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THE METAPHYSICAL BASES AND IMPLICATIONS OF
INDIAN SOCIAL IDEALS IN TRADITIONAL INDIA,
GANDHI AND AUROBINDO.**

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THE METAPHYSICAL BASES AND IMPLICATIONS OF INDIAN
SOCIAL IDEALS IN TRADITIONAL INDIA,
GANDHI AND AUROBINDO

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CHAPTER I.
INTRODUCTION

Basic Aims and Assumptions

Basic Aim

It is the aim of this work to show, by presenting and analyzing the philosophies involved, that there is an essential continuity running through the social philosophies of traditional India,¹ Gandhi,² and Aurobindo.³

The question might arise as to why there should be an attempt to relate the social thought of the twentieth century thinkers, Gandhi and Aurobindo, to the social thought of ancient India, there being an historical gap of more than a thousand years between the end of the traditional period in India's history and the advent of Gandhi and Aurobindo.

Basic Assumptions

The answer to this question involves several assumptions. There is, first of all, the assumption that there is an important connection between the social

¹The social philosophies of traditional India include the dominant social thought of India from about 800 B.C. to approximately 800 A.D.

²Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi was born in Porbander, India, October 2, 1869. He died at the hands of an assassin on January 30, 1948.

³Aurobindo Ghose was born in Calcutta, India on August 5, 1872. He died at Pondicherry, India in 1950.

Basic Assumptions

The answer to this question involves several assumptions. There is, first of all, the assumption that there is an important connection between the social thought of traditional India and the social thought of Gandhi and Aurobindo, an hypothesis for which justification will be sought in this work. Secondly, there is the assumption that the social thought of Gandhi and Aurobindo is influential in the making of modern India. A third assumption is that for sociological and psychological reasons the new India arising in the world today will have to be built, at least in part, upon the foundations of the traditions of the peoples of India.⁴ Put differently, this is the assumption that in order to make the new an effective force in organizing India socially it will have to be justified in terms of, and to a certain extent, assimilated to, the traditional social philosophy.

If this third assumption is correct, and the assumption that Gandhi and Aurobindo are effective forces in the re-making of modern India is also correct, then it becomes practically important to show that there is an essential continuity running through the social thought of Gandhi, Aurobindo, and traditional India. For granted that there is something of the new in the social thought of Gandhi and Aurobindo, this would indicate at least an initial palatability on the part of the peoples of India for the new social organization that can be put forward in the name of Gandhi or Aurobindo.

⁴See note 1, page 7.

The second assumption, that Gandhi and Aurobindo are significant contributors to the new India, must ultimately find its justification or refutation in the unfolding of history. Consequently, its complete justification or refutation awaits the judgment of a history yet to be made. Nevertheless, there are certain appeals that can be made, appeals to the history unfolded in the last few hundred years in India, that lend support to the view that Gandhi and Aurobindo are significant contributors in the building of modern India.

The fact that both Gandhi and Aurobindo have been significant contributors to the Indian renaissance that started with Ram Mohan Roy and has been continuing up to the present time is evidence that they are to be counted among the makers of modern India. Even though one might be hesitant to make as strong a claim as Benoy Gopal Ray does when he says, "Contemporary India begins, as we have seen, with Ram Mohan Roy,"⁵ still, there can be little doubt that the Indian renaissance has been an important factor in the production of modern India. And if this be the case, then there can be no less doubt that Gandhi and Aurobindo have been significant contributors in the construction of modern India, for both of these thinkers have been influential renaissance leaders.⁶

⁵Benoy Gopal Ray, Contemporary Indian Philosophers (Allahabad: Kitabistan, 1947), p. 102.

⁶The claim being made here is that Gandhi and Aurobindo are generally recognized as important renaissance figures, and not necessarily that this recognition is justified. If, however, the general contention of this work--that there is an essential continuity running through the social thought of ancient India, Gandhi and Aurobindo--can be established, then certainly the recognition of Gandhi and Aurobindo as renaissance thinkers is justified.

Middle Ages and Decline of Traditional Ideals

A brief study of the renaissance movement in India may be helpful in drawing attention to the significance of Gandhi and Aurobindo. To understand the renaissance movement in India it is necessary to examine the India that lies between the traditional period and the period that begins with the renaissance. Such an examination will also serve to explain the long historical jump--from approximately 800 A.D. to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries--that is being made in this work. Referring to this middle period in India's history as the middle ages, it may be said that it was during the middle ages that the basic ideals that guided and gave life to India's social institutions and social activity for nearly two thousand years began to lose their force and guiding power. As the ideals gradually lost their efficacy and were themselves lost, the various forms of social organization which were based on them became mere conventions, lifeless and rigid, in time becoming ensconced with a myriad of ritual and peitistic character.

The decline that took place during the middle ages was, at least in part, a great deal of fighting, and a general, though not complete, lack of philosophical speculation at this time. Tara Chand introduces the period of India's history between the years 800 A.D. and 1800 A.D. with the following statement:

The eighth century marks a transition. With it closes the ancient period of Indian history, the period during which the Aryan tribes spread over India, established principalities and founded short-lived empires.

Before the eighth century had passed, new factors had arisen which largely changed ancient conditions and ushered in a new era.

One of the most important of the new factors was the advent of the Muslims. They began to settle on the western slopes of Southern India soon after the rise of Islam. In Northern India the Muslim Arabs first entered from the west; they appeared as invaders, . . .

Then, at the end of the tenth century, the Turks began their encroachments, . . . and by the middle of thirteenth century Northern India was swiftly brought under the way of the Turkish Sultans.

The rule of the Sultans of Delhi was overthrown by the invasions of Babur, who founded the Mughal empire in the beginning of the sixteenth century. His descendants continued to rule over a wide empire till the commencement of the eighteenth century, and then the power of the Mughals rapidly declined and the British established their dominion in India.⁷

This statement indicates very clearly that during this period in history the Indian people were subjected to the rule of foreign powers, which helps to explain the death of the ancient ideals and the failure to replace them with the new ideals that should have grown out of the tradition.

S. K. Saksena summed up India's middle ages in the following way, at the Fourth East-West Philosophers' Conference:

Then came a long period of what is known as India's Medieval Period. India lost its political status and unity. There was no one central authority to legislate of the Hindu population as a whole. The country stood divided

⁷Tara Chand, A Short History of the Indian People (Calcutta: Macmillan & Co., 1944) pp. 100-101.

and separated into hundreds of local or regional kingdoms, all competing and vying with each other to keep their own power intact. India lost its original spirit of freedom and free enterprise, its earlier outlook; it felt oppressed and driven to mere existence, all efforts centering on preserving its identity, all efforts centering on preserving its identity, allaying all social customs and behavior completely to religion, which remained the only common bond among the Hindus. To add to this, foreign rule for about 800 years strengthened all these evils and shortcomings under the pretense of non-interference with the religion of the natives.⁸

There can be little doubt that the advent of the middle ages marked the beginning of a political and cultural decline in India. Thus, the conditions of the middle ages prepared, in a negative way, the ground for an effort to recapture the best of the ages gone by, and to re-introduce this into modern India. And the ground being prepared, the renaissance came about.

India Renaissance

After the long period of the middle ages and beginning about 1800 A.D. a certain feeling that India (and the world) would benefit from a return to and re-evaluation of her past traditions began to appear. A movement got under way to study India's ancient culture with an eye towards shaping and forming modern India in terms of ancient ideals.⁹

⁸S. K. Saksena, in a paper read at the Fourth East-West Philosophers' Conference, Honolulu, Hawaii, July, 1964.

⁹John W. Spellman calls attention to this phenomenon in contemporary India in the following statement: "Part of the dichotomy of contemporary India is the tremendous desire for progress a la Occidentale while seeking to find authority of these changes in the ancient Indian texts. Probably no other country today looks so deeply into the past in order to find sanctions for the present." Political Theory of Ancient India (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1964) p. xxi.

The incentive to this movement came largely from two sources. First, there was a reaction against foreign domination, particularly British domination, which gave the Indian people a determination to become a free people. Secondly, there was a reaction against the widespread poverty and disease found in India, corruptions of social institutions, increased social inequalities, abuses of certain segments of the population, perversion of religious practices, and other undesirable factors present in society.

It was generally recognized that successful self-rule could be obtained only if social and economic conditions in the country were improved. Consequently, often the goal of political self-rule provided the incentive for social reform, which social reform was based on an interpretation of ancient ideals and institutions by the renaissance thinkers.¹⁰

It was characteristic of the renaissance thinkers to study the ancient texts in an attempt to revive the ancient ideals and re-create the ancient traditions. The social thinkers of the renaissance movement were inclined to argue against corrupt social practices by showing that they were not sanctioned by the ancient texts. Ancient texts would be quoted at length to prove points.¹¹

¹⁰It is, of course recognized that the renaissance movement was stimulated in no small part by foreign scholars and that there were reforms attempted that were in no way tied to India's past. Especially in the last several decades, since political independence, there is a rather widespread tendency to adopt western ideologies on which to base social reforms.

¹¹A useful list and analysis of the characteristics of the Indian renaissance is found in K. C. Vyas, Social Renaissance in India (Bombay: Vora & Co., 1957) pp. 183-199.

This attempt to argue against corrupt social practices by showing that they were not sanctioned by the ancient texts was effective because a majority of the people felt it to be a religious duty to live according to the word of the ancient texts, and when the teachings of the ancient texts were presented to them they felt obligated to give up any practices in opposition to such teachings. Because of its success the technique of arguing against those social practices felt to be undesirable by showing that such practices were not sanctioned by the ancient texts or that they were positively opposed to the teachings of the ancient texts became a prime weapon of the social reformers. But, of course, such a weapon could be used successfully only if the ancient texts were read and understood, and therefore, a general revival of ancient learning took place.

It is this revival of ancient learning that is referred to here as the Indian renaissance, and it is because of their efforts to revive ancient learning that Gandhi and Aurobindo are usually numbered among the leaders of the renaissance movement. That is, it is because Gandhi and Aurobindo have attempted to re-introduce some of the ideals of ancient India into modern India, basing reforms on the ancient ideals that they are classified as renaissance thinkers.¹²

The importance of Gandhi as a renaissance leader is too well known to require an attempt here to justify his inclusion among important renaissance

¹²This renaissance movement, aimed largely at social reform, and often with an eye to shaking off British rule, included many illustrious adherents in addition to Gandhi and Aurobindo. B. G. Ray, for example, lists Ram Mohan Roy, Devendranath Tagore, Keshab Sen, Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Dayananda, Rabindranath Tagore, Gandhi and Aurobindo. (In Contemporary Indian Philosophers). One might also add the names of Tilak, Ranade, Annie Bessant, and Radhakrishnan.

leaders. The importance and excellence of Aurobindo, however, has also been widely recognized. For example, V. P. Varma says:

Maharshi Aurobindo has been one of the most creative and significant figures in the Indian Renaissance Movement. He was gifted with surprising powers of intellect. He was a great sage, yogi, and philosophical thinker. Romain Rolland regarded him as the highest synthesis of the genius of Europe and the Genius of Asia. Rabindranath Tagore hailed him as the most pronounced exponent of the spiritual message of India to the world. Radhakrishnan thought of him as perhaps the most accomplished of modern Indian thinkers, and in a statement to the press after Aurobindo's death declared him to the greatest intellectual of our age.¹³

Thus, there is seen to be at least an initial plausibility in assuming that both Gandhi and Aurobindo are significant contributors to the new India. And this initial plausibility provides whatever justification is needed in this direction for studying the social thought of Gandhi and Aurobindo, and for comparing this social thought to the social thought of ancient India in order to seek the significant relationships between these social philosophies. For until it is shown in what respects these thinkers have utilized the resources of the past, the claim that they are renaissance thinkers is rather a hollow claim.

In addition to the assumption that Aurobindo and Gandhi have utilized the past in an attempt to initiate social reforms and social reorganization, and that it thereby becomes important to study the relationships between Gandhi, Aurobindo and the ancient traditions, it may be pointed out that the work may be justified

¹³Vishwanath Prasad Varma, The Political Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1960), p. vii.

simply in terms of the light it sheds on the social philosophy of Gandhi, Aurobindo, and traditional India. Furthermore, it might be argued that it is almost impossible to understand the social philosophies of Gandhi and Aurobindo without understanding the social philosophy of traditional India, for this is the foundation from which each builds, and the guiding principles of traditional Indian social philosophy are used in constructing the social edifices of both Gandhi and Aurobindo. Therefore, any attempt to do justice to the social philosophies of Gandhi and Aurobindo necessarily involves one in a study of traditional social philosophy.

Social Philosophy

Upon the assumption that the questions of what (whose) social philosophies are being considered in this work and why these particular social philosophies are being examined have now been answered, it becomes possible to turn to the question of what is meant by "social philosophy."

Senses of Social Philosophy

There a variety of considerations that might be advanced in the name of social philosophy, and it is important to make some distinctions between these in order to indicate, at least roughly, how the expression "social philosophy" is being used in the present work.

In the first place a distinction must be made between "social philosophy" in the sense of an analysis of the methodology of the social sciences, and "social

philosophy" in the sense of more or less carefully worked out social ideals.

This work is not concerned with "social philosophy" in the first sense at all.

Though this work is concerned with "social philosophy" in the second sense, in the sense of social ideals, it must be distinguished from another kind of work that might also be concerned with social ideals. The distinction involved is concerned with the difference between the task of conceiving and advocating social ideals, a task often performed by the social reformer, and the job of analyzing the structure of the ideals and examining the possible justification of them. This work is concerned primarily with "social philosophy" in the sense of an analysis of the structure and justification of social ideals.

Social Activities

Social ideals may involve social activities, social institutions, social goals, and extra-social ideals. There may be ideal social activities, ideal social institutions, ideal social goals and ideal goals beyond society.

The distinctions between social activities, social institutions, and social ideals can be made by considering the relationships between these concepts. Starting with social activities--which include learning, sex and family activity, work and play within groups, and religious worship among others--it can be seen that just the ordinary cares and problems of daily life require that human beings cooperate with each other for the good of each. Efficient learning requires the cooperation of a teacher and student, and begetting of offspring requires the

cooperation of a mate, to cite just two basic social practices. For the sake of this discussion it might be said that any human activity requiring the cooperation of two or more persons is social activity. Social activities are the various activities of people in cooperation with each other. The important thing about social activities is that they are the actual "doings" of people; the begetting of this child, the teaching of that person, etc., and are not abstractions in any sense. In one sense the justification of the institutions and even the ideals themselves is found only in the social activity.

Social Organization

It is an observable characteristic of human activity that the various social activities are not completely unordered and chaotic. Instead of being merely random activities the various activities of a given group will be found to have certain form and direction. For example, teaching and learning might take structure from the institution of the school, a basic social institution in modern societies. Or, the begetting of children might be regulated by the institution of the family, which might result in a monogamous society with the begetters of children outside of marriage stigmatized in one form or another. The means for regulating and structuring human activities are the various social institutions.

It is important that the social institution not be identified or confused with particular practices, buildings or groups of people. The school, as an institution is not this or that school building, this or that school, or this or that group of

teachers and students. It is, rather, a certain structuring of a criss-crossing network of relationships resulting from the pursuit by human beings of a particular goal or set of goals, which results in a certain form and pattern being introduced in the social activities.

The form and pattern of the social activity of a person whose behavior is structured by social institutions is the result of acting in accord with the rules inherent in the institution. The rules of the institution guide the individual's behavior, providing reasons for acting. Justification of particular actions is to be found in the rules by reason of which the individual acted. If the rules of the institution were followed the action is justified; otherwise not.

Granted that in the case of rule-governed activity justification of actions is to be sought for in the rules, there might be a question about the justification of the rules themselves. In the case where the rules constitute the structure of an institution, the question becomes one of justifying the institution. The justification of social institutions turns on the relationship between the social institution and a social ideal.

Social Ideals

By appeal again to the institution of the school, the relationship of social institutions to social ideals can be seen. Granted the ideal of education--for example, that every boy should learn how to make fish nets, or that every child should learn to read and write--the task is to devise means for the realization of

that ideal. The structure of the means devised for the attainment of the ideal yields the institution, which determines the pattern of activity of learning or teaching in the society. The purpose of a given institution is, therefore, to render effective the social ideal by way of ordering the relevant social activities. It is, accordingly, possible that though the ideal, say the education of all children in a certain religion, be the same in different societies, the institutions might be quite different. That in one society the chief educational institution is the household of the guru while in another society the chief educational institution is the state school is no proof that the educational ideals are different in the two societies. It may be only that the means for realizing the ideal are different. It is thus possible that though the social ideals be quite similar in different societies the institutions established to make the ideal effective may be quite dissimilar.

But the ideals of different societies might also differ if the prevalent attitudes toward life itself differ in the two societies. If in one society the prevailing attitude is that the years of existence between birth and death are only a minute portion of the total life span of an individual and that those few years are the opportunity to earn a life of unending bliss by practicing austerities, then the ideals according to which that portion of one's life is lived might well be different from the ideals in a society in which the prevailing attitude is that one's life consists only in those years between birth and death, and happiness is possible only by the avoidance of austerities. Or, to take another example, the ideals of one society will differ from those of another if in the first society it is held that

the best and highest activity consists in praying to the gods, and in the second society it is held that the best activity of man consists in sexual activity. The ideals of a society depend upon the meaning and purpose of human existence as held, either implicitly or explicitly, by the members of that society.

Basic Ideals

(It is this fundamental attitude toward life itself, this view of the meaning and purpose of existence, that in this work is regarded as the philosophy underlying and supporting the social ideals, institutions and activities. It is this fundamental attitude toward life that provides the basic ideal, the ideal that serves as the ultimate guide to the activities of life.¹⁴ The suggestion here is that man indulges in the activity of viewing and valuing the ultimate nature and purpose of things, himself included, and that it is this viewing and valuing the ultimate nature and purpose of things, himself included, and that it is this viewing and valuing activity which provides the basic ideal which serves to guide and justify social ideals and social institutions.

Ideals and the Justification of Social Organization

From the foregoing discussion of the sense of social philosophy relevant to the present discussion it becomes clear that another assumption of the present

¹⁴Whether the basic ideal is one or many, or whether it is a one comprised of many is taken to be irrelevant to the logic of the matter.

work is that there is an hierarchy of principles involved in social philosophy. There are, at bottom, the social activities themselves. Beyond the social activities are the social institutions which give direction to social activities. Beyond the social institutions are the social ideals, which serve to guide the social institutions. Finally, one comes to the basic ideal, which serves to guide the social ideals.

A corollary of this assumption is that the justification of particular social activities depends upon appeal to social institutions. Justification of a social institution depends upon an appeal to social ideals, and social ideals, in turn, depend for their justification upon a basic ideal, which is the ultimate aim in life of the social individual.¹⁵

In the following chapters then, the main features of the social institutions, social ideals, and basic ideals found in the social philosophies of traditional India, Gandhi, and Aurobindo will be presented and analyzed in terms of the structure of the concepts involved and the relationships between the basic concepts.

¹⁵ It is, of course, recognized that justification in any of the above senses depends also upon matters of fact. The question of whether or not a particular institution does, in fact, contribute to the realization of the relevant social ideal is undoubtedly relevant to the question of whether or not the institution in question is justified. These questions of fact--whether or not particular features of social organization or do not contribute to the realization of social and basic ideals--cannot, obviously, be settled from one's philosophical armchair, and depend for an adequate answer upon the findings of the social scientist.

CHAPTER II.

TRADITIONAL SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

Fourfold Human Aims (Purusārthas)

According to the dominant social philosophy of traditional India, society should be organized into classes of individuals, each class making its peculiar contribution to the well-being of society, and the life of the individual should be divided into various stages so that each person might make the maximum contribution to the well-being of society and at the same time contribute maximally to his or her own self-perfection.

The justification for this social organization is found in the concept of purusārtha, or human aim, for according to the dominant social thought of traditional India each person should have four basic aims or goals in life. These four are dharmā (morality or virtue), artha (means of life), kāma (enjoyment), and mokṣa (complete freedom). It was held that the good life for man consisted in the attainment of these goals, and therefore, society should be so organized as to provide for the attainment of these goals. In fact, the sanskrit expression "purusārtha" which refers to the four ideals, dharmā, artha, kāma, and mokṣa, to be aimed at, literally means "aim of a person." "Puruṣa" means "person" or "man," and "artha" means "aim" or "goal" or "purpose" (in addition to the narrower meaning of "means" or "wealth").

These four purusārthas (human aims) are the ideal. Ideally, every person should live a life filled with the joys and pleasures that attend the activities involved in satisfying one's needs and desires, which satisfaction presupposes a sufficiency of means for these activities. But these activities are to be performed according to dharma, the moral rules governing man and the universe. By living such a life mokṣa (complete freedom) is to be obtained. The basic social means for realizing the purusārthas are the social institutions of varṇa (social classification) and āśrama (life-stages), which may be regarded as plans for social organization, and which receive their justification in terms of the purusārthas. An understanding of the purusārthas is, therefore, of the most fundamental importance for an understanding of traditional Indian social philosophy. Consequently, the first part of this chapter will be devoted to a study of the ideals of dharma, artha, kāma, and mokṣa.

Moral Rules (Dharma)

Turning to a study of dharma, it may be noted that the term "dharma" is derived from the root "dhr" which means "to support, sustain, hold together." In its widest sense it refers to that which sustains and holds together the universe itself. The term is used already in the Vedas, the earliest literary

records of the Indian peoples.¹ There "the term 'dharma', which in later days is used in the sense of righteousness, law, religion, etc., is exclusively used in the Vedic sense as meaning the benefits accrued from sacrifices"²

But even though in the Vedas the term "dharma" means only the benefits accrued from sacrifices, this meaning is much more comprehensive than might be thought, for the Vedic age was a sacrificial age wherein it was thought that the efficacy of sacrifice maintained the various processes of the world. In fact, it was thought that the maintenance and structure of the very universe depended upon the efficacy of sacrifice. As Surama Dasgupta says, "The Vedic people seemed to have a simple code of morals. The performance of sacