace. The spread of Saivism, Vaishnavism and Saktism, while promoting religious zeal among the Sudras, gave them access to the highest knowledge and wisdom. Al-beruni points out that according to the Hindu philosophers liberation is common to all castes, and to the whole human race, if their intention of obtaining it is perfect. The Dharmasastras had to relax the Brahmanical regulations of castes and stages and recognise the existence of various mixed castes who obtained entry into the orthodox social scheme. Both Brahman-Kshatriya and Brahman-Sudra marriages obtained recognition, though the Sudra wife of the Brahman was excluded from participation of her husband's religious sacrifices and rituals. But her son though not a heir, was recognised as a kinsman, and as such was entitled to maintenance according to Gautama. In accordance with the needs of the age, the Dharmasastras followed the epic in assigning to the Sudras the practice of agriculture and the mechanical arts for livelihood (*vritti*) along with service to the higher castes as obligation (*dharma*). Such was the compromise between the growing needs of the major and expanding section of the Indian population and ancient social disabilities. Even the upper castes, viz. the Brahmins, the Vaisyas and the Kshatriyas could also follow the practice of agriculture. With reference to the Brahmins Parasara lays down the following code: "the Brahman who performs the six duties assigned to him, may also do the work of cultivation; but he should not yoke a bullock when the latter is thirsty, hungry or tired. He should cultivate half the day and then bathe and then perform the sacrifices enjoined with corn produced by himself in his own field." The ancient belief in respect of agriculture being a sin dies hard. For agriculture involves the felling of trees, the tearing of soils and the extermination of insects. But by the offer of one-sixth of the yield of land to the king, one-twentieth to the gods and one-thirtieth to the Brahmins, the cultivator can be absolved from the sin. Thus farming that was the predominant vocation of the Sudra no longer had any sin or indignity attached to it, according to the scholastic doctrine. The recognition of the civil rights of the Sudras to adopt a profession was no doubt a definite step forward in Gautama and Vishnu. Parasara specifically declar-



ed that a Vaisya or Sudra should always live by trade, agriculture or handicraft. In the economic life of the Gupta and post-Gupta age the compartmentalism of occupations was in fact no longer possible. The Brahmans adopted every occupation from ruling kingdoms and administering high offices in the state to selling betel-leaves. Similarly, the Kshatriyas acquired knowledge of the Vedas and attained literary celebrity, while at the same time, adopting such degraded occupations as those of potters, oilmen, distillers of liquor, sugar-boilers and betel-sellers. Thus crafts, occupations and professions came to be adopted by the Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras according to necessity and convenience rather than varna injunction and privilege though the former were still regarded as the superior folk (*mahajana*) in the early medieval period. There is a striking passage in Gautama (X, 69) which assigns all the castes on the basis of similarity of occupations. A Sudra, who adopts the calling of an Aryan, should not be despised. On the contrary, under such a circumstance the formal relation of master and servant between the Dvija and Sudra no longer holds good. But socially speaking, the Sudras were still outcastes and lived outside the habitation where the dvijas dwelt. The injunction of Apasthamba (II. 2.4 19-20) that a Sudra coming to a Brahman's house as a guest, should be given work and then entertained or else the Brahman's slaves should fetch food from the royal store and honour him, ought to be read with the grim description of the degradation of the Chandalas and other outcastes by Fi-Hien and Bana. The proliferation of religious sects and evangelisation among the Sudras first, by the heresies of Buddhism and Jainism, and then, by the Bhagavata and Pasupata cults, contributed materially towards abolishing the barriers between the Dvijas and Sudras and between the Hindus and the foreigners or Mlechhas in the post-Gupta period.

Between the Gupta and the Mughul age, the spread and popularity of Tantrikism and Bhakti led gradually to the differentiation in Hindu society between the followers of the Srauta and Smarta rituals and those who worshipped the various sectarian deities such as Panchratras, Pasupatas, Nakulas, Kaulas, Bhairavas, Sakatas and Ganapatyas. Numerous sects rose and thrived side by side and gradually the opposition to the heresies, to the special scriptures of the sects as well as to the adoption of Hindu faiths by "casteless" foreigners and "Mlechhas" wore off. Simultaneously, the age-old practice of mentioning gotra

and pravara indicating the kind of Vedic rituals undertaken was given up even by the Kshatriyas as we find from inscriptions of the last centuries of the preceding millenium. For all castes, with the exception of Brahmans who were still designated by their gotras and charanas or sakhas, the worship of the various sectarian deities that superseded the Vedic rituals and sacrifices left its impress upon their nomenclature. All this reduced the social distance between the privileged and the under-privileged.

### **Bhakti and Social Integration**

Then came the religious upsurge associated with Ramananda and his disciples. A vast swelling tide of spiritual devotionism and its associated catholic egalitarian movement gradually brought about a profound religious and social synthesis through a stretch of five centuries. Many of the great medieval mystics and saints belonged to the lowest castes such as Kabir the weaver, Ravidas the cobbler, and Sadhana the butcher and were adored by the princes and the people alike. Akbar himself paid his homage to the Sikh Guru Amaradas. In spite of his support of Varnasrama, Tulsidas was a humanist and a universalist, and belonging as he did to the Ramanandi order stressed compassion together with bhakti, service for man together with reverence to the deity. Through the length and breadth of India was then sweeping the bhakti movement among the masses leading them away from orthodoxy, sacredotalism and caste. The ideal men of the age are no doubt less manly, intrepid and virile than the sons of Dilip, envisaged by Kalidasa with duty governing their whole lives, accumulating wealth for gifts, speaking fewer words lest truth be violated, seeking conquest for the sake of fame and pursuing love for the sake of parenthood. But the persons of the Bhaktamala are sweeter and more attractive, even angelic.

They are the heroes and heroines of spiritual love. There is the queen poet Mira Bai who abandons her palace as she cannot bear the sight of animal sacrifices, and wanders from hill to forest, restless with the fever of separation from the blue-complexioned Lord. There is another queen, Ganesha Davani of Ohcha, who suffers in silence the agony of a wound inflicted by a mad ascetic lest her husband take revenge. There are the penitent Indian Magdalenes, the dancing girl Kanhopatra of Pandharpur, who became intoxicated with the love of Vithoba and ultimately preferred death to ravishment



by the king of Bidar, and also the courtesan of Delhi who dedicated the only art she knew, viz. dancing, to the love of God. There are also Surasuri, whose chastity was protected by a tiger, the passionate Vilvamangal, who swam across the dark flood in the night to meet the woman of his love and rejected by her, turned inwards, plucking out his offending eyes to eradicate his lust, and the nameless king who for a similar reason cut off his right hand.

The Ramacharitamanasa and the Bhaktamala were produced in Middle India. On the north the Grantha Sahib of Nanak (1469-1538), the first Sikh guru, was fashioning the character of the Punjab peasantry in the crucible of suffering, service and sacrifice for their future martyrdom. In the east and the south-east there was the shining figure of the God intoxicated, rapturous Chaitanya (1485-1533) who utilized the contemporary doctrine of Bhakti recently enriched by the popularisation of the Srimad Bhagavata from the South and the cult of Krishna-Radha of Vrindavana for a mass religious and social awakening and gathered round him a unique band of adoring philosophers, poets and scholars. They developed on the basis largely of their beloved master's spiritual ecstasies, an entire psychology, metaphysics and aesthetics of bhakti, that stimulated a literary and religious renaissance in Bengal, Orissa and Assam for more than two centuries. The Chaitanya movement added a new streak of moral quality and goodness to the Indian character, grounded on the maturation and transcendence of authentic human affections and attachments as symbols of approach to the deity. While Chaitanyism promoted the ideal of a casteless society and a ritual-free devotion and abolished many social barriers, it had a profound influence in shaping human character through the stress of humility, fortitude and self-surrender. The ideal of human perfection is pictured as the blend of "the humbleness of the grasses, the fortitude of the trees, the self-abasement for the assertion of fellowmen and the constant remembrance of God's name." In Eastern India due to the entrenchment of decadent Buddhism and its assimilation to many popular Hindu cults, the movement led by Chaitanya's disciple Nityananda, who admitted into his order thousands of degraded Buddhist monks and nuns, was a part of a broader movement of eclecticism. This was represented by the cults of Dharma Thakur, Mangala Chandi, and Manera, metamorphoses of the Mahayana deities, which through both worship and literature found a place for derelict Buddhism and its degraded

votaries in the bosom of popular Hinduism. Remnants of the now-forgotten Buddhism are the varna-Brahmans described by Mukundaram as "men of monastery of bhikshus", and the Yogis and Dharmagharia Yogis of South-West Bengal. For the first time in Indian literature the heroes and heroines of these new cults, vigorous, enterprising and pious, come from the lowest and the least in society. Mukundaram's Chandimangala Kavya (1593-1603) and Ghanarama Chakravarty's Dharmamangala Kavya have profoundly influenced the popular Hindu mind for generations leavened by the impact of both Buddhism and Islam in eastern India.

Thanks to the legacy of the ages, the Indian soul feeds as much on the Sankhya and Yoga views of the nature of man and the universe of the Gupta age as on those of the Bhagavata-purana and the Gita Govinda of the medieval times, and what is more, reconciles the diverse views. The ideal Indian man is a complex blend of the virtues and rules of life laid down by the Manava Dharmasastra and the Raghu-vamsa of the Gupta age and the Ramacharitamansa, the Bhaktamala and the Chaitanya Charitamrita of the Mughul epoch.

We have focussed attention to these two epochs of history and showed the resemblances and contrasts between one epoch and another only because these were great formative periods of Indian civilization when the Indian mind was moulded anew, the Indian values, dharma and institutions shaped and patterned and the Indian people felt also a national pride and faith in their own destiny. It is the vision and idealism of a whole people, who thought that they were fashioning a new age that explain these generative epochs' enduring achievements in literature, art, religion and code of morality which have saved India from the social conquest of the British. No subject nation can outlive the loss of its soul. Indian civilization has survived because even in the periods of the greatest suffering, misery and humiliation it had sufficient faith in its own values and ideals and did not sell these to the conqueror for "a mess of pottage."



## CHAPTER XLIV

### CROSS CURRENTS IN SOCIAL HISTORY

#### Condition of People in the Gupta Period

The Gupta and Mughul ages were glorious epochs of Indian civilization, as shown by their courtly, aristocratic literature, art, wealth, luxury and finesse of living of a refined and sensitive society. But neither in the Gupta nor in the Mughul age the economic condition of the people was very satisfactory nor the cleavage between the poor and the rich bridged. Yet the people as a whole felt in these ages that they were marked out for a high destiny and were shaping a new social order. In an agricultural civilisation, the imperative issues are the distribution of landed property among the ruling and subject populations, the encroachment of the ruling class upon village self-government and the burden of taxation of the peasantry. The Dharmasastras in the Gupta period broke away in some measure from the Manu Smriti in giving a social status to the Sudras not as mere domestics or slaves but as agriculturists (according to Parasara, dated between the first and the fifth century A.D.), artisans and traders, to the various groups of foreigners such as the Sakas, Abhiras, Gurjaras and Pratiharas and Rajputs and also to the semi-hinduised border and forest tribes, and permitting the remarriage of women. Narada, a legalist of the Gupta epoch, permitted the rights of divorce and remarriage to women on several grounds and of inheritance of the maternal grandfather's property to an illegitimate son. The youngest son, if able, also might now govern the family and manage its property. The Sudras gradually rose in wealth and power, and there were Sudra ministers, generals, and even kings. Sudra slavery was done away with by the beginning of the Gupta rule, except in the houses of the nobility and royalty, the manumission of slaves being always looked upon as a virtuous deed. Slaves were called *dasas* or *dasakas*, employed in such odd jobs as cutting grass or gathering fruits; while forced labour (*vishti*) is mentioned in connection with various land grants in some Gupta inscriptions. We gather from the Dharmasasthra literature that agricultural labour and herding were undertaken

by the Sudra slaves and members of mixed castes. Narada gives an interesting description of the various categories of *susrukas* (i.e. persons who serve others); a Vedic student, an *anta-vasyin* (an apprentice), *adhikarmakrit* (a supervisor over labourers) and *dasa* (a slave). The first four are called *Karmakara*, who cannot be asked to do menial service. It is only the slave who does menial or dirty (*asubha*) work in the household. Among the causes of slavery mentioned by him are discharge from debt, capture in battle, protection from hunger and famine, voluntary pledge and wager under a bet. This law-giver also gives a detailed description of the ceremony of manumission of slaves. The release from slavery is relatively easy from the conditions laid down by Narada and Katayana.

Untouchability of the exterior castes (*bahya*, *antya*, *antyaja*), grounded on an exaggerated Brahmanical conception of ritual purity had been a curse in India since the time of Panini; but in the Gupta period this was modified. The injunctions of Atri and Brihaspati are that there is no untouchability nor is there need of *prayaschitta*, if there be contact in temples, religious or marriage processions, sacrifices and festivals. Bana speaks in the *Kadambari* of a *Chandala* girl getting an entry into the assembly hall of the king, though she is made to stand at some distance. The *antyajas*, according to Atri, are represented by the following seven groups: washerman (*rajaka*), leather-worker (*charmakar*), dancer (*nata*), bamboo-worker (*buruda*), fisherman (*kaivarta*), *Meda* and *Bhilla*. Below these is yet another group of seven, according to the *Mitakshara* or *Yajnavalkya* (III, 260), called *Antyavasayins*, viz. *Chandala*, *Svapacha*, *Ksatri*, *Suta*, *Vaidehika*, *Magadha* and *Ayogava*. In Maurya India we find a similar differentiation between the five *Hina-jatis*, comprising the *Chandalas*, *Neshadas*, *Venas*, *Rathakaras*, and *Pukkusas*, which are lower in status than the five groups of craftsmen—the *Hina-sipani* as well as the eighteen guilds (*sreni*). Almost the same stratification is mentioned by Al-beruni (973-1048) who remarks that there are two classes of *Antyajas*: the first comprises the seven castes of Atri's list: "the fullers, shoemakers, jugglers, basket and shield-makers, sailors, fishermen and hunters of wild animals and birds," with the addition of weavers, all organised in guilds; and the second group comprises the *Hadi*, *Dom*, *Chandala* and *Badhatau* (*Vaidehika*) who are not reckoned amongst any caste or guild and are occupied with dirty work, such as the cleaning of the villages and other services. "They are degraded outcastes".



Al-beruni adds: "Among the degraded groups, the Hadi is best spoken of, since they keep themselves free from everything unclean. The Domas play on the lute and sing. The still lower classes practise as a trade killing and the inflicting of judicial punishments (hanging or torture). The worst of all are the Badhatau, who not only devour the flesh of dead animals, but even of dogs and other beasts. But even the Chandala group (antyaja) had the right to enter the temple and touch the image of Vishnu according to the Bhagvatapurana (X, 70, 43) and to perform vratas throughout the post-Gupta and medieval periods. A summary but true description of the caste hierarchy also comes from the Arab writer Ibn Khurdaba (900 A.D.) who presents the following gradation:

1. The Sabkatrias (Sukshatrias) according to Vaidya representing the Rajput royal families who occupied the highest ranks;
2. The Brahmans;
3. The Kshatriyas;
4. The Sudarias (the Sudras) "who are by profession husband-men";
5. The Baisuras (Vaiyas) "who are by profession artificers and domestics";
6. The Sandalaia (the Chandalas), who perform menial service, and
7. The Lahuds (possibly the Natas) "who are fond of amusements and games of skill and whose women are fond of ornaments."

At the end of the last millenium castes showed the same features of stratification as were stabilised in Maurya times. Nicolo Conti who came to India at the beginning of the 15th century (1419-1444) found 84 caste groups in the country wherein "no man of one creed will drink, eat or marry with those of others." Muhammad Jaisi, the famous poet of Oudh and author of Padmavati (1540 A.D.) at the time of Sher Shah, mentions 36 castes of Hindustan which include Brahmans, Gaurs, Agarwalas, Bais, Chandels, Chauhans, Baniyas, Sonars, Kalwars, Kayasthas, Patains, Barains, Thathers, Ahirs, Gujars, Tambolins, Lohars, Bhats, Gandhis, Chhipis, Rangrezs, Naus, Baris, Telis, Malis and Besavas. The Nats, Doms, Dhobis,

Sahnais and Bherikars seem to belong to the lowest castes while the untouchables were the Helas and Doms who worked also as executioners. At the beginning of the 16th century Babar found the same water-tight division of castes and occupations, as observed by Amir Khusrau, Conti and Jaisi in the early Muslim epoch. It was in this period that the Rajputs came to be differentiated into twenty sub-castes as recorded in the *Ain-i-Akbari*. Both Varthema (1503-1508) and Barbosa (1518) among the foreign travellers, and Jaisi, the Indian poet, commented upon untouchability. Varthema found the following social stratification in Malabar. The highest rank was occupied by the Brahmans, next came the Nairs. These were followed in order by the Tiva (Thiya), the Mechua, the Poliar (Pulayan) and the Hirava (Izhava). These latter were untouchable and unapproachable and could be killed with impunity if such a social taboo was disobeyed. A century later Pietro della Valle (1623-1624) found 84 rigid castes in India, "known and distinguished by descent or pedigree" and admitting no rise or fall or change of occupation or economic condition of the people. The general scheme of gradation as well as differentiation between the artisan and domestic groups, and the semi-Hinduised, despised aboriginal groups at the bottom of the social scale which we find in Maurya India and in the Middle Ages still persist today. It is remarkable that the institution retains the same general mould for more than two thousand years.

The aboriginal and tribal groups occupied the lowest rungs of the social ladder in India, largely because of their loose marital customs and filthy social habits, including the eating of carrion, which were held in repugnance in all the *Smritis*. Above them were the craftsmen, agricultural workers, fishermen, etc., half-aboriginal and half-Hinduised groups, that formed themselves into the "eighteen guilds". The *attahars seniyo* of the *Jatakas* generally correspond to the eighteen *Prakritis* or *srenis* (guilds) of the medieval inscriptions that speak of grants of villages together with the eighteen *prakritis*. The *Viramit-rodaya* also mentioned the eighteen low-caste *srenis* or craft-guilds. It is evident that the organisation of craft-guilds handed down from the Maurya age safeguarded the interests of the lower social orders outside the pale of Indo-Aryan society, and as they improved in wealth and economic status they obtained various social and legal privileges. Both Gautama and Manu refer to the laws of the guilds of artisans that are respected by kings and officials; and the *Mahabharata*



(Santiparva, chapter VI) enjoins complete obedience to the laws of the caste, sreni, territory or family. "No dharma can possibly exist for those who violate these." Manu (VIII, 219-220) specifically refers to the customs and regulations of guilds (sreni-dharma) of villages or districts, having the force of law that kings are specially enjoined to enforce.

In the great cities and towns of Northern India in the Gupta period the guilds of merchants, traders and craftsmen became a powerful factor in politics as in medieval Europe. The officers of the guilds—bankers (sreshthin), traders (sarthavaha) and merchants (kulika) are mentioned in the Gupta inscriptions as having administrative authority in the towns, with their own clay-seals (as discovered at Basrah) and banners depicting implements and emblems (Harivamsa, ch. 86 v. 5), and being courted by kings as the principal support of their power. The Damodar copper plates (433-438 A.D.) belonging to the reign of Kumaragupta, specifically mention that the Kumaramatyā was administering the locality in association with a nagara-sreshthi, a sarthavaha, a prathama-kulika and a prathama kayastha. The Nasik inscriptions in the early centuries of the Christian era show guilds of weavers, potters, irrigation men, bamboo-workers and graziers, receiving public funds for perpetual endowment of charities. The injunctions of the Dharmasastras indicate a progressive development and integration of the various guilds and corporations, which were invested with considerable executive and judicial authority over the members of the crafts, professions and brotherhoods. Their constitutions and contracts are considered to be specially binding. The enemies of guilds are regarded as incompetent witnesses, no better than thieves and quacks.

### **Agrarian Organisation through the Centuries**

The bulk of the population lived as small peasant proprietors whose interests were safeguarded by village elders or headmen and who paid land taxes to the state. But sometimes whole villages (agrabasas) were given as gifts to Brahmans or certain other individuals. The king's donees received the royal dues and got their lands cultivated on the produce-sharing basis, the cultivators retaining one-third to half of the gross produce, half the share of the produce went to the farm-hands in the Buddhist monasteries, and Manu mentions the half-share (ardhika) allotted to the hired labourers as the

standard proportion. Such beneficiaries enjoyed the common lands (padraka), forest-roads and cow-paths, the flowers, milk, hide and charcoal from the waste and the rights of pasturing cattle with "the right of fines and deciding cases arising out of ten offences". The village revenues are mentioned in the Gupta inscriptions (Fleet, 38 and 55) as including taxes on occupancy and temporary tenants (udranga and uparika) and various imposts amounting to a dozen or more. The king's share is the traditional one-sixth of the produce, as mentioned in the epic, Vasishta and Vishnu (shadbhaga) and the imposts going to the state include taxes on salt, on sale and purchase and irrigation rates while forced labour (vishtika) might also be imposed. Several levies were probably intended for village administration. Regular or irregular troops and "umbrella bearers" of the king had the right to enter the land. The village headman is called gramakuta, the elders mahattaras and the village council panchakula or pancha. The common land is called bhumbhusapadraka, the landlord of the village is called gramapati, bhojaka or bhojika and the landless labourer perhaps karshaka in the Gupta period. An estate comprising a few villages is called vishaya. An official called the Sunakarmakara fixed the boundaries of individual proprietors and looked after the village records in which the name of all cultivators were recorded; while cases of boundary disputes were settled by the officer called Nyayakaranika. It was the village headman (gramakuta) who was notified about land transactions in the village and worked in close co-operation with the state officials. Village self-government by the pancha is specifically referred to in one post-Gupta inscription—the Bhinmalstone inscription, but there are several references to consultation with the village elders—mahattaras, kuladhikaranas and gramikas—for land purchase, sale or grant.

The richer land-owning class known as the Mahasalas of the Mauryan age, who eclipsed the wealth and prosperity of the peasant householders such as the Grahapatis and Kutumbikas of the Buddhist literature, had their counterparts, the Gramapatis, Bhojikas, Kutimbis and Vishayapatis in the Gupta age. We know from Brihaspati that whole villages belonged to single individuals, and could be transferred to another by river action or by the king's will. Landed estates multiplied wherever feudal landholdings were superimposed upon the ancient rural communities by invasion and conquest of the foreign military-aristocratic tribes such as the Sakas



the Abhiras, the Gurjaras and the Parihars as in large parts of Western India, Rajputana and Central India. Feudatories or overlords of several villages were called Mandalikas, Samantas and Mahasamantas developing into distinct social hierarchy with different privileges and responsibilities for each order, including the maintenance of peace and civil and criminal administration over large parts of Northern India.

Feudalism gradually established itself and eclipsed the village communities. Entire villages were handed over by kings, chiefs and nobles to Brahman families for religious and educational purposes, as permanent gifts, with lands attached to them that were cultivated by the agricultural castes. In the Gupta period the cleavage between the upper and lower castes, between the Nagarapatis, gramikas, mahattaras and the bulk of the artisans and peasantry was sharpened, forced labour (*vishti*) was not unfamiliar and there was a large variety of local imposts and cesses, levied by local authorities.

The standard of living of the common people was not high although famines, as met with in the Mughul and British periods, were unknown. Hiuen-Tsang in the 7th century describes the simple fare of the common people of Northern India as comprising rice and wheat, milk, ghee, sugar, candy, corn-cakes and parched gram. Fish, mutton and venison were occasional dainties. Their household utensils were mostly of earthenware, few being of brass. In respect of clothing he observes that men wound a strip of cloth round the waist and up to the arm-pits and left the right shoulder bare. The women wore a long robe which covered both shoulders and fell down loose. Closely fitting jackets were also worn. Most of the people went barefoot, shoes being rare. The dress and ornaments of the upper classes were, on the other hand, very luxurious and extraordinary, including necklaces, bracelets, rings and tiaras and garlands on the crown. The media of exchange were gold and silver coins, small pearls and cowries. In respect of household necessities, Hiuen-Tsang observed that there was generally a good supply of these of various qualities. We have also an interesting description of the food of the common people in South India in Dandi's *Dasakumara Charita*, usually assigned to the 6th or 7th century A.D. The story is of a *shreshti's* son, belonging to Kanchi, meeting a poor girl, with no ornaments, who had no parents and lived in a dilapidated house in a city on the bank of Kaveri. The young man gave the girl a *prastha*.

of shale paddy for his food. The girl removed the husks that were sent to the goldsmith. Out of the kakini thus earned, one earthen cooking pot and two earthen saucers and firewood were bought. The food prepared comprised boiled rice, with ghee, soup (*supa*), two or three upadamasas (appetisers) and curds flavoured with *trijataka*. The meal ended with *kalasiya* (butter milk) and *kanjika* (gruel). It is noteworthy that the sale of half-burnt faggots earned enough *kakinis* (1 *kakni*=20 cowries) to buy vegetables, ghee, curds, oils, tamarind and *amalaka*. The essential foodstuffs were, therefore, exceedingly cheap in the Sibi country, the merchant's son being fully refreshed and highly delighted with this simple fare, provided by the girl whom he later married. On the basis of the South Indian records of the Chola period it has been estimated that the average income of an upper-class family per month was about rupees sixteen and for a family of the lower castes it was about half.

From the age of the Imperial Guptas several types of overlords of villages, called *Mandalikas*, *Samantas*, *Gramapatis* and *Desagra-nukas* were superimposing themselves upon the agricultural society, and this accounted for a large number of imposts, tolls and cesses that the peasantry had to pay and in some provinces like Bengal under the Imperial Palas for the whole substitution of cash assessment for payment in kind. Already the list of rural levies was formidable in Gupta inscriptions. In the Pala Empire along with the traditional levies such as produce rent (*bhaga-bhoga-kara*) and cash rent (*heranya*) we read of the police cess (*chauroddharana*) and three categories of revenue officials are mentioned : (1) collectors of the sixth share of the agricultural produce (*shashthadhikrita*), (2) collectors of tolls (*saulkika*) and (3) collectors of customs (*gaulmika*). Mention is made in certain inscriptions of Kamarup in the 10th and 11th centuries of illegal levies or oppressions. In the Gurjara-Pratihara Empire we find a reference to such new cesses as levies on the threshing floor, on weights and measures of commodities sold, on each shoulder-load of goods (exported) and a general "benevolence" levied on a village. Later on among the Gaharwar kings of Kanauj of the 11th century we find such other new cesses as a tax on merchants (*pravanikara*), war-gold for fighting the Muslim Turks (*Turushkadanda*), tax on cattle (*go-kara*), water rates (*jala-kara*), salt tax (*lavana kara*) and tax on leaves and twigs (*harna kara*). The early medieval period, characterised by the pomp and magnificence of the Rajput rulers and the



multiplication of petty feudal chiefs and fief-holders encroaching upon the economic autonomy of the village community, saw an increase in the burden of rural levies and imposts, the proceeds of which were distributed among the village community itself, the increasing numbers of the feudal martial class, who served to maintain the semblances of order when disorder was rampant, and the sovereign authority in Kanauj, Pataliputra or Navadipa who increased the tax burden on the peasantry to fight the menace of Muslim invasion and conquest. This exacting and burdensome tax system was handed in toto to the Turkish sultanate. It was left for Firuz Shah Tughlak to abolish as many as 25 different cesses inherited from the past, causing a loss to the Treasury of 3,000,000 tankas, and a sharp fall in agricultural prices. Under Turko-Afghan administration the traditional village community maintained its autonomy in respect of economic management but collective responsibility and apportionment of revenue largely disappeared in the Mughul period. Revenue all over India was collected direct as far as possible from each individual farmer, the share of the ruler being enhanced to half the gross produce by Alauddin Khilji, with additional heavy levies on the livestock. The early Muslim epoch saw a considerable increase of the disparity of income and standard of living between the classes and the masses. The highly-paid officials of the state earning huge incomes amounting to at least 10,000 tankas per year were often foreigners—Turks, Afghans, Arabs and Persians—who cared more for making money quickly by any means than for the welfare of the people in order to go back rich to their own countries. Many foreign nobles returned to Persia, Arabia, and Turkey enormously rich, their ill-gotten wealth measuring the ruin and poverty of the Indian peasantry. Ibn Batuta makes mention of one such greedy foreigner who was punished by the loss of all his fortune "through the wrath of the Divine". Whole villages and districts whose revenues were assigned to foreign Turkish nobles or their Indian successors were often mismanaged and ruined. The assignments of revenue (aqtas) also were very large and sometimes comprised whole provinces of the kingdom. The system of revenue collection according to which the Muqta or assignee collected the entire revenue of a district, defrayed the administrative charges, paid the troops and remitted a fixed sum from the remainder to the royal treasury, was borrowed from the Caliphate of Baghdad. Muhammad Ashraf estimates that the total value of revenue assignments under Firuz Tughlaq comes to more than 57

million Tankas. Even modest assignments given to the nobles were very remunerative. Ibn Batuta by administering the Aqta or revenue assignment of a noble in his absence at Deogiri gained about 5,000 Tankas. These Aqtas were often leased out by the assignees to other persons for bigger sums. Thus the peasantry suffered all the burden of the increased revenue assignment. The control of the Aqta-holders especially in outlying regions through audit from the revenue department at Delhi was hardly effective. The common soldiers instead of obtaining salaries in cash were given assignments like the nobles under Firuz Shah. These became even hereditary and earned for the soldiers far greater gains than their salaries, while they were permitted when they became old to send their relations to the musters and campaigns. On the other hand, the muqaddam or the village headman who realised the land revenue for the royal treasury from his village and obtained a certain percentage of commission on the realised revenue also often proved unjust and oppressive, especially in times of trouble and uncertainty. His open or clandestine appropriation of the revenues of the state and imposition of unjust and excessive taxes brought him a respectable fortune at the expense of the people. This was commented upon by Baruni and Ibn Batuta. It is the general insecurity and poverty of the rural population under the Delhi Sultanate that explain Babar's shrewd observation that "people flee and disappear completely from a place where they have been living for many years in about a day and a half. Not a sign or trace of them remains". "In Hindustan hamlets and villages, towns indeed are depopulated and set up in a moment." In the 17th and 18th centuries one-half of the produce became the standard, and this in both assigned and reserved areas. Mughul officials both military and civilian came to own large fiefs and jagir lands. As farmers of revenue they had definite economic and political obligations, the responsibility of maintaining law and order and supplying to the Mughul Emperor a specified force of cavalry whenever it was required for defence and conquest. They also paid a certain fixed amount of land revenue to the treasury. The changes of assignment were, however, too frequent; the jagirdar could hardly continue for more than a year or even six months. Thus he endeavoured to make hay while the sun shone and to extract more than the normal yield of his grant, he exploited the peasantry.



### **Differences between the Mughul and the British Economic Impact**

The ryotwari system, as it was called in the British days, became widespread in the Mughul period, the state dealing directly with the cultivators. By the middle of the 17th century the system of jagirdars, foudars and farmers of revenue also became fairly established. Times of uncertainty and disorder encouraged many jagirdars to defy the local viceroys, whose power and income fast declined, and they began to collect revenues themselves in their jagirs with every kind of oppression. Not merely the bigger chiefs and nobles but the headmen of sub-divisions and villages began to convert themselves into landholders throughout the 18th century. Thus a considerable portion of the peasants were placed under farmers, assignees and headmen. The modern zamindari system was entrenching itself even though the Mughul Badshahi regulations for the guidance of collectors of revenue explicitly mention that the assessments should be realized direct from the cultivator and so intermediaries avoided. Not merely did the distinction between farmers and chiefs fade away but both these classes extended their spheres of interest over small or large areas, assessing and collecting revenues from the peasantry as Rajas, Chiefs and political rulers or paying the revenues assessed to the Prince or formal sovereign as farmers, jagirdars or ijaradars according to circumstances. Political authority sometimes became a proprietary connection with the land by a process of attrition or degradation through the stages of feudal superior, seignor or overlord (sardar), assignee of land revenue (jagirdar), farmer of state revenue (ijaradar) and such like. The political connection of the Raja, Chief or political ruler gave place to a closer and nearer personal and proprietary connection, coupled of course with a concomitant restriction of the area concerned. Sometimes, however, the assignee or farmer extended his authority over neighbouring villages, with which he had no connection previously, and managed the lands and controlled their cultivation, and which were constituted into his landed estate—legitimate sphere of interest and political authority that obtained recognition of the formal sovereign. Sometimes, again, self-cultivating agricultural tribes and clans, such as the Jats occupied villages and distributed the revenue equally over ploughs and over cultivated areas, the headman collecting it from each household of the land-owning community (bhaichara) for payment to the formal sovereign. Such was

the fluent agrarian situation at the end of the 18th century. In the Maratha territory the farming system was widely adopted, and the demands became oppressive and arbitrary.

Several tendencies emerged towards the end of the 18th century that increasingly shaped the agrarian organisation. First, the Akbari standard of assessment of one-third of the produce of the land (together with a commission of one-tenth) gradually yielded place to one-half with additional abwabs whose variety and arbitrariness depended upon the collector in the first place, and in the second place, upon the uncertainty of jagirdari or ijaradari possession. Second, the payment in kind yielded place to payment in cash, shifting the risks due to price fluctuations from the collectors, farmers and landlords to the peasantry. Third, the period of disorder or anarchy led to the establishment of an intimate connection between political authority and management of the land, including collection of land revenue, leading both to the disintegration of the village community and obliteration of proprietary interests or tenant rights of the peasantry. Fourth, the development of sub-infeudation and the presence of a hierarchy of revenue collecting proprietary and sub-proprietary rights in the land not only depressed the status of the actual tillers of the soil but also obscured the nature of relations between the revenue administration and the peasantry, so as to make indistinguishable the difference between zamindari and ryotwari, that in the British regime formed the basis of the land revenue system. Fifth, the superimposition on the agricultural society of a motley class of intermediaries—the descendants of old Hindu Rajas, court favourites, soldiers, speculators and adventurers—aggravated the cleavage between various grades of interests in the land, and stereotyped rackrenting and eviction, especially as the demands from the superior authority became importunate and excessive. Finally, not even the skeleton of the elaborate revenue-collecting staff of the Mughuls, with Amils, Tehsildars and Qanungos, remained in the farmed districts while in others the zamindars, created often by sanads, collected the revenues.

It was obviously difficult for the early British administrators to unravel the tangled skein of the chaotic land system, which was rendered worse confounded by disastrous droughts and famines. Mughul imperial and viceregal authority could not assert itself effectively in Bengal, especially in the outlying areas even upto the 18th century,



and a part of Bengal that passed into the hands of the English Company in 1765 had never been subject to the Mughul revenue system. The powerful Hindu zamindars, known as the Barabhuiya group who until the middle of the 17th century resisted the Mughuls, were founders of ancient homes in eastern and southern part of the delta while in the centre and south-west the Rajas of Vishnupur, Birbhum, Nadia and Burdwan continued to hold the position of hereditary territorial magnates. Neither Murshid Kuli Khan nor Warren Hastings nor Lord Cornwallis could ignore the proprietary rights of several such Rajas and zamindars, who by imperial firman accepted the obligation to pay specified revenues and ruled as territorial chiefs but often became as independent as they could even up to the advent of the British. The Permanent Settlement of the East India Company was made with both the big and powerful zamindars or Rajas and assignees who came to be called Zamindars as well as with many small holders, especially in the eastern districts of Bengal, who could put forward proprietary claims. The Company itself owed its legal position within the Mughul Empire through the acquisition of full-fledged zamindari rights and functions in Calcutta and the 24 Parganas. Their strong bias in favour of zamindars invested with "the proprietary rights of the soil" as counterparts of British landlords and of the mortgage, and transfer of land, set the pattern of their revenue policy. There were also other important considerations such as the rapacious demand of the Directors in London, who had false views of the fertility and wealth of Bengal, the stability of revenues, the need of winning over a contented landholding class to the British side, the financial deficit caused by the Rohilla and Mysore wars and above all, the need of reclamation and security in Hindustan where Lord Cornwallis saw "one-third of the Company's territory now a jungle inhabited only by wild beasts". Lord Cornwallis created both a new landlord class and a landless class simultaneously, especially as the ryots' rights to fixity of tenure and rent rates and their customary privileges were nullified. Rackrenting and eviction which became the flagrant abuses of the Mughul system after the death of Akbar were renewed in Bengal throughout the first half of the 19th century. Rentals rose to between one-third and nine-sixteenths of the gross produce as observed by Colebrook. These were aggravated by the increase of population, the intensified competition for holdings, the absence of any definition of the rights of the ryots and the disintegration of the old purgana rent rates. The objective of Lord Corn-

wallis to fix the ryot's rents according to the rates existing at the time of the perpetual settlement was completely nullified. The social revolution in the countryside was ably forecast by Sir Thomas Munro in 1824 : "We erroneously think that all that is necessary for the permanent settlement of a country is that government should limit its own demand . . . But nothing can be more unfounded than this opinion, or mischievous in its operation ; if some hundreds of proprietary ryots are made to pay their public rents to zamindars, they will soon lose their independence, become his tenants, and probably end by sinking into a class of labourers. This internal change, this village revolution, changes everything and throws both influence and property into new hands ; it deranges the order of society, it depresses one class of men for the sake of raising another." The effects of this revolution were aggravated by the ruin of old established semi-royal families, who defaulted and were sold up. In 1798 the Permanent System was ordered to be introduced by Lord Wellesley also to Madras, where, however, the attempt was unsuccessful due to the absence of landholders. There the ryotwari system was pressed for by the local officials. Here the free transfer of land, the entry of middle-class and money-lending interests into agriculture and the disintegration of the village community as an organised group have been responsible for the social revolution in the countryside. The modern settlement in the South dating from 1855 differs from Munro's in giving the ryot absolute freedom to relinquish his land, which destroyed the nature of a coparcenary community, that all along maintained the rights of entail, pre-emption or pre-occupation as well as rights over the common lands and the waste. Yet all common meadows and forests (samudayam) were not distributed among the ryots, and the autonomy of village administration and economic management was maintained in greater vigour and strength in South India than elsewhere. Conversely, the restoration of village communities and panchayats began much earlier here under the British regime and was also more successful.

The Moslem conquest of India initiated vast changes in the social structure and ideals of Hinduism and also in the patterns of beliefs and faiths of both Hinduism and Islam. Such changes were due to the fact that the Moslems, unlike the Yavanas, Sakas, Kushanas, Hunas, Abhiras and other invaders of the past, would not accept any form of Hinduism, rejected Indianisation and hardly lived on the land except



as jagirdars, revenue farmers and assignees without being socially assimilated with the people. Given preferential treatment in the army and various administrative services, they lived largely in the cities and towns. But there were also Hindu landholders, Rais, Ranas, Thakurs and Chaudharis, as well as revenue officials, khuts and Muqaddams who enjoyed several concessions in the Turko-Afghan state. Normally, the affairs of administration of a vast country could not be carried on without the cooperation of indigenous Hindu agencies, whether Princes, landholders or village officials, who realised the revenue. It did not take long for subject India to challenge and transform the racial outlook of the Semitic and Central Asian peoples, for Hinduism and Islam to come to a complete rapprochement through the stimulus and inspiration of the Hindu bhakti and the Muslim sufi movements. These began as egalitarian devotional cults and ended by reforming orthodoxy. Yet even now the forcible conversion to Islam, on the one hand, and the rigid, uncompromising Hindu taboos and prohibitions in respect of social intercourse, with the new Mlechhas as social defence mechanisms, on the other, have left their impress upon the social attitudes of the two communities.

The British conquest of India did not raise the problems of religion, caste or the conduct of life, but from the very beginning assumed a pattern of economic exploitation of the people as a whole. Such exploitation of a whole race from a distance was a phase of European economic imperialism and disintegration of the ancient economic system of Asia. Under the old system India till the 16th century had been not only the nursing mother of Asia, nourishing her different countries with rice, wheat, sugar and raw cotton, but also the industrial workshop of civilisation, producing a prodigious quantity of cotton and silk goods for the markets spreading from the Indian archipelago in the East to Europe in the West, from the shores of the Caspian Sea to the coasts of Mozambique and Madagascar.

### **Development of British Capitalistic Enterprise in India**

World economic unity was first achieved with the systematic contacts between Asia and Europe as the result of Portuguese, Dutch and British maritime adventures from the 16th century. In this structure of international intercourse India occupied the central position as she supplied foodgrains to different parts of Asia and cloth, silk and luxury goods to every part of the civilised world;

and directed to her own shores the entire world current of the precious metals, replenished by the Spanish conquest of Peru and Mexico, for being coined into Indian money. The continuous flow of gold and silver greased the wheels of Indian economy, and kept these moving fast to the benefit of all economic classes, especially the producers of cloth, silk and other luxury goods for foreign markets. The new international economic structure was, however, developed from the mid-18th century with Holland and Britain playing the central roles and transforming the economy of the whole of South Asia by their capitalistic enterprise and commercial and political hegemony. British capitalistic evolution in India had its first authentic beginning in the coastal fringes of Bengal, Madras and Bombay. The Charter Acts of 1813 and 1833 form the most important signposts in this development.

The beginning of the 19th century witnessed the abolition of the East India Company's monopoly in Indian trade with the enactment of the Charter Act of 1813 and the accrual of the rights of the British citizens to trade and hold land in India. Thenceforward, private merchants and traders could explore and develop the Indian market for British-made goods, the East India Company's hands being too much tied with political activities. Moreover, the Company had misgivings now and then that the destruction of Indian manufactures would ultimately lead to the diminution of remittances on private or public account and loss of revenue. Private English traders and industrialists would harbour no such fears and scruples. The first decades of the 19th century also saw the beginning of the virtual ruin of the Indian textile industry. The export to England of Indian cotton and silk goods was still being maintained at a very high level amounting annually at the opening of the 19th century to about £ 2.5 millions as compared with about £ 1 million at the beginning of the 18th century. Yet the way was being prepared in every manner towards dislocation and extinction of the handloom industry. By 1820 the power-loom industry was getting itself established in England and it took only another quarter of a century for the Lancashire industry to become pre-eminent enough to justify the boast of Sydney Smith (1845) : "The great object for which the Anglo-Saxon race appears to have been created is the making of calico." Meanwhile, several Chambers of Commerce founded by the British in Bombay, Bengal and Madras between 1834-36 were collecting in-



formation about the customs and tastes of the Indian people in order to push British textile goods. The Indian handloom industry simultaneously lost both the British and the home markets. The former was lost due to prohibitory and sumptuary laws against the use of printed Indian calicos in England that were being enacted since 1701 and 1720 while in India the competition with British machine-made goods, the destruction of Indian shipping, the exemption of the British merchants from the payment of custom duties, transit duties and other charges and the establishment of British monopoly in the Indian cloth trade virtually destroyed the Indian handicraft industry. At the same time, the merchant class was hard hit by the differential trade monopoly and extraordinary privileges, granted by the Mughul Emperor and his viceroys from time to time in favour of the European and especially English merchants and factories "as if they were even more than the natives." As early as 1788 Lord Cornwallis could state : "Merchants from the upper part of Hindustan were in fact expelled and those concerned with exports by sea discouraged."

### **De-industrialisation and Rise of the Urban Bourgeoisie and the Rural Proletariat**

Upto the mid-18th century Indian traders and merchants invested their capital in a large variety of handicrafts and luxury industries and in the vast inland trade and export of cloth goods, saltpetre and articles of luxury. The total annual export of cotton goods by sea from India alone may be estimated as between 50 and 60 million square yards in the 17th century. Some of these merchants grew to great political importance. The influence of the Jagat Seth and of Umi Chand on the politics of Bengal before the Battle of Plassey and of Arjunji Nathjis in Western India is well known. When different powers were contending for supremacy in Bengal and Gujerat, it was the service of these Rothschilds of India which paved the way for British supremacy. The big mercantile kothis (houses) established a virtual monopoly over large regions and freely lent capital to the English factories and merchants. As a matter of fact, the Jagat Seths and Nathjis, bankers and agents of the Company, were directly responsible for the influence in the Delhi and Provincial Courts. But the days of the Jagat Seths were soon over since the East India Company's servants, whose official salaries were deemed inadequate

claimed and obtained from the Nawabs the monopoly not only of duty-free foreign trade but also of internal trade of the three Provinces, and before long supplanted the Indian merchants even in small towns and villages. In 1765 a group of zamindars petitioned that "the Factories of English Gentlemen are many and their Gomashtas are in all places and in every village almost throughout the Province of Bengal that they trade in Linnen, Chunam, Mustard seed, Tobacco, Turmeric, Oil, Rice, Hemp, Gunnies, Wheat, in short all kinds of Grains, Linnen and whatever other commodities are produced in the country. That in order to purchase these articles, they force the Money on the ryots, and have by these oppressive means bought these goods at a low rate, they oblige the Inhabitants and shopkeepers to take them at a high price, exceeding what is paid in the markets. That they do not pay the customs due to the Sircar, but are guilty of all manner of seditious and injurious acts, for instance . . .

"There is now scarce anything of worth left in the country."

Mir Kasim protested against the English "violence and oppressions" in the countryside and generally against their inland trading free of customs to which the Indian merchants and traders were liable. He executed two Seths who were accomplices of the Company and also drowned Ramnarayan in the Bhagirathi with a bag of sand, and attacked the English factories at Patna and Kasimbazar. The sequel was the battle of Buxar where he was routed. Buxar led to the establishment of the Company, in the words of Caraccoli, the biographer of Clive, as "the most formidable commercial republic known in the world since the demolition of Carthage." Thus the meanest shopkeepers of Bengal were ousted by the English who "could undersell the natives in their own markets".

The policy of Lord Cornwallis also favoured the zamindars and revenue farmers against the merchants. It was the new class of zamindars created by the Permanent Settlement, who became the most important allies of the British rule. As Cornwallis himself indicates, "In case of a foreign invasion, it is a matter of least importance, considering the means by which we keep possession of this country, that the proprietors of lands should be attached to us from motives of self-interest." With the gradual decline of trade and industry in the country the intelligent middle class sought entry into



the Company's services and Bentinck's educational policy filled the gap left by the all-round decline of industrial and trading activities that robbed the people of their means of livelihood. At the same time, the belief and tradition were implanted, especially in Bengal, that men can gain social prestige only by acquiring land and becoming zamindars. Yet there was the shining example of Dwarkanath Tagore (1794-1846), ancestor of Rabindranath Tagore, who was the first entrepreneur, owner of a colliery and many indigo factories, planter of sugar-cane and founder of a business house that had connections with the West. But large-scale industrial development and estate agriculture for Indians had to encounter insuperable obstacles. As India was converted into a raw-material region even capitalistic agriculture of silk, indigo, tea, cotton, coffee and rubber became a British monopoly. This made even more acute the process of rural unemployment and pauperisation. Yet oblivious of these George Thompson was preaching in India (1842) that it was "honourable, humane and patriotic commerce that embraced the dearest interests of England, the social elevation of millions in India and the personal freedom of millions elsewhere."

At the bottom of the social fabric the increase of population, fractionalisation of land and rackrenting were producing the landless proletariat in large numbers for the first time. In other countries, these migrated to towns with the rise of modern industry. But in India industrialisation was discouraged for several decades more, and the first migration of agricultural labourers was from Bengal (from the precarious districts of Midnapore, Bankura and Burdwan), Chhota Nagpur, Malabar and Coromandel, to the French and British colonial plantations across the Indian Ocean. Overseas migration started about the year 1819 with the movement of industrial coolies to Mauritius and Bourbon from the ports of Calcutta and Madras. (Prior to this St. Helena received ten slave labourers from Malabar in 1557, and this movement seemed to have persisted till the end of the century.) This movement expanded later on filling the vacuum caused by the abolition of slavery in 1833, creating new colonial wealth and transforming British tropical colonies suffering from a chronic scarcity of labour into prosperous gardens. How easily it is now forgotten that the emigrant Indian workers, petty traders and merchants were formerly the backbone of the economic structure of whole regions of the British tropics!

### Role of the British Nabobs in Western Industrial and Commercial Revolution

The Nabobs of Bengal bred more Nabobs of the British Empire, in the West Indies and South Africa. Though they were "pursuproud barbarians" and attacked every borough in England, it was their newly-acquired wealth which financed the Industrial Revolution in England and her colonial expansion across the Atlantic. The arrival of a prodigious quantity of Bengal silver, after the Battle of Plassey greatly increased the circulating capital, the velocity of money circulation and the number of banks which stimulated both technological invention and investment in industries on an unprecedented scale in Great Britain. Great Britain was thus launched on the road to industrial supremacy for half a century by the "plunder of India" in the words of Adam Smith.

Chatham observed in 1770: "For some years past there has been an influx of wealth into the country which has been attended with many fatal consequences because it has not been the regular, natural product of labour and industry. The riches of Asia have been poured in upon us and have brought with them not only Asiatic luxury but I fear, Asiatic principles of government. Without connections, without any natural interest in the soil, the importers of foreign gold have forced their way into by such a torrent of private corruption as no private hereditary fortune can resist." The wealth that flowed into Parliament (?) of Britain was ill-gotten, and the shaking of "the pagoda tree" and picking up its golden fruits caused much misery and suffering to the Indian people. Six years later Adam Smith observed in respect of the administration of India by the East India Company that there was never a government so "perfectly indifferent to happiness or misery of their subjects."

The gradual conquest and consolidation of British power in India accompanied the dwindling of India's export trade in calicoes and silks. The balance of trade which had been in favour of India until the close of the 18th century now gradually began to turn against her. India's most considerable industry, viz. weaving, was crushed due to the imposition of British tariffs, the loss of continental markets due to the French Revolution and the Berlin decrees, the introduction of mechanical inventions in the British textile industry and the competition in India itself with the products of the power-loom. With the



destruction of cotton and silk weaving and spinning India began to lean more heavily on agriculture. The Select Committee of the House of Lords observed in 1830: "The chief manufactures of India having been supplanted to a great extent by the manufactures of England, not only in the market of this country but in that of India itself, it has become an object of deepest interest to improve the productions of the soil." A year ago Lord Bentinck referred in his minute to "the gloomy picture of the effect of a commercial revolution, productive of so much present suffering to numerous classes in India and hardly to be paralleled in the history of commerce." It was the drained wealth of India which supplied the capital for the Industrial and Commercial Revolution in England and the development of England's extensive mercantile marine and powerful fleet and of her colonial empire in the new world. It was on the destruction of India's industry and commerce that the development of Britain's industrial and commercial supremacy was founded.

### **The War of Independence, 1857**

The misery of the Indian people, aggravated by population increase and the loss of employment at the loom during the "vacation from agriculture", the confiscation of estates of certain landowners and resumption of rent-free tenures, the bitterness of anti-British feeling provoked by the annexation of Oudh and the ill-treatment of the Houses of the Mughul Emperor and the Peshwa and the growing alarm of the conservative section of the Indian population at the abolition of the old customs and Europeanisation, all these contributed to the rebellion of 1857, which is usually called in British histories of India as the Sepoy Mutiny. The national revolt threw up some great leaders, such as Tantia Tope, Nana Sahib, Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi, and Azimullah Khan. But the Indian soldiers had no modern arms nor had they control over the telegraph system and the postal communication. From the very beginning the rising was restricted and localised and could not be coordinated at all. Both sides fought with cruelty and even savagery. This "war of independence", as James Outram called it, represents the dividing line between the exploitative policy of the East India Company and the enlightened ideal of the British Empire. This was formulated in the proclamation of Queen Victoria which was regarded in the last generation by the Indian peoples as their Magna Charta.

## Growth of National Idealism

Politically, India was already integrated by the time the Crown and the British Parliament assumed responsibility for the government of India. The development of the railway and telegraph system and of a highly elaborate centralised administration of the country by the various all-India services, knit the different provinces together. The Universities, started in the various provincial capitals, and the press as well as the common psychology of the literate middle class, that was benefiting from employment in the public services thrown open to them, were also unifying the country. Like modern education and the use of English all over India, the system of the judiciary and the police were also potent binding agencies. For a whole generation the English-educated people, especially in Bengal, were socially Anglicised and thrown off their feet, profoundly influenced as they were by early Christian missionaries and educators, such as Carey, Derozio and David Hare. But soon Western education progressed far enough to develop an adequate appreciation of Indian values and institutions. Raja Rammohan Roy was India's first great modern, who played a dominant role in the spread of Western education, promulgation of social reforms and recovery of ancient spiritual values amidst the various orthodoxies and superstitions of the 19th century.



## CHAPTER XLV

### NATIONALISM AND FREEDOM

#### **Cultural and Religious Movements Opposing Social Anglicization**

The progress of the 19th century saw the deepening and expansion of several social, cultural and religious movements in India that all converged towards the defence of the people against social Anglicization and conquest and the development of Indian nationalism. The Brahmo-Samaj, led by the Tagores and Keshab Chandra Sen (1838-1884) greatly stimulated the feeling of Indian nationality and spread the gospel of social justice and equality throughout India. Keshab's victories over the Christian missionaries in many controversies fostered a legitimate national pride. The rehabilitation of Hindu myths and rituals in his Navavidhan or the New Dispensation also promoted a constructive social and religious idealism. An institution called the Hindu Mela that met annually from 1867 to 1880 in Calcutta promoted an ardent nationalism and patriotic endeavour for the resuscitation of Indian arts and crafts. Rabindra Nath Tagore (1816-1941), then a boy of 18, wrote patriotic songs for the Mela that became a focus of deeply-felt national stirrings and aspirations. Devendra Nath Tagore, Raj Narain Bose, Siva Nath Shastri, Ananda Mohan Bose and Naba Gopal Mitra became the leaders of the new idea of resurgent nationality in Bengal inspired by a lofty ethical ideal. From the Punjab emerged the socio-religious movement of the Arya Samaj founded by Dayananda Saraswati (1827-1883). He stoutly defended Hinduism against Christian and Muslim propaganda in his Satyarth-Prakasa and sought to create an Indian nation on the basis of a common religion and spiritual culture. It was he who first used the term "swaraj", later on adopted for the Congress by Dadabhai Naoroji and advocated Hindi as a national language of India. From him came also to Northern India the repudiation of false gods and rituals that replaced the contemplation and worship of the Supreme Being. The Arya Samaj promoted the spirit of caste liberalism, inter-caste marriage and widow remarriage and promulgated the use of suddhi or reconversion of the Hindus for the strengthening of Hindu society.

From Madras and Varanasi spread the Theosophical Movement under the leadership of Dr. Annie Besant, the greatest European woman who lived in India and devoted her lifetime for the cause of India, and her spiritual culture and political freedom. She came to India in 1893 at the age of fifty-six. Theosophy re-interpreted India's metaphysical truths and values from a universalist standpoint and reoriented them as eminently suitable for the spiritual re-education and enlightenment of the advanced peoples of the modern world. Indian wisdom no longer needed apology or defence, but was expounded as revelation for the salvage of modern civilization. Annie Besant speaking from a thousand platforms reminded Indians that they had a great spiritual mission for the future of mankind. She was one of the greatest orators of the world. Her speeches and writings profoundly stirred the imagination of the Indian intellectuals, many of whom in the different provinces worked under her leadership, setting up theosophical societies in the major cities and towns.

More deeply, more spontaneously did the Ramakrishna Mission of Belur move the heart and soul of new India. Ramakrishna (1834-1886) was a saint and sage of India's traditional pattern, a person who had seen God and constantly communed with Him. But he differed fundamentally from old saints and sages in that his God belonged to all faiths which he cultivated and nurtured in his personal worship and devotion. Living towards the end of the 19th century when the vast modern currents of Christianity and deism of the Brahmo-Samaj, mingled with Bengal's traditional Sakta and Vaisnava mysticism, the sage of Dakshinesvara reached a summit of universal mysticism, unparalleled in the world history of religion. He worshipped Siva and Durga, Kali and Krsna, Ramachandra and Sita, and was simultaneously steeped in the Absolute of the Vedanta. But the strongest paradox is that this unsophisticated and unostentatious man of God, around whom gathered the nineteenth-century intellectuals of Calcutta, worshipped Christ and Mohammad. Ramakrishna's religion was beatific vision, his worship the perennial realization of the immanence of the Divine in every object and creation, his whole nature the image of God in all its purity, love and beauty. Other people had spoken of one god sought by all, though along different ways. But when he affirmed that he followed the paths of the different sects and creeds and practised all religions, Hinduism, Islam and Chri-



stianity, there were a strange passion and certitude from which there could be no escape even of a scoffer and an iconoclast.

Ramakrishna had a young and noble disciple, Vivekananda, (1863-1902), who with his strong bias towards Western science, democracy and socialism raised Indian nationalism to new dimensions. He remarkably combined in himself the roles of the ascetic monk, the ardent nationalist and the organizer of a vast humanitarian movement for meting out fair deal and justice to Daridra Narayana, God among the hungry, ignorant and suffering millions of India. Out of the anguished heart of the compassionate monk emerged the grandest and the most constructive synthesis in modern Indian Renaissance, viz. the fusion of the ancient Indian metaphysical principle of identification of self and cosmos with the ethics and politics of social justice, equality and altruism. Vivekananda was India's first socialist. But his socialism, like that of Gandhi a few decades later, is of the humane Indian brand, based not on economic class struggle and revolution, but on social goodwill and sympathy and on a collective levelling up, and not levelling down, of the authentic values of Indian life and culture.

Vivekananda breathed life into the nation's corpse and fire into its soul through his call of dedication to Universal Sakti—his dark blue Mother of Infinite Power and goodness who swallows up all blemishes and weaknesses, individual and national. He became the adored hero of modern Indian revolutionaries and underground resisters who preferred the gallows to servitude. He was alone among the modern Indian saints and mystics to identify religion with what Paul Tillich calls "courage to be," so indispensable to a subject people to galvanize the whole nation.

### The Congress and the Nationalist Movement

The 19th century Renaissance spurred and guided by the great moderns Ram Mohan, Bankim Chandra, Dayananda, Vivekananda, Annie Besant and Tagore passed on into the resurgent political movement of the Indian National Congress. The British Indian Association, the precursor of the Congress, was founded in 1876 in Calcutta by Surendra Nath Banerjee (1848-1925) who devoted to the national cause his unique gifts of oratory, great vigour and personal charm for a whole lifetime. The Indian National Congress gave modern India for the first time "the conception of a united India, derived from the

inspiration of Mazzini", to use his own words. The rallying symbol and inspiring hymn of the nationalist movement was supplied by what later became the National Anthem of India, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's "Bande Mataram" taken from his historic novel, "Anandamath."

The national hymn "Bande Mataram" is translated as follows by Aurobinda Ghosh:

Mother, I bow to thee  
Rich with thy hurrying streams,  
Bright with thy orchard gleams,  
God with the winds of delight,  
Dark fields waving, Mother of Might  
Mother free,  
Glory of moonlight dreams,  
Over thy branches and lordly streams,  
Clad in the blossoming trees,  
Mother, giver of ease,  
Laughing, low and sweet.

Thou art wisdom, thou art law,  
Thou our heart, our soul, our breath,  
Thou the love device, the awe,  
In our hearts that conquers death,  
Thine the strength that nerves the arm,  
Thine the beauty, thine the charm,  
Every image made divine,  
In our temples is but Thine.

The genius of Bankim Chandra (1834-1886), the father of modern Indian fiction, transformed nationalism into religion and the karmayoga of the Bhagavad Gita into self-forgetful, patriotic service for the motherland. From the very beginning the ideal of political emancipation had a deep ethical and spiritual note, especially in Bengal and Maharashtra, Surendra Nath Banerjee's early stress on the life of Mazzini and the Italian freedom movement nurtured a profound idealistic spirit. Thanks to the bracing intellectual and moral climate of Bengal in the last quarter of the 19th century, Indian nationalism rooted itself in the ethical demand of substitution of man's freedom for slavery following the teachings of Rousseau and the Encyclopaedi-



sts in France and of Burke in England. Indian nationalism had also a sociological meaning from the very start, basing itself on the principle of a free nationhood, for enabling Indian spiritual culture to offer its authentic contribution to world civilization. This strand of thought was derived from Mazzini. Simultaneously, the idea and movement of nationalism were enriched by the social-religious revolt of Keshab-chandra Sen and the Brahmo-Samaj and the gospel of service to the poor, humble and starving god of Vivekananda. The Congress, the forum of the new aspiring and eloquent middle class, dubbed by Dalhousie as a "microscopic minority", gradually gained power in the resurgent nationalist world, deriving its support and inspiration from the liberal traditions of Bentham and Mill, Gladstone and John Bright. The terrorist movement of Ireland had also its lessons for the Indian nationalists. By 1900 the methods of constitutional agitation and of entry into the rarefied atmosphere of the Legislative Councils advocated by the great Congress liberals, from Surendra Nath Banerjee, Pheroze Shah Mehta, Ramesh Chandra Dutta and Anand Mohan Bose to Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Dadabhai Naoroji and Madan Mohan Malavya were found futile and demoralising. As early as 1893-94 wrote Aurobindo in the *Indu Prakash* (Bombay) : "The Congress in Bengal is dying of consumption; annually its proportions sink into greater insignificance. The desire for a nobler and more inspiring patriotism is growing more intensive. This is an omen of good hope for the future, for what Bengal thinks tomorrow, India will be thinking tomorrow week."

### **The Rise of Militant Nationalism and the Revolutionary Movement**

In 1896 Bal Gangadhar Tilak during a terrible famine in Bombay advocated a no-rent campaign and clearly formulated the goal of Swaraj in preference to reform in administration and "the policy of mendicancy" followed by the Congress. He also initiated the Shivaji and Ganapati festivals for arousing national pride and enthusiasm among the Maharashtra people. Militant nationalism thus grew side by side with constitutional nationalism. In Bengal, the political and revolutionary movements were saturated with national idealism which vigorously expressed itself in a lively interest in folk culture, in rural life and institutions, folk songs and village arts and cottage industries.

In 1905 came the Partition of Bengal that more than any other British decision created a yawning gulf between government and the people which was in fact never healed until the British quit in 1947. The nationalist movement in Bengal was enriched and enlarged into the movement for Indian Swadeshi, backed by the boycott of British goods, for Indian village autonomy and economic self-sufficiency and for Indian national education. Lord Curzon's Partition of Bengal that was later evoked directly led to the abandonment of the "mendicant policy" of the Congress and the rise of militant revolutionary nationalism.

Gradually, the extremist wing of the Congress led by Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, Lajpat Rai, Aurobindo Ghosh and Khaparde spread the mass movement initiated in Bengal to the whole of India. Swarajya, Swadeshi and National Education were now assimilated into the basic political programme of the entire country. Tilak said, "Swarajya is my birthright and I must have it." Bipin Chandra Pal, who was the political philosopher and prophet of the movement said, "Nationalism is not a mere political programme. Nationalism is a religion that has come from God. Nationalism is a creed in which you shall have to live. Nationalism is immortal; Nationalism cannot die." Aurobindo exclaimed: "Can the wealth of the whole world be put in the scales over against liberty and honour? A subject people has no soul, just as a slave can have none . . . A man without a soul is a mere animal. A nation without a soul is only a herd of dumb-driven cattle."

### **A Spiritual Movement of Nationality and Humanity**

While the technique of economic and social boycott of the British and the establishment of gymnasia and resistance centres throughout Bengal transformed the nationalist movement into an underground revolutionary movement, cultural nationalism received a great accession of strength from the movement of national education adapted to the requirements of freedom and of countrywide renovation of folk culture and rehabilitation of village life and institutions, disintegrated by the zamindari system and British centralization. The National Council of Education established in Bengal in 1906 as a protest against the type of University education that was manufacturing only clerks and "slaves" and which was led by veteran scholars and educationists such as Satish Chandra Mukerji, Gooroodas Banerji,



Rabindranath Tagore, Rashbihari Ghosh, A. Chaudhury, Hirendranath Dutta and Benoy Kumar Sarkar, fostered a new intellectual freedom, a zeal for work among the masses in city slums and depressed rural areas, and a "back to the village" movement. Ten years later the Benares Hindu University was founded with the object of promoting the study and conservation of Indian culture. During this period, too, again from Bengal came the movement for the revival of Indian art, which utilised the developed techniques and skills of the West to recover and reorientate in the new social context the motifs and formal values of ancient and medieval Indian art, especially painting. The artistic renaissance, led by Abanindranath Tagore, Nandalal Bose and Asit Kumar Haldar, was soon flourishing in various art schools and centres throughout India, helping to re-educate the Indian eye in the perception of beauty, after many decades swamped with cheap and shoddy specimens of European art, and also discovering new forms of artistic expression.

During this whole period, Gokhale observed, "What Bengal thinks today India thinks tomorrow." The Indian national movement deepened and extended itself into a spiritual movement of nationality and humanity. The philosophical exponent of the new national idealism was Bepin Chandra Pal who coming out of the jails made hurricane tours throughout India. He was the best orator that Indian nationalism produced. He proclaimed the determination of the Indian people "to become autonomous, absolutely free of the absolute control." Such determination came from the peoples' "dear, deep, vital and divine" faith in Indian humanity. Faith in the people, faith in the genius of the nation and faith in God were harmoniously welded together by this original and vigorous thinker who fashioned the ideological foundations of the resurgent nationalist school that no longer pinned its faith on the sense of justice in the British. He observes, "The Mother is the spirit of India. The outsider knows her as India. But we, her children, know her even today as our fathers and their fathers had done before, for countless generations, as a Being, as a Manifestation of Prakriti, as our Mother and the Mother of our Race. The cult of the Mother among us is by no means a political cult. The real cult of the Mother among us is part of our general spiritual culture. It is the idealisation and spiritualisation of the collective life and functions of our society. It is the apotheosis of our Race-spirit and National Organism. It is organically related to our highest

conceptions of Humanity. The true cult of the Mother is as much a cult of Nationality as of Humanity. And it is because of this essential universalism that this cult of the Mother is so vital a part of our highest religious symbolism and spiritual culture.

### **Mahatma Gandhi's Ideal and Procedure of Satyagraha and Non-Violence**

The leadership of the Congress gradually and inevitably shifted to Mahatma Gandhi who came from South Africa to India in 1914 and imported into Indian politics the novel techniques of application of truth, soul force and non-violence fashioned by him in the strenuous mass struggle of the Indians against political injustice and social oppression in South Africa. In 1920 the Congress launched under Gandhi's leadership the non-cooperation movement, involving resignations of Government posts, withdrawal from schools and colleges and boycott of the elections. Satyagraha became for the first time in the history of world revolutions, a formative and directive factor in mass movements. Gandhi appealed to moral power against injustice and inequality, without anger and without malice, and harnessed for the Indian freedom movement at its most critical phase all the spiritual values of her immortal civilization. The moral ardour and discipline of non-violence of Jainism in particular were blended with the modern teaching of Tolstoy and Thoreau of the West for a political-cum-spiritual struggle against oppression and violence. Not less significant than Gandhian politics was Gandhian economics, with its emphasis on a humane socialism, grounded not in class conflict but on amity and goodwill, simplification of living, and decentralization, symbolized by the return to the spinning wheel and the panchayat raj. Let the prophet of India's freedom speak about the purpose of Satyagraha: "Satyagraha is the vindication of truth, not by the infliction of suffering upon the opponent but upon oneself. It is nothing but 'tapasya' for truth, the law of suffering. It is a force that may be used by individuals as well as communities. It may be used as well in political as in domestic affairs. Its universal applicability is a demonstration of its permanence and invincibility. Satyagraha is love-force or soul-force. It is the Way, the Truth, the Life. It is a force which, if it became universal, would revolutionize social ideals."



One of his remarkable methods of Satyagraha was his fasting for limited periods or even "to the death" for the objectives of social and political persuasion of opponents that had a tremendous impact on the mind of the masses of India. Gandhi undertook fifteen fasts of which at least three had immediate, extraordinary success. One persuaded Ambedkar and the untouchables to give up their claims for separation from the Hindu community through separate political representation that the British rulers encouraged them to demand; the second ended the serious communal rioting in Bengal; and the third compelled the Government of India to pay Pakistan Rs. 55 crores, a debt withheld for payment because of Pakistan's aggression against Kashmir.

With his isolation and loneliness before God, Mahatma Gandhi led the Indian nation and the Congress committing and subsequently rejecting "Himalayan blunders" on several occasions, and launching non-violent mass constructive programmes from time to time with sudden and dramatic revelations of truth. Often did he strongly differ from his colleagues Rajendra Prasad, Patel and Nehru and from the Working Committee of the Congress and listen in silence and isolation to the still, small voice of God. A God-loving individual could not be overpowered by a standardized crowd or mass mentality and the vote of the majority. Gandhi is the supreme and shining example of democratic leadership in India, standing for right rather than for might, standing alone in his profound detachment from self and from the nation before his universal Self or God. Above all, his procedure of Satyagraha, "soul force" and non-violence was remarkably effective in Indian mass movements and educated and revived the whole nation. It compelled the British to exercise caution and restraint against the Indian freedom-fighters, because of the moral forces which the non-violent struggle released. Lord Irwin was the first to realise that non-violence was a most potent and elusive weapon against any established authority and not merely against the British who were cruel and ruthless in many ways. Gandhi's new techniques have far deeper and more extensive applications in social and political transformations than are imagined in the present generation. As years pass and the world gets more conflictful and dangerous, the weapon of non-violence and collective civil disobedience for the sake of "truth" will have a greater significance as the only hope of the weak, the unprivileged and the disorganized

against the all-powerful state, the solace of the vanquished against military victors, the promise of the exploited against the exploiters and the pride of the outcaste against the *elite* in every society and civilization. Already the Gandhian tactics of non-violence have spread to many other parts of the world. In the French Empire Massignon's movement for obtaining justice from Governmental policies and integrating together Muslim, Jewish and Christian groups; in Italy Dorci's collective non-violent struggle and in the United States Martin Luther King's non-violent struggle for the removal of the racial disabilities and barriers of the Negroes represent empirically effective methods of social action, persuasion and conversion where other methods have failed.

### **The Revolutionary Leadership of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose**

Of a far different mould of temper and character was the leadership of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, sponsor and organizer of revolutionary activity that had a long history in India with its objective of overthrowing the British by terrorism and force. This goes back to Phadke, Chapekar brothers and Savarkar of Maharashtra, Bhagat Singh, Chandrasekhar Azad, Batukeswar Dutta and Raja Mahendra Pratap of U.P. and the vigorous Anusilan Samiti with its many branches among other independent secret societies of Bengal, set up or aided by P. Mitra, Surya Sen, Makhan Sen, Aurobindo Ghosh, Barin Ghosh and C. R. Das. The constitutional and the revolutionary forces worked together but hardly co-operated in the actual field of practical politics, generating a sense of rebellion, indomitable courage and martyrdom among all classes for the achievement of freedom. In the history of world revolutions, there has hardly been a more outstanding, dramatic figure than this courageous leader who ransacked the whole globe, from Berlin to Tokyo and from Rome to Singapore, in order to harness forces for a War of Indian Independence, and to strike the final blow at his adversary in Delhi. Netaji's Azad Government, founded in Japan in 1943 with the assistance of Rashbehari Bose, won the allegiance of some two million Indians in the Far East and was recognised by the Axis Powers. It adopted the slogans "Jai Hind" and "Delhi Chalo!" burning with the determination to fly the Indian tricolour on a victory parade in the ancient Red Fort of India's metropolis. It ruled the Andamans and Nicobars and also the Indian territory conquered by the Azad Hind



forces, including Kohima, Manipur and Vishnupur areas, comprising about 1,500 square miles. After the defeat of Japan, the principal officers of the Azad Hind forces were brought to India as prisoners for trial at the Red Fort in Delhi. This trial not only gave impetus to the revolutionary forces but also spread marked discontent and disaffection among the regulars. In August 1942, an upheaval, not unmixed with violence, took place throughout India after the incarceration of Gandhi and his associate Congress leaders. This as well as the sympathy of the Indian population with the Indian National Army, and with the naval risings in Bombay, Karachi and Madras in 1945 and 1946, ultimately led to the decision of the British, though not before the terrible famine in Bengal, which took a toll of fiftythree lakhs of lives, to "quit India", as demanded by the Congress Executive under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation.

### The Independence of India

The circumstances in India as well as the situation in world politics which led to the British evacuation of India were complex and unpredictable for a foreign colonial power. There was an immediate threat of the invasion of Eastern India by Subhas Bose's Azad Hind Forces. There had been grave dissatisfaction among the Congress leaders after the failure of the Cripps proposal in 1942. Churchill shamelessly declared six months before Cripps' writ that the Atlantic Charter did not apply to India. The Cripps offer in spite of its objective to set up a new "Indian Union" conceded to the Muslims that the Indian provinces with a Muslim majority could not only separately elect their own constitution-making bodies, but also have a separate treaty with the British Government. The Princes were also assured that the old treaty rights with the British were not to be "tampered with". All this pointed to the British intention to make sure of another spell of mastery through the traditional imperialistic divide and rule policy. Gandhi said in grim humour that India was not at all interested in a post-dated cheque on a failing bank. The masses were by this time prepared for suffering and sacrifice both by Gandhi's non-violent programme, the no-rent campaign and the non-cooperation movement spreading to established institutions as well as by the violent activities of the terrorist school during the thirties, coupled with the advocacy of violence by Subhas Chandra Bose and his Forward Bloc. Gandhi felt the pulse of the angry, frustrated

nation and dramatically coined at the critical hour the "Quit India" slogan demanding British abdication on pain of a revived civil disobedience campaign. The Congress High Command was put in jail.

The next few years were characterised by a simultaneous increase of tension between the Congress and the Muslim League and of undisguised suspicion of the British administration by the Congress. These became intense with the communal outbreaks in Bengal and U.P. in 1946. 1946 also saw a naval mutiny in Bombay harbour and Madras. "For the first time, the blood of men in the services and men in streets flowed together in a common cause," said the Manifesto of the Central Naval Strike Committee that took over the ships and barracks in Bombay. President Roosevelt gave full expression of the American view that India must be given independence and that quickly. The British after their experience of the naval mutiny and the aftermath of the trial of the principal officers of the Azad Hind Force in Delhi felt that the Indian army could no longer be fully relied upon for the maintenance of order in the case of open rebellion. Gandhi himself used the word "rebellion" when he formulated the "Quit India" resolution. "There is no question of one more chance. After all, this is open rebellion." The Muslim League extorting concessions after concessions for separation from the British with their "divide and rule" policy for decades was not satisfied with anything less than Pakistan. The Congress was compelled also to agree to concessions to the Muslim League in fear of "direct action" that they might launch with its probable consequences of tremendous mutual slaughter and bitterness. When in August 1946, Jinnah, known as Qaide Azam, or Saviour of the People, proclaimed the "direct action day" saying: "This day we bid goodbye to constitutional methods", he deliberately let loose vast unpredictable forces of Hindu-Muslim anger, fear and hatred that overwhelmed India from Lahore to Calcutta. For days together "the great killing" went on in Calcutta into whose sewers flowed the blood of thousands of butchered innocent men, women and children. The Congress itself in May 1947 proposed the partition of Punjab as the country's only alternative to bitter war between Hindus and Muslims with the British still in paramouncy.

### The Disasters of the Partition

The independence of India achieved with the consent of the British people and without bloodshed on August 15, 1947, brought with it the



Partition. The Partition of India was a disaster to the country. Gandhi, the Father of the Indian Nation, was wholeheartedly and adamantly opposed to partition. As Hindu-Muslim riots spread to all over India, Gandhi found Jinnah doing nothing to control the increasing communal madness and fury and the British politically lukewarm and morally bankrupt awaiting their abdication. He made, therefore, his last bid to Jinnah in offering full power to the Muslims for saving India's unity. But that lingering dream of unity was shattered by Jinnah's "two-nation" theory. Since only the forties Jinnah claimed that "the Muslims and Hindus are two major nations by any definition or test of a nation. By all the canons of international law we are a nation." The theory of two nations that seemed so blind and audacious until the early thirties, up to which time even very few Muslims took the idea of Pakistan seriously, was at last implemented. Not nationalism but rather anger and hatred gave birth to Pakistan as these waxed stronger and stronger in the wake of mass murders and collective hysteria. These became more frequent and barbarous as the Independence Day, August 15, 1947, was approaching.

Not satisfied with the demarcation of an independent, theocratic state at the cost of tremendous loss of Hindu and Muslim lives and great suffering due to displacement of the minorities, Jinnah tried to further Balkanise India by encouraging the Princes, most of whose territories were inside India, to proclaim their independence of the Indian government. On the accession of Kashmir to India, first Pathan tribesmen and then regular Pakistani troops were sent by Jinnah to Kashmir. The aggression was successfully resisted but Indian retaliation and victory were halted by Nehru and Patel due to the counsels of the peacemaker Gandhi. The sagacious and indomitable Vallabhbhai Patel in his turn did not permit the noxious grass to grow under his feet and took no time in successfully completing integration within the Indian territory. Inside India, the absorption of over 600 Indian states, pockets of feudalism, autocracy and social reaction, into the Indian Union has made the country, thanks to his foresight and statesmanship, larger and more vigorous than she was in many historic empires.

The Partition is not only a mistake but also a disaster for the future of both India and Pakistan. Feebleness on the north-western frontier, beyond the Indus, or foreign occupation of the Kabul and Indus valleys, the Punjab and Kashmir, has been the historic cause of the

country's disintegration and disruption of its civilization through the ages. The agreement between Pakistan and China and the occupation of Indian territory in Leh by China with Pakistan's connivance have recently underlined the vulnerability of India's and Pakistan's frontiers in the north-west. The Partition is doubly disastrous owing to the estrangement of the two neighbours, who have often made common cause in the fight for freedom in the long, chequered march of Indian history, and to the migration to India of about 12 million Hindus as refugees. So far West Bengal has accepted about 4 lakh displaced persons. The total number received represents roughly the combined population of the districts of Malda, West Dinajpur and Murshidabad. The Hindu minority in Pakistan suffers from serious economic and political discrimination and the influx of immigrants continues unabated at the rate of about 3,000 persons a day in some months. The incoming at Sealdah of passenger trains from Pakistan (called "the trains of tears"), full of hapless and homeless men, women and children, bears undoubted testimony to the deliberate policy of ruthless persecution and relentless squeezing out of the so-called "jimmis". This is a flagrant repudiation of both Pakistan's solemn pledge and obligation to the minorities.

The Partition thirdly is the denial of the most characteristic process of Indian history what Toynbee calls "social nemesis". This is the process of gradual assimilation and absorption of peoples, cultures and religions in the civilization of India not by the forces of conquest and racialism, so often encountered in the history of Europe, but by a spirit of universalism and intellectual communion.

### Religious Humanism of the 18th and 19th century Popular Saints

Even up to the middle of the 19th century when British education and trade first created the new upper middle class among the Hindus and Muslims in the cities and towns that later on fought so acrimoniously with each other for "loaves and fishes" from the British table, the rural masses, Hindu and Muslim alike, lived in social amity. The 18th and 19th centuries produced a galaxy of Muslim and Hindu mystics and saints whose disciples were both Hindus and Muslims and who strongly emphasized social equality and religious brotherhood. Such were Yari Sahib Sufi of Delhi (1668-1725) and Bullah Shah Sufi of Faizabad (1680-1758) both Muslim saints, and their dis-



ciples Gulal, Bhika and Keshav Das (1690-1765). Similarly, Jagjivan Das (born 1665), founder of the Satnami sect and Prana Nath (1700-1750) preached universal love and brotherhood almost in Christian fashion and had a large following of both Hindus and Muslims. Gharib Das of Rohtak (1717-1778) worshipped Ram, Hari and Allah together and had the Mughul emperor Muhammad Shah as his disciple. Shahanand of Gonda (born 1780) founded the Swami Narayan sect which freely admitted Muslims as well as lower-caste Hindus. In Bihar there was also a saint named Dariya who was born of Muslim parents, and was the founder of an order that combined in worship the Muslim kornish and the Hindu saidah. Paltu Das of Ayodhya (1757-1825) was yet another well-known saint, a disciple of Gulal, and thus in the line of the Muslim woman saint Bawari Saheba and Yari Saheb. How remarkably does the following verse of his embody the manner and spirit of Kabir and Gandhi forging Hindu-Muslim unity :

They say Rama is in the east, and Khuda in the West ;  
 Who then lives in the north and the South ?  
 Where is the Lord, and where is He not ?  
 Why do the Hindus and Muslims raise a storm ?  
 The Hindus and Muslims have engaged in strife,  
 And the two faiths run into two opposing camps.  
 Paltu the slave says the Lord is in all,  
 He is not divided at all ; this is the truth.

Gandhi's favourite hymns sung at his evening prayer meetings similarly dwelt on the common worship of Ram and Rahim and identified the mandir and the masjid in the traditional spirit of Hindu-Muslim amity. The teachings of a hundred popular saints both Hindu and Muslim hailing from the villages had completely wiped out the bitterness and resentment that Aurangzeb's deliberate policy of the persecution of Hinduism bequeathed at the beginning of the 18th century. The masses of the Indian people, left to themselves and undeflected either by the British policy of "divide and rule" or by the middle and upper class struggle for economic and political power and privilege, would never have disturbed the essential Indian unity. The dreadful 18th century of unparalleled turmoil, plunder and disintegration in India did not forget the broad religious humanism and universalism of her culture in the villages. Amidst the unparalleled massacre, arson and atrocities in whole regions of the Punjab, Bihar and Bengal, Jawaharlal Nehru rightly said in September, 1947: "The history of

India has been one of assimilation and synthesis of the various elements that have come in . . . It is perhaps because we tried to go against this trend of the country's history that we are faced with this."

### The Assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, the Peace-Maker

The Partition goes against the trend of the country's history with cultural synthesis as its fundamental key-note. Indian history is in a sense the making of humanistic and universal myths and all myths have wings. Indian history never accepted the theory of pure races and of nations as artificial and fragmented units of mankind. This is responsible not only for the social integration of heterogeneous races, traditions and cultures within the continent but also for the millenium-long process of the Hinduization of Asia. The Father of the Indian Nation stressed India's universal humanism and spiritual mission right up to the moment of his assassination in 1948 when his heart was torn by the upsurge of gory mass madness and fury sweeping through Northern India. Early in 1948, Gandhi the peace-maker undertook a new fast to put an end to the communal hatred and asked for tolerance, understanding and love. He observed, "The reward will be the regaining of India's dwindling prestige, and her fast-fading sovereignty over the heart of Asia and thereby, the world. I flatter myself with the belief that the loss of her soul by India will mean the loss of the hope of the aching, storm-tossed and hungry world." In the same year he himself became a victim of mad Hindu religious fury. Mahatma Gandhi was great in death as in life. For India the assassination by a Hindu religious fanatic of this unguarded, sweet man of silence and love in the capital city of Delhi as he was riding over the whirlwinds of religious passions and hatred will for ever represent the silent challenge of love, goodness and understanding against falsehood, anger and hatred. For the world it will embody the highest potential of India's moral and spiritual values in any unjust and insufferable social and political situation.

### The Little War

After the death of Gandhi, the pacifist and peace-maker *par excellence*, the relations between India and Pakistan considerably deteriorated. The Nehru-Liaquat Ali Agreement in respect of the rights of the Hindu minority in Pakistan was flagrantly flouted and streams of Hindu immigrants flowed into India from time to time as



there were periodical mob outbursts of religious hatred and persecution. Pakistan consistently followed a cruel plan of squeezing out the Hindus and an aggressive military policy, supported by massive economic and military aid from the U.S.A. and the U.K. In 1965 Pakistan crossed the cease-fire line suddenly and treacherously with a view to a quick march through the plains of the Punjab to New Delhi. Pakistan's unexpected massive tank attack was foiled by the strategy of General Chowdhury and the courage and endurance of Indian officers and soldiers in the fields, trenches and mountain-passes and the superior skill of the Indian Air Force successfully fighting against tremendous odds. The twenty-two days of Indian heroism and valour and the destruction of the bulk of Pakistan's striking force, inspite of China's massive threatening concentration of armies and intrusion on the eastern front, rehabilitated the image of India's strength in the mind of Asia and the world and affirmed the truth and value of her policy of peace, amity and non-alignment. The Tashkent Agreement with Pakistan, largely due to the sweet reasonableness and foresight of the Indian Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri who died suddenly as a martyr to the cause of peace at Tashkent, brought to an end the little war and the tensions and suspicions between India and Pakistan and was hailed as a victory for peace by most countries of the world, except, of course, China which did not believe in peaceful progress but deliberately promoted disagreement, war and revolution. China's plan of opening a new eastern front for hard-pressed India during the critical time of her fight with Pakistan in the north-west completely failed due to Pakistan's quick defeat in arms at the hands of India. If the Tashkent spirit waxes, India and Pakistan will have to join in a military alliance against China for mutual strength and defence when the Himalayas have ceased to be a defensive wall and constitute the most vulnerable strategic frontier of the continent.

### **The Spirit of Cosmic Humanism in Indian Civilization**

India is not Hindu nor is Pakistan Muslim. Indian history is neither Hindu nor Muslim, nor British. Empires, dynasties and kings have come and gone and wars and conquests are forgotten but Indian civilization resting on deep and universal principles goes on for ever. The periodization of Indian history is rendered easier by focussing attention on the dominant myths or "threads of history" that determine or colour the life and tempo of the people; these, after accomplishing a marked change or revolution, contribute

certain permanent elements to the cultural heritage as a whole. Peoples, like individuals, have privileged phases or periods in their career. The Vedic Age, the Age of Philosophies and Heresies, the Age of Asoka, the First Age of Asian Unity, the Age of Neo-Brahmanism and the Second Asian Unification, the Age of the Vedanta, the Age of Tantrikism, and the Age of Bhakti stand out as the Golden Eras, beacon-lights in the general march of Indian civilization. Each Golden Era is associated with a constellation of myths, values and its institutions that have gone to the making of India. Kingdoms and peoples may rise and fall but myth and culture are enduring. It is the continuity of myth, faith and culture that explains social stability in India, and prevents that chaos which usually follows from foreign conquest and the imposition of changes without reference to existing forms and patterns. But for the economic debacle and ignorance and poverty of the masses brought about by British imperialism and its systematic policy through the decades of enhancing Hindu-Muslim cleavage in the name of introduction of representative government, the masses of Indian people could have lived in peace and amity and Partition could have been averted. What Paul Tillich calls the Demonic in history, due to the lust and fear of irrational humanity, successfully challenged and destroyed during a period of only two decades the age-old spirit of universality and cosmic humanism in Indian civilization. This it did at a time when it could have served the future social and economic democracy of the undivided continent, the biggest in the whole world, through assimilating the social-egalitarian ideal of the ancient Vedanta and medieval Sufi and modern Bhakti, proclaiming the divinity of man and the humanity of God, with the Western socialistic and humanistic trend.

There are several philosophies that have been of lasting influence on the course of civilization across the centuries, indeed across the millenia. These are the philosophy of the Upanishads and the Vedanta in India (800-500) B.C., including the Vedantic thought of the Buddha (563-483 B.C.), and that of Confucius in China (551-479 B. C.) which shaped the history of their respective Oriental lands for two millenia and a half; the philosophy of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle (470-322 B.C.) which moulded Occidental civilization for about the same period; and the philosophy of Hegel (1770-1831), with its offshoot Marxism, which has dominated the Occident for only about a century. In the contemporary West, Hegel's dialectics en-



forced by Marx's acceptance for his own purposes of the former's vision of the triad, thesis, antithesis and synthesis, has inspired the political and psychological strategy of Communism. In India the basic Vedanta idea is similarly transformed into a social relation, into a skill in activity (*yogah karamasu kausalam*). Should dialectical materialism of Communism lead the peoples of the world towards the struggles and battlefields of global revolution and war? Or should the true dialectics of the human mind, that of Vedanta metaphysics, which gradually widens and deepens the understanding through a greater inclusiveness of ideas and a profounder perception of their truth and value, and which finally culminates through intuition in the Absolute, direct mankind along the paths of cosmic humanism, peace and goodwill?

### Indian Democracy versus Chinese Communism

In the Far East, the dialectical materialism of Communist China is not merely converting the Chinese millions into a mechanized and regimented ant-heap but also inciting the peoples of the South-eastern fringe of her land mass, into which she had been penetrating for the last half a millenium, into chronic revolutions and conflicts. British colonialism and Indian subjection for two centuries were the inevitable consequences of the victory of the science and technology of Europe over the continent of Asia. With India the entire Asia has moved fast in the 20th century towards all-round economic progress and towards nationalism. The independence of India in the middle of the 20th century is related to the renovation of the Asian continent. It is linked with the broadening of the civil liberties and improvement of condition of the teeming Asian millions. For the new group of nations in South-east Asia in particular who have a tradition of cultural intercourse, neighbourliness and goodwill among themselves, India's resurgence does not forecast any aggrandizement or pressure in "power politics" but rather mutual aid and co-operation in wholly peaceful and constructive enterprises towards common economic and social uplift. Historically, India had been an evangelist of peace and amity through the centuries. In this century, she also stands basically for peace, for the abolition of the vestiges of racialism and colonialism, and of all tensions and exploitation that thwart peace and progress in this part of the world.

Standing in the middle between Asia and Europe in several senses as the largest democracy in the world she stands as a bridge today bet-

ween the rival world colossi, Individualism and Communism. Her democratic socialism, integrating her perennial socio-religious ideals with the values of the worth and dignity of the individual of European civilization, offers new visions of economic betterment and social justice for the peoples of South-east Asia without the Communist revolution and streamlining sponsored by World Communism in alliance with Chinese imperialism. The mixed economy and socialism of India and the flexible, expansive neutralism of her politics are of equal significance for the economic development and preservation of peace in the whole South-east Asian region. From the mutual tolerance and understanding of rival economic systems—capitalistic, mixed and totalitarian—the elimination of greed, and aggression of societies and cultures, and the isolation by non-alignment of the entire continent from the blizzards of the cold war can spring forth the lasting peace of Asia in the wake of widespread anxieties and the fears of the times.

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## EXPLANATION OF PLATES

### 1. Viṣṇu Trivikrama, Badami. 6th century A.D.

Classic Deccan Cave Style of Medieval Art, 6th to 8th centuries.

The Neo-Brahmanical Renaissance of the 6th-8th centuries, governed by the mythopoeic interpretation of the Purāṇas and the Āgamas, introduced the medieval phase in Indian religious and cultural history. Its grand product in art was the phantasmagorial cave style, unique in world art. The cave (*guhā*, *kandara*) is the secret recess of the human heart where the supreme Puruṣa or Self resides and enacts dramatically the *divyakriyās*, or transcendent adventures, symbolising the truths and values of Life, Cosmos and Reality as revealed in yoga exaltation.

Colossal tableaux were produced under the impetus of the Brahmanical Renaissance at the cave shrines of Badami, Ellora and Elephanta where the modulated atmosphere, light and shade were deftly utilized to intensify the dramatic emotionalism of Man that obtains its true meaning as part and parcel of cosmic tension and poise. Living rocks burst into sublime and blessed apparitions of the Absolute and the Transcendent in a manner unparalleled in the history of art.

The cosmic image of Viṣṇu (*Viśvarupa*) is here seen as traversing the Seven Realms of the Universe by three strides thus defeating the ambitions of the arrogant Asura king Bali. The Dwarf Avatāra in the guise of a Brahman is seen below Viṣṇu's extended left leg accepting the gift of land covering only one pada from Bali. The latter holds a pot of Ganges water as proof of sanctity of his pledge to give the Brahman whatever he wants. He is accompanied by his wife, three attendants and his Guru Sukrācārya. A dwarfish asura clasps Viṣṇu's right leg with a view to upset his balance. Behind him is another asura who tries to strike Viṣṇu. Below the toe of Viṣṇu's left foot is *Triśanku* suspended in the sky. The panel below represents the musician *Ganas*.

The marvel of the composition consists in the blending of a circular field around the central point of Viṣṇu's navel (*manipura chakra*) symbolizing His poise with the parallel diagonals of the left hand and leg governing tension and movement. As the beholder's eye moves up and down the image, it is filled with the unifying serenity and aloofness of Viṣṇu in spite of the massive diagonal sweep of his left arm and leg comprising lines of tension. The verticality of the sword underlines the poise of God, while the soft curves of His garland, loin-scarf and bow relieve it. The small panel at the top shows Siva Nataraja. The Neo-Brahmanical movement was completely eclectic in its spiritual and aesthetic traditions and values, leading to the sculpting of Siva, Viṣṇu and Sakti and of their various myths and legends in the same temple or cave-shrine. The art style and cosmic sentiment, power and action (*divyakriyā*) are similar; the iconography and myth are only different. Such catholicity and tolerance went into the making of the eclectic Smārta School still dominant in the country.

## 2. Siva Natarāja, Ellora. 8th century A.D.

The cosmic dancing image of Siva Natarāja symbolises the eternal rhythm in the life of cosmos and the human mind: silence and manifestation, creation and destruction, life and death. What Yoga exaltation experiences of Life, Cosmos and Reality is rendered in exquisite visual terms. Ecstasy and poetry superbly coalesce. In this grand image silence rules—the silence of supramundane destruction of cosmic space and time. In the midst of the tumultuous dance movement Siva's face exhibits and distils perfect stillness. The elaborate ornamentation of His grand *jatāmukuta* underlines the exaltation of the cosmic dance. Behind Siva, half-hidden in the sculpture, is grim *Mahākāla* or Eternity in skeleton form. To his right are three musicians playing the drum, flute and *Karatāla* in tune with the dance. To his left stands *Pārvatī* holding child *Kārttikeya* by her right hand. To her left is a *gaṇa*. Another *gaṇa* stands behind *Kārttikeya*. On both sides of the panel above the Guardians of the Eight Quarters (*Dikpālas*) are depicted among the clouds. The inarticulation of the figures of these Guardians stresses the mystery of the dance. The suppleness of the movement of Siva's legs and eight hands and of his whirling implements and garland vividly record the ceaseless rhythm, of Being and Becoming. The composition of the sculpture of Cosmic Cycle of World-creation and



destruction is a perfect circle or rather a series of perfect cycles symbolising at once absolute fullness, eternal silence and unchangeable bliss of the Real Self or Siva-atman, maintaining its adamant non-duality in the cosmos-process. The latter is plastically expressed by the firm vertical line from the middle of Siva's lofty mukuta and his oval face across His whirling body to the centre of the space between His poised feet. The groups surrounding Natarāja superbly complete the equipoise and fullness of the circular composition.

3. Rāvana Shaking Kailāsa. Kailasanath Temple. Ellora. 8th century.

In the entire range of cave sculpture, whether in India or in China, there is no finer example of the skilful utilization of light and shade effects in the cave interior for psychological characterization. The simmering darkness behind the arrogant, myriad-headed Rāvana exerting his full might underlines the mystery of the sudden seismic disturbance which he brings about. Siva who wards off the peril to Kailāsa by the soft touch of his toe is in greater visibility stressing His self-competence and poise. Parvati, half-awake from her relaxation, clings to Siva in fear. She is visible in the sculptural treatment. Her attendant flees into the darkness of the cave depth created by artificial hollowing. The ponderousness and stolidity of Siva's sturdy attendants that embody their composure are accentuated by the distribution of light and shade in their respective niches. The fighting Ganas show in contrast great excitement as they hurl blocks of stone against Rāvana. The figures of the Devas in the sky witnessing the scene are purposefully left unfinished.

The colossal tableaux celebrates the egregious folly of the finite creature Rāvana as he pits his intelligence and might against the Divine order. Wrapped in half-light, half-darkness of the cavern of the human heart, it stirs emotions and thrills imagination in a manner that sculpture in temples or in the open cannot do. The Purāṇic vision of ordered harmony in the scheme of the universe is embodied in the Deccan cave shrines by altogether new plastic skills and techniques in which light, darkness, space and vibrating atmosphere enter into earth-born breadth, weightiness and vigour.

4. Ardhanārīśvara. Elephanta. 8th century.

The androgynous image of Siva with Umā merged in his body embodies the metaphysical vision of the Two-in-One. It proclaims

the same truth as is revealed by the triune Mahesa-Mūrti in the same cave-shrine—the accents of manifestation (Māyā or the feminine principle) and silence (Puruṣa or the masculine principle) in Life, Mind and Cosmos. The legend of the merger of the two bodies is given in the Kālikā and Matsya Purāṇas and has been made familiar by Kālidāsa's invocations of Ardhanārīśvara. The contrasted faces of Siva and Umā have the same composite crown, just as the Real and empirical selves comprise a unity. The two halves of the image, masculine and feminine, are fused with adroit skill. The bull is broadly and summarily carved below. Siva-Umā is steeped in silence while the gods and goddesses on the sides offer their reverential homage. Rarely does sculpture so superbly blend monumentality with sensitive, ornamental tracery, plasticity with linear network, embodying the synthesis of Saiva metaphysics with the lyricism and fervour of Saiva bhakti. The Tantras and Āgamas of the middle ages of India not only stimulated image-making on the basis of cosmic and transcendent symbolism, but also provided the artistic principles of figure composition in medieval cave-art.

5. Padmapāni Avalokiteśvara. Gaya, Bihar. 11th century.

**Pāla-Sena Gothic Art-style, mid-8th to mid-12th centuries.**

Pāla Gothic in Eastern India imports a radiant charm into the clarity and rigour of proportion of classic Gupta art. This was the outcome of the intense religious fervour of the Buddhist Renaissance in the Pāla Empire based on the assimilation of the Mahāyāna with the Tantra. Avalokiteśvara, Lokeshvara or Lokanātha is the emanation of Amitābha Buddha, who promises salvation for all, and is even now worshipped in South-East Asia, particularly in Siam and Cambodia. Pāla Gothic became in fact the vehicle of the spread of Buddhism into Nepal, Tibet, Burma, Malaya, Siam, Cambodia, and Indonesia for several centuries.

The decisive influence of this true Indian Gothic style over Borobudur, Prambanam, Dvārāvātī, Angkor and Pagan, and even over Tien-lung Shan in China is due to its exquisite blend of serenity with elegance, of transcendence with intimacy through the juxtaposition of geometrical and plastic with differentiated and sensitive linear interplay and tracery in sculptural treatment. Whether in Borobudur or in Tien-lung Shan, Pāla art style replaces the Gupta simplicity and massiveness by fullness and sensuous grace of the forms. There is a



bold rendering of the nude through the apparel and jewellery clinging to the firm, full and supple torso. The abdomen with the navel is most sensitively modelled and the hips move slightly sideward. Wherever the Pāla Gothic form has penetrated, the classic solidity and coldness yield to suavity, warmth and elegance, even luxuriance, along with the profusion of adornments. The images of Nalanda, Varendra, Vikrampur and Mayurbhanj have their counterparts in Java, Siam, Angkor and China.

Tien-lung Shan in China, for instance, is simply Pāla Gothic, transcendent as well as charming, serene as well as lyrical, superbly reconciling the massive-abstract with the decorative-sensuous elements in sculpture. Willetts has recently mentioned the Boddhisattva from Lung-yen shan, Pao-ting, Hopei, and the Eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara from Ch'ang-an Shansi, as closely resembling the Pāla style. The former image, unfortunately headless, is regarded by Ashton and Gray as "perhaps, the finest example of Buddhist sculpture in existence". The posture is a pronounced Pala-tribhanga flexion.

The distinctive Pāla Gothic is illustrated in this beautiful image by a most exquisite and delightful reconciliation of the mellifluous rhythm of the lotus stalk and the lineated, sensitive adornment of the jewellery and apparel with the rigid discipline of the plasticity of the mass. The half-closed eyelids and the soft smile of Lokeśvara breathe his profound compassion for world-misery. On his crown is discernible the figure of Amitābha. In the original placement this image was to the left of a large, seated Buddha and had as its counterpart the image of Maitreya to the Buddha's right. The double lotus (or Mahāmbrajapitha) on which the deity is seated is characteristic of Pāla plastic treatment. The major centres of Pāla Gothic were Sarnath, Nalanda, Rajshahi, Vikrampur and Khiching, all of which produced under the impetus of the Protestant religious and social currents of the Pāla-Sena age the same High Gothic art as France produced under a similar spiritual upheaval in the thirteenth century.

6. Ashtabhujapita Mārici. Provenance unknown. Lucknow Museum. c-10th-11th century.

This image, made of Rajmahal black stone, is probably derived from Nalanda, and belongs to the Pāla School. Mārici is the Vajrayāna Buddhist Goddess of Dawn and Sakti of Vairocana. She

has eight hands. One of her three faces is that of a sow symbolising the conquest of sex. Her garment is that of fire, and flames issue from her crown. She stands in alidha posture on her chariot, drawn by seven Boars (rays of the Sun). The charioteer Rahu is carved between her legs swallowing the sun and moon. On the stela are depicted Vartāli and Vadali at the top and Varālai and Varāhamukhi at the bottom. Dhyānī-Buddha Vairocana is carved on her crown. The richly decorated sculpture is superb in its dynamic vitality and balance of composition and adroitly blends massiveness and weight with sensitive, ornamental tracery true to Pāla Gothic. A similar image from Nalanda is in the Indian Museum, dated middle tenth century. Mārici is found not only in Eastern India but also in Tibet, China and Japan.

7. Uṣṇiaṣvijayā. Bihar. c. 11th century.

In Buddhist Tāntrika art this triple-faced six-armed deity is regarded as the Sakti of Vairocana or Amoghasiddhi and depicted as the embodiment of all-encompassing yogic serenity and poise just as Tara embodies all-encompassing compassion. Superbly is the sensitive modelling of the ornaments, garments and drapery that all cling to the soft contours of the flesh, subordinated to the feeling of volume and plastic quality in the sculpture. Above the deity's head is discernible the figure of Adi Buddha Vairocana. Three stupas are carved on the stela. This image is one of the finest examples of Pāla Gothic adroitly reconciling the Gupta massiveness and solidity with suavity and lyrical charm.

8. Simhanāda Lokeśvara. Mahoba. c. 12th century.

This fine image superbly embodies the Bodhisattva's serenity and elegance, symbolised by the soft mellifluous curves of the limbs, garlands and garment that echo the ambling movement of the high lotus stalk. The right hand holds the rosary. In the high jatāmukuta appears the figure of Dhyānī Buddha Amitābha. As counterpart of the flowing lotus stalk on the left is carved the straight, serpent-coiled trisula to the right. The trisula is the symbol of Siva. The identification of Bodhisattva with Siva Lokeśvara or Siva Lokanātha is a shining example of the shift from the dogma to the symbol of mystical inspiration and the mingling of Buddhist and Saiva Yoga. Below the stupas on either side are miniature figures perhaps of the Dhyani-Buddhas. The lion which is roaring is also well-decked, wearing a



rosary. The plastic treatment here, blending classical volume with suavity, exhibits the decisive features of the Pāla Gothic style. See Figure 5.

9. Syāmā or Nīla Tārā. Mahoba, Lucknow Museum. c. 12th century.

Tārā is the consort of Avalokiteśvara (Mahāyāna) and of Amanghaśidhi (Vajrayāna) and is the most popular deity of Mahāyāna and Vajrayana Buddhism. She is green (Syāmā) or white (Sitā) according to the colour of the lotus which she holds. Tārā's right hand resting on the right knee shows the thunder-bolt. Her left hand holds a half-blossomed blue lotus in the vitarkamudra. Five Dhyāṇī Buddhas appear on the stela. To her right and left are represented in miniature Aśokakāntā and Ekajātā. The Goddess is lavishly adorned with garlands and jewellery and her posture here is vajraparayanka. Often, however, Tārā is imaged in lalitāsana seat with one pendant leg placed on a lotus. The elaborate adornment underlying the contours of the soft, pliant limbs, the pointed nature of the stela with pilasters on each side, the curves of the two lotus plants terminating with a full and half-blown flower and the double lotus pedestal indicate Pāla Gothic features. The art-style of the Mahoba figures 8 and 9 is the same, lending support to the presumption that the same artist has executed them.

10. Hevajra. Provenance Unknown. Indian Museum c. 12th century.

Gupta art-style classic as at Taxila, Mathura, Vaddisa and Ajanta, and Gothic as at Hadda, Nalanda, Rajshahi and Vikrampur produced metaphysical images of absolute poise and silence going beyond naturalism and humanism to a transcendent dimension. Tranquillity is the most distinctive key-note of Indian art embodying Santarasa. But Indian art is equally unique in its revelation of the terrible, repellent, the bewildering and the violent—the untoward rasas which the canons of European art abhor. Nowhere in the world we have such horrendous apparitions as Mahākāla, Bhairava, Durgā and Kālī, all wild, grim, and violent in their cosmic setting.

This is an eight-headed awesome Vajrayāna deity, and is shown in Yab-yum posture with his Sakti. His sixteen hands hold skull-cups along with the thunder-bolt or vajra. In the Vajrayāna, Hevajra represents Vajrasattva or void and is in a state of conjugation (yu-

ganaddha) with his Sakti. The metaphysical principle here is the union of Prajñā or Sunyatā with Upāya or Compassion which is the same as the union of Siva-Sakti. The image of Hevajra blends the meditation of Void with terror and sexuality combining the fierce gesture of the masculine deity with the soft, melting love stressed in the sinuous, nervous modelling of the female deity's limbs. The paradoxical expression of two irreconcilable rasas, fierceness (rudra) and tenderness (śrangāra) in a cosmic dimension is distinctive of Indian art, and especially characteristic of its Tāntrika phase in Eastern India. Such is India's mode of expressing Reality rather than Beauty, Truth rather than Harmony.

In Bengal the image of Hevajra has been found in such widely separate places as Paharpur, Tippera and Murshidabad. Hevajra played an important role in the conversion of the Mongol Emperor Kublai Khan to Buddhism in the 13th century. From Bengal the worship of this deity spread to Nepal, Tibet, Mongolia, Siam and Cambodia. In Tibet Hevajra still occupies an important place in the pantheon. In Siam his fierceness is most appalling.

11. Viṣṇu on Garuda. Bogra, East Pakistan. c. 12th century.

This is a colossal image of Viṣṇu seated in the dhyāna posture on the back of Garuḍa or Suparṇa. Garuḍa here is not a bird but a human vehicle with two wings. Lakṣmī and Sarasvatī with Jayā and Vijayā are carved with extreme delicacy and refinement on the sides. The leogryphs on elephants are sculptured with extraordinary vitality. The leogrophy symbolizes the mystery and power of Sakti and is a common motif lavishly used as adornment in all medieval temples of Bengal and at Khajuraho, Bhuvanesvara and Konaraka. The profuseness of jewellery and adornment, characteristic of the later phase of Pāla-Sena sculpture, has not disturbed here the profound balance and serenity of the gigantic composition. There is a close similarity between this image from Bengal and the image of Viṣṇu on Garuḍa at Belahan, Java.

12 Umālingana. Provenance unknown. Lucknow Museum. 11th-12th century. Classic Tāntrika Art-style of Middle and Eastern India. 10th to 13th centuries.

The composite image of Siva-Umā was exceedingly common in Eastern India, Middle India and Rājputana during the period of



Tāntrika dominance from the 10th to 13th centuries. The image of Siva fondly caressing Umā was the subject of Tāntrika contemplation, as mentioned in the Matsya Purāṇa and the Soundarya Lahari. Siva's upper right hand holds the trident and his lower right hand a lotus bud. The upper left hand holds a serpent and the lower left hand claps Umā. The Goddess is seated in sukhāsana on the left leg of Siva. Her left hand holds a mirror. Siva's right leg and Umā's left leg are placed elegantly on lotuses. The angularity of the poses, faces and limbs of both the God and Goddess and the lineation of garments, chains and jewellery reveal warm conjugal passion and tenderness, characteristic of Tāntrika art and ritual. On the left upper corner Gaṇeśa figures above a leogryph. Two Vidyādhara are carved at the top of the stela. The bull and lion vehicles of the God and Goddess are figured below. Between them is a dancing bhūta. On each side Siva's sentinels stand in eternal vigil. The intervening empty spaces between the various figures as well as parallels and diagonals are effectively utilised for the consolidation of the mood of serene mutual self-fulfilment and transcendence of the Divine couple, Two-in-One.

13. Celestial Beauties (Surasundaris). Facade of the Kandariya Mahadeo Temple, Khajuraho. 11th century.

Classic, national Gupta style of art distinguishes between charm (soundarya) and spiritual grace (lāvanya) and mirrored spiritual rather than physical perfection far aloof from mundane allurements. 10th to 13th centuries witnessed one of the golden ages of Indian art in Middle and Eastern India. This was the period of the Tāntrika Renaissance celebrating soundarya or charm as the revelation of the Divine (Sakti), imminent in all form and appearance. Classic Tāntrika art-style and motifs embody a poetic vision of Life, Mind and Universe through the interplay of the cosmic principles of masculinity and femininity or Siva-Sakti welded into the One-and-All. It is this metaphysical truth of unity in duality which underlies the exquisite portrayal of Mithunas (amorous couple) in Indian art. Mithunas are repeated endlessly on the facade, railing and bracket and in every nook and corner of the temples at Khajuraho, Bhuvanesvara and Konaraka. The ubiquitous presence of the Universal and Eternal Feminine make erotic embrace a ritual, and union a transcendence, leading to the identification of enjoyment (bhoga) with spiritual bliss (yoga) coveted by Tāntrika worship.

Sakti indwells in every form, name and movement. She is at once the Divine Mother as well as the courtesan, the danseuse and the beloved—every lure of the senses and every enjoyment. She is both Illusion or *Mahāmāyā* and Enlightenment or *Mahāvidyā*. Her generic name is *Surasundari*. In the *Tāntrika* scripture *Surasundari* is a form of *Gouri* and also a celestial nymph.

*Tantrika* erotic sculpture is too often misjudged by Western critics. First, it is the metaphysical truth and feeling of immanence of Sakti or the Eternal Feminine principle in Life, Mind and Universe which lead to the lavish multiplication and fond carving of beauties, whether celestial or earthly, almost everywhere in the medieval temples; while each figure becomes a masterpiece of plastic treatment, unique in the revelation of a distinct mood and gesture of love that even the sexological texts such as the *Kāmasūtra* and the *Ratimanjari* cannot exhaust. Secondly, *Tantrika* erotic art embodies a happy blend of abstraction with intimacy of feeling, of serenity with vitality in each amorous couple, showing the psychological possibilities of sensuous sculpture hardly discernible in the West. Thirdly, the erotic art reconciles the opposite moods and feelings of charm and fierceness, compassion and terror, grimness and hope, all in a supra-mundane dimension. While revelling in the expression of the most subtle nuances and moods of erotic love, it has produced some of the grandest apparitions of fury and awesomeness unknown in any other art.

#### 14. *Pārvati*. *Khajuraho*. 11th century A.D.

*Pārvati* has innumerable names and forms. She symbolizes at once the lure of the senses in appearance of Form and Name in the universe (*bhoga*) and the bliss of spiritual emancipation (*yoga*). A strong sense of immanence of Sakti was imported into Indian art and Indian civilisation generally by *Tāntrikism*. This is responsible for the carving of *Gouri*, *Surasundari*, *Apsarā* and *Nāyikā* almost everywhere in the medieval temples; while each erotic couple becomes a masterpiece of plastic treatment, unique in the revelation of a distinct mood and gesture of love.

#### 15. Celestial Musician. Sun Temple, *Konaraka*. 13th century.

The *Apsarās* on the terraces are some of the most magnificent, colossal, free-standing human statues of India, Monumentality here



mingles harmoniously with balance of proportion and amiability of mood. Under the canopy of the sky, the nymph celebrates the sunrise with her celestial music and dance.

16. Pārvai, Consort of Sundaramurti. Bronze. Brihadeswar, Temple, Tanjore, c. 12th century.

### Pallava and Chola Art Style in the South

The efflorescence of Pallava and Chola sculpture was the offspring of the Bhakti movement. The South Indian bronzes date from the 10th to 17th centuries. Pala, Pallava and Chola bronzes that could be easily transported to distant countries played a significant role in the Indianization of Asia.

The Bhakti movement in the South led by the Vaisnavite Alvārs and the Saivite Nayanmārs from the 8th century onward obtained a most noble, ardent and tremulous plastic expression unique in world art in the Chola bronzes. Later on clearness and refinement of lines and curves with their mathematical order and precision yielded wiry, yantra-like compositions whose vitality in congealed repose and movement became unparalleled in metal work. The bronze images of self-oblivious, mystical devotion were themselves worshipped in the South Indian temples.

Perhaps the most radiant example of these is the image of the consort of Sundaramūrti Swāmī called "the companion of God" in Tamil sacred literature. Pārvai is here depicted in the posture of Pārvati—the avanga flexion with the left hand hanging down. It is one of the softest, most impeccable, and radiant utterances of piety in metal. The spirit of mystical devotion here is the same that actuates such famous Chola stone images as Kālāri at Tanjore (10th century), and Chandēśānugrahamūrti, at Gangaikondacholapuram (11th century). In the former, Siva rescues his devotee Mārkaṇḍeya from the clutches of Death. In the latter we find the Emperor Rajendra Chola himself at the feet of Siva who bestows benedictions. In the garden of Indian art Bhakti as a spiritual flower blossoms forth differently in the South Indian bronzes and sculptures and in the paintings of Rajasthana and Himachala.

17. Krishna and Rādhā or Love Revealed in Union. Rajasthana Painting. c. 18th century.

The metaphysical notion of the humanity of God and the divinity of Man in the Rādhā Krishna myth found a radiant, enraptured expression in Indian poetry, song, painting and dance for well-nigh five centuries, from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries. For Hindi literature of Northern India Keshav Das's *Rasika Priya* (written in 1591) following the literary tradition of the *Gītāgovinda* (composed at the end of the 12th century) and the lyrics of Vidyāpati, Chandidās and Mira Bāi, distinguished the various Heroes or Heroines of Love (*nayikas* and *nayakas*), and marked a decisive step in poetry in the fusion of human and divine love sentiments. From this stemmed both the psychological depth and charm of Rājasthāna and Himachala paintings. Krishna and Radha are the Eternal Lovers here and the love is reinforced through the reflection of the couple on the mirror held symbolically by Krishna. For the Love Eternal spills from the heart and is immanent in the life of the senses. The theme is Prakāśa Samyoga. The Hindi couplets at the top of the picture from the *Rasikapriyā* explain: "As soon as Krishna looks at the face of Rādhā on the mirror he is overwhelmed with delight and gazes intently on the red beauty spot on her forehead, just as Rāma gazes at his beloved consort Sitā who obeying his command is seated on the fire of her ordeal." The ardency of the passion is expressed in the intent gaze and the intertwined curves of the lovers' limbs and garments. The trees are mute witnesses of the bliss. The strong horizontals and verticals of the marble building underline the depth of the passion.

18. Rāgini Devagandhāri. Rajasthana Painting. 18 century.

The paintings of the Rāgmālas, literally Garlands of Illustrations of the Indian musical scale, exhibit as subtle harmonious blend of music, and painting poetry. The musical modes are symbolized by typical nymphs of love (*nāyika*), singing the tunes most appropriate for the particular situation, season and hour of the day and night. They incarnate the cosmic sentiments aroused in the procession of the months, days and hours in Northern India. Here the nymph represents Devagandhāri Rāgini, consort of Rāga Hindola sung in the rainy season. She is represented as an ascetic woman or, may be Pārvati herself counting beads on a cot in front the temple of Siva. The landscape depicted is that of the rains. The Hindi lines at the



top mention that the Rāgini should be sung at the late hours of the night. Devagandhari is also called Devagi, and depicted as performing Siva puja in the collection of Ragamala paintings belong to Coomaraswamy and Rothenstein.

19. Sarai. Rajasthana Painting. 18th century.

A whole medley of wayfarers (musafirs) along with a dog and a lamb is depicted with charming realism and vigour of expression. The face of each traveller, hailing from different regions and gossiping, as the entire group patiently waits for the meals, vividly shows markedly idiosyncratic features. Cooking goes on inside the kitchen. The old inn-keeper is delineated as resting on the cot while he smokes the hukka. A beggar is being denied edibles by a hawker sitting outside the Sarai. Monkeys are romping about on the trees. As is the usual practice, the artist here views the situation from above and portrays with much feeling a series of synchronous scenes familiar in an Indian town.

20. The Newly Married Bride. Kangra Painting. 18th century.

The Navodhā Nāyikā is the bride of God inexperienced in the lore of love. She is here in her bashful mood (lajjapriyā). It is a full moon night and everything is ready for the union. The maid having made all arrangements in the inner compartment is leaving the place. The coyness of the maiden, so well delineated in the painting, symbolizes the trepidation of the human soul as it approaches the Divine. Krishna's fond, receptive gesture is the promise of life's fulfilment.

21. The Swing. Kangra Painting. 11th century.

There is a superb blend of animation with the serene grace of gestures and movements of the womenfolk as music, dance and swing will soon be conjoined for the celebration of advent of the rainy season. The white marble pavilion stands in vivid contrast with the dark clouds on the horizon that is crossed by the cranes in flight. The movement of the cranes echoes the rhythm of the swing. The swing symbolizes the rise and fall of the nuances of the human-cum-divine passion.

22. The Anxious Heroine. Kangra Painting. 18th century.

This is a picture of the Heroine of Love who having reached the tryst in the night anxiously awaits her Lover (Utka or Utkanthita

Nāyikā). The lightning on the dark clouds symbolizes the poignant expectancy of the human soul for union with the Divine Lover. The strong curves of the undulating hills echo the tumult in the Nāyikā's soul. The leaves of the trees behind are stirred and share the tumult. The latter is also reflected in the asymmetrical arrangement of the flowers. The whole nocturnal landscape is focussed towards her situation and mood.

23. Krishna and Rādhā. Kangra Painting. c. 19th century.

The love of Eternal Man and Eternal Woman, Krishna and Rādhā, that transforms and consecrates the love of mortals, is reflected also in the twining of the creeper round the tree. A deep and intimate interchange blend here with a sweet innocence of feeling, pose and gesture. Rādhā advances poised and self-confident with her offerings to the Lord of the Flute, while He in His ecstasy slightly raises His right foot and prepares Himself for sounding the flute—His supreme gift to her beloved.

24. Parakrama Bahu I. Polonnaruwa, Ceylon 12th century.

The Singhalese king is here depicted as a sage wrapped in contemplation as he reads a palm-leaf manuscript. Here again there is an exquisite combination of ponderousness with sensitive tracery of the garment and its knot as well as of the crown.

25. Boddhisattavas. Chandi Mendut, Java. 8th century A.D.

These are some of the most serene Boddhisattavas ever produced, breathing a fullness, majesty and transcendence which the Pala Gothic style at its supreme moments of creativeness could embody. The Mahayana Trinity of the Boddhisttavas-Manjursi (or Amitabha), Padamapani and Vajrapani are frequently met with in Pala Bengal.

26. Durgā Mahiṣamardini. Singasari, Java. 13th century.

Durga's numinous power and majesty are reconciled here with her youthful elegance. The breadth and massiveness of the modelling stress the former. The sensitive decorative treatment of the drapery following, it may be noted, the texture of Bengal artistic handloom weaving, garland and adornment stress the latter. The demon emerges from her buffalo shape and is caught, by the hair of the



Goddess after the dramatic onslaught. The full grandeur of the images is missed because of the mutilation of the many hands and weapons. Durgā represents the real self or the Absolute in action, manifestation or immanence. It is probable that it is the same artist who sculpted both this image and the more celebrated image of Prajñāpāramitā found in the same place and belonging to the same century. The rich and highly elaborate symbolism underlying both the architecture and iconography in Borobodur, Prambanam, Chandi Mendut, Chandi Sewu, Singari and other shrines in Java are derived from the contemporary Pāla Buddhist and Saiva theology of Bengal.

27. Prambanam. Java. 10th century.

This relief represents Rāmachandra killing Bali during the fight between Bali and Sugriva in the forests of the Deccan. Lakṣmana is behind Ramachandra. The posture of Ramachandra as he wields his powerful bow is magnificently represented. Lakṣmana's demeanour shows a prick of conscience. Like Borobodur, Prambanam or Brahmbanam is a stupendous art gallery recording the myths and legends of the Indian homeland. The Indian style of carving of bas-reliefs has reached its perfection in Prambanam, reaching an approximation to tapestry rather than to sculpture and combining Pāla Gupta with Pallava idioms.

28. Walking Buddha. Sukotai, Siam.

This bronze image marvellously combines suppleness and vitality with serenity and poise, and excels in its plastic quality the similar famous Birmingham bronze image from Sultanganj, Bhagalpur, Bihar. The Buddha shows here the Vitakarmudrā.

29. The Faces of Siva (Tumburu or Rudra). Angkor Thom. 12th-13th century.

India's most magnificent gift to Asian civilization is represented by Angkor. Art, architecture and engineering reached here an acme of skill, beauty and grandeur unparalleled in the world. Angkor Thom is justly considered as one of the wonders of the world. This was built as Sivaloka. Its architecture and sculpture embody the synthesis of the metaphysics of the Mahayana, Vījrayana and Saivism on the soil of Cambodia. Most haunting and mysterious is the empty, all-encompassing gaze of the innumerable Sivas on the towers. The

tower of the Siva faces lavishly multiplied embodies the notion of the immanence of deity in the universe. Art and architecture convert the mundane world into Sivaloka—the abode of the gods. Here we reach the culmination of the influence of Pāla-Sena art, derived from Bengal or mediately through Java and Siam, and superbly assimilated into the ancient Khmer art traditions.

30. Lokeśvara, Cambodia. c. 12th century.

A sweet, understanding smile distinguishes Khmer art which is most unique in its reconciliation of other-worldliness with human warmth. Such an image can easily stand by the side of the Asian masterpieces such as the Padampāni Bodhisattva of Ajanta, the Padampāni Lokeśvara of Bihar and the Siva of Prambanam. As Lokesvara in the homeland is a composite Siva-Buddhist figure associated with the contemporary dominance of the Nātha tradition that merged Buddhism in Saivism, so he is in Cambodia the product of the confluence of idealism of the Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna Buddhist and Saiva Tāntrikism. The same deity appears massively and repeatedly in the towers of the Bayon. On his urna appears Adibuddha Amī-tābha.

31. Bantea Srei. Near Angkor, Cambodia. 10th century.

At Bantae Srei, literally The Women's Citadel, Bantea Sams and other neighbouring sites, temples become poems of stone depicting some of the famous episodes of the Indian epics with dramatic intensity and lyrical fervour not met with in the Indian homeland. The story of the two demons fighting with each other for the possession of Tilottamā, which is depicted here, is derived from the Mahābhārata. The three trees represent a forest where the dramatic scene is enacted. Two sages are squatting beneath the trees on each side. Above the central tree reaching out to heaven dance the Vidyādhara. The border highly decorated with arabesques terminates at each side in the Khmer motif of the five-headed serpent coming out of the terrifying jaws of Kālā. The carving with its profusion of adornment and elaboration of details and yet with its fine balance and dynamic rhythm of composition reaches the level of craftsmanship of tapestry weaving. Many of the carvings on the pediments represent, indeed some of the most marvellous designs and skills of meticulous craftsmanship in world art. The sculpture here shows a delicacy and re-



finement not met with in the treatment of the same theme at Bhuvanesvara and markedly differs from the compositions at Ellora. The lyrical and pictorial phase of Indian sculpture finds its climax in the reliefs of the Bayon and Bantea Srei, characterised by a lightness, delicacy and sensitivity of conception hardly found in India.

32. Inscription of the *Sitātapatro nisa dhārani-sūtra* on a stone wall on the cloud Terrace at Chuyungkuan, Hopei, 1345 A.D.

The inscription is written in six different languages viz. Sanskrit, Tibet, Mongolian, Uighur, Hsihsian, and Chinese.

33. Buddha. Ming dynasty. 1411 A.D.

This marvellous image of the Buddha is wood distils deep stillness and majesty and can be compared with the famous seated Buddhas at Sarnath, Anuradhapur and Borobodur. The Buddha shows the *bhumisparsamudrā*. The treatment of the folds of the garment, hair and urna is entirely Indian classical Gupta.

34. Hiuen-Tsang. Chise Wood-cut. 14th century.

The Chinese monk-scholar, who spent sixteen years in India, including five years of study at the University of Nalanda, played an invaluable role in the spread of Buddhism and Indian civilization in the East. On the basis of the idealistic philosophy expounded by Asanga and Vasubandhu he developed as many as three new schools of Chinese Buddhist philosophy. These were respectively the *Dharmalakṣana*, the *Koṣa* and the *Vinaya*. He also brought to China, according to the tradition, seven statues of the Buddha, including alleged copies of the celebrated Udayana image seen by him at *Srāvastī* or *Kauśāmbī*. Such Gupta prototypes of the Buddha image greatly contributed to popularise the aesthetic conception of the Buddha in China and Japan. In India Hiuen Tsang received the Sanskrit name *Mahāyāna-deva* from the *Mahāyanistis* and *Mokṣācharya* from the *Hinayanists*. Such was the reverence that India showed to this foreign scholar that in the 9th century a Buddhist traveller from Japan who visited India reported: "In a large number of Buddhist temples in Middle India, Hiuen-Tsang was represented in paintings, with his hemp shoes, spoon, and chop sticks, mounted on multi-coloured clouds. The monks paid respect to the image on every fast day." The clean-shaven monk is depicted here as translating Indian

manuscripts a load of which he carried on his back in his return journey to China.

35. Bodhidharma (Daruma). Painting by Miyomoto Muashi. 17th century.

India knows nothing of some of her greatest men who lived and were honoured and worshipped in foreign lands and who stimulated vast spiritual and philosophical movements current even today. Among these are Kumarājīva, Bodhidharma, Bodhiruchi, Vajrabodhi, Padmasambhava and Atiśa. Bodhidharma taught in China for about fifty years, from A.D. 470 to 520. His teaching was based on the *Lankāvatāra Sūtra*, and his sect was at one time known as the Lanka school, though more commonly as Ch'an, a corruption of Dhyāna. He was the son of the prince of Kanchi and obtained his initiation into the Dhyāna form of Buddhism in the Indian Archipelago. In China he was known as Ta-mo (Dharma) and in Japan, where his teaching spread in the twelfth century under the name of Zen, as Daruma. Zen Buddhism still has many thousands of adherents today.

Another school of Buddhism called the T'ien-T'ai was founded by one of his most distinguished disciples Chi-k'ai (born A.D. 531). This also has its adherents today in many countries in the Far East.

36. Bodhisattva Maitreya. Wooden image. Nara, Japan, c. 650 A.D.

Hardly has wood recorded such profound inwardness and concentration blending Indian Gupta and Chinese T'ang traditions of Buddhist art that swept across the Asian continent.

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# **PLATES**





1. Visnu Trivikrama. Badami. 6th Century.



2: Siva Nataraja, Ellora. 8th Century.





3. Ravana Shaking Kailasa. Kailasanath Temple, Ellora. 8th Century.



4. Ardhanarisvara. Elephanta. 8th Century.





5. Padmapani Avalokitesvara. Gaya, Bihar. 11th Century.



6. Ashtabhuja Marici. Lucknow Museum. 10-11th Century.



7. Usnisavijaya. Bihar. 11th Century.





8. Simhananda Lokeshvara. Mahoba. 12th Century.



9. Syama or Nila Tara. Mahoba, Lucknow Museum. 12th Century.





10. Hevajra. Indian Museum. 12th Century.



11. Visnu on Garuda. Bogra, East Pakistan.  
12th Century.





12. Umalingana. Lucknow Museum. 11-12th Century.  
Classic Tantrika art style of Middle and  
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13. Celestial Beauties (Surasundaris). Facade of the  
Kandariya Mahadeo Temple, Khajuraho.  
11th Century.





14. Parvati. Khajuraho. 11th Century.



15. Celestial Musician. Sun Temple, Konaraka.  
13th Century.





16. Parvai, Consort of Sundaramurti.  
Bronze. Brihadeswar Temple,  
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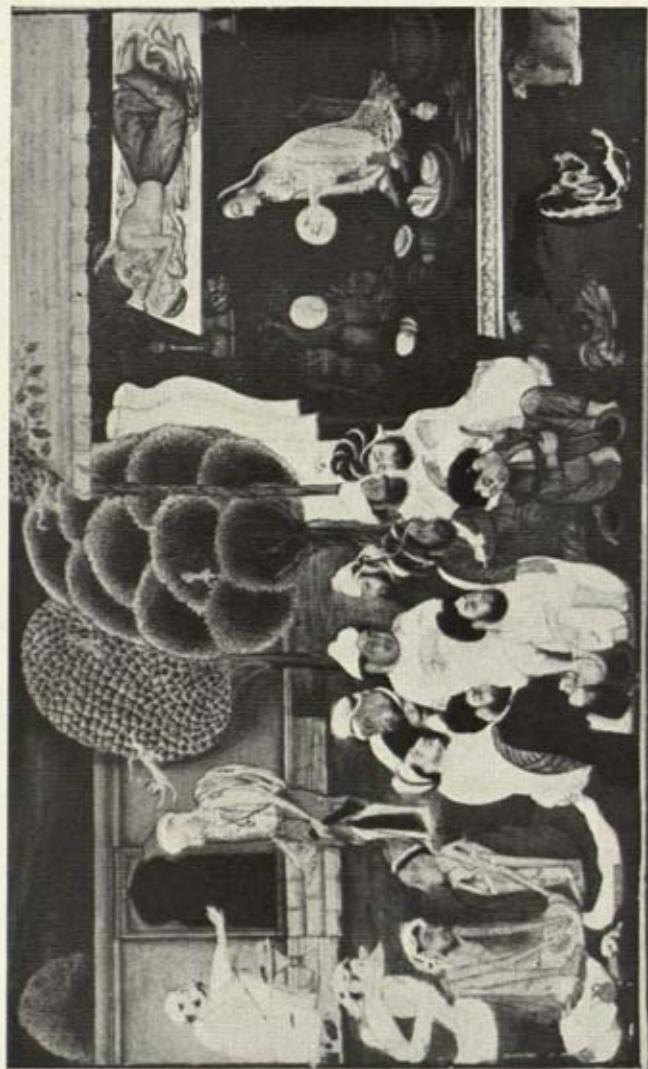


17. Krishna and Radha in Union.  
 Rajasthana Painting.  
 18th Century.





18. Ragini Devagandhari. Rajasthana  
Painting. 18th Century.

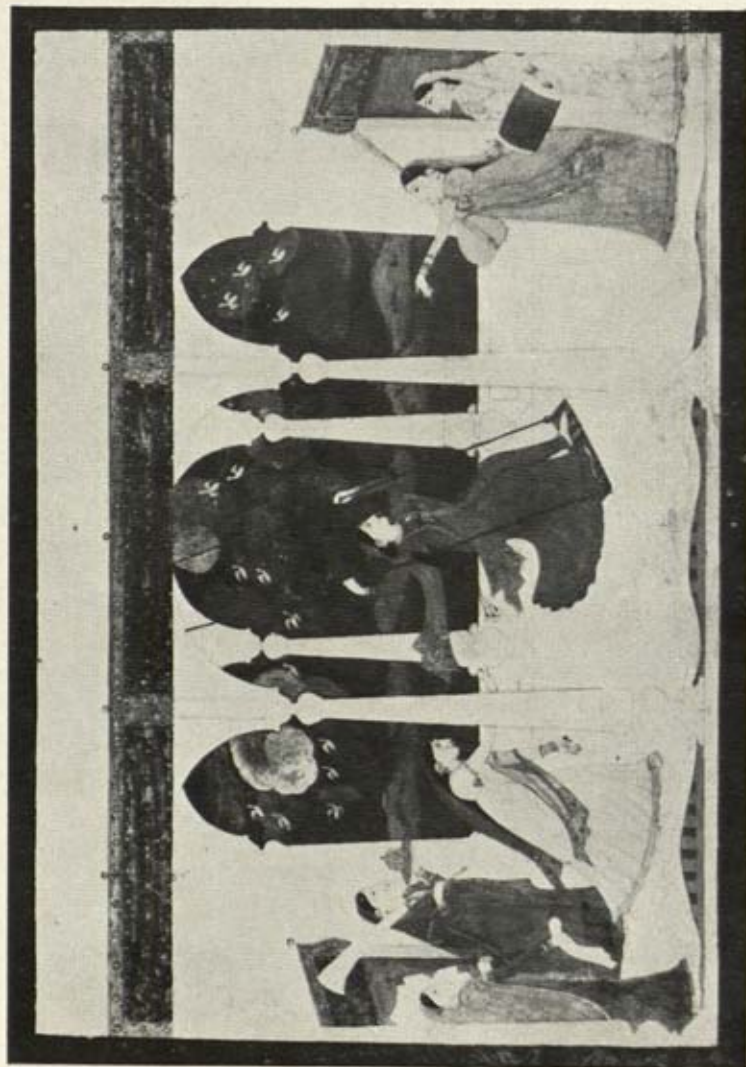


19. Sarai. Rajasthana Painting. 18th Century.





20. The Newly Married Bride. Kangra Painting.  
18th Century.



21. The Swing. Kangra Painting. 11th Century.





22. The Anxious Heroine. Kangra Painting.  
18th Century.



23. Krishna and Radha. Kangra Painting. 19th Century.





24. Parakrama Bahu I. Polonnaruwa, Ceylon.  
12th Century.

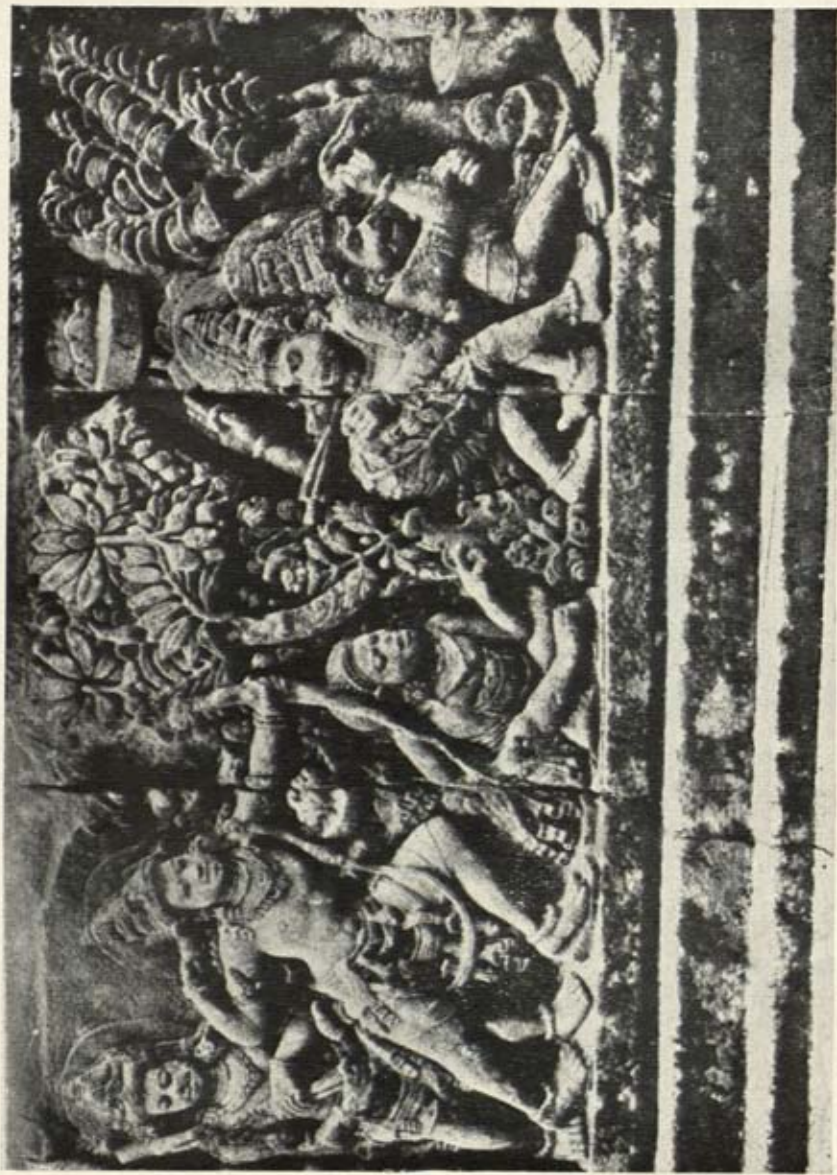


25. Boddhisattavas. Chandi Mendut, Java. 8th Century.





26. Durga Mahisamardini. Singasari, Java. 13th Century.



27. Prambanam. Java. 10th Century.





28. Walking Buddha. Sukotai, Siam.



29. The Faces of Siva (Tumburu or Rudra). Angkor Thom. 12-13th Century.



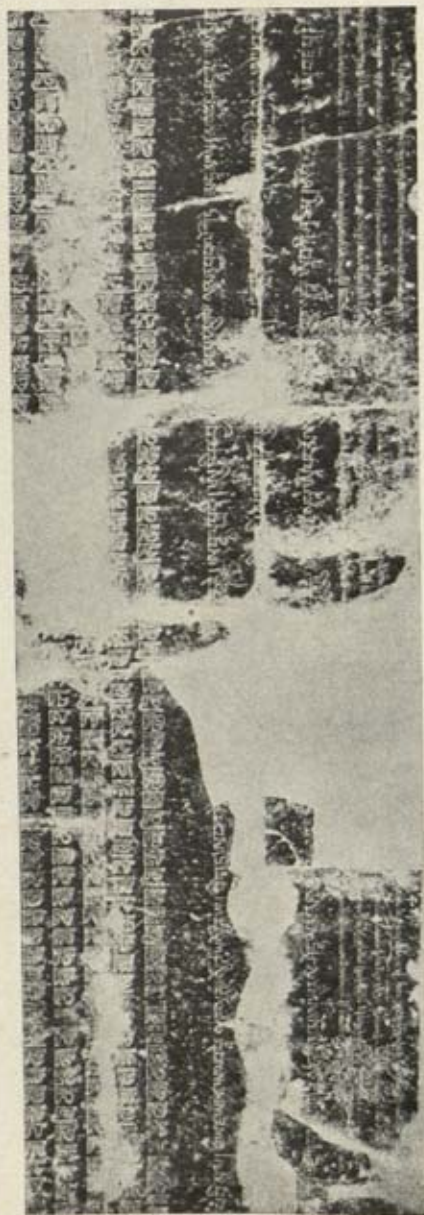


30. Lokeshvara. Cambodia.  
12th Century.



31. Bantea Srei, Near Angkor, Cambodia. 10th Century.





32. Inscription of Sitatapatro nisa dharani-sutra on stone wall on the Cloud Terrace at Chuyung-kuan, Hopei. 1345 A.D.



33. Buddha. Ming Dynasty. 1411 A.D.





34. Hsüan-tsang. Chinese Wood-cut.  
14th Century.



35. Bodhidharma (Daruma). Painting by Miyomoto Muashi. 17th Century.





36. Bodhisattva Maitreya. Wooden image. Nara, Japan.  
650 A.D.

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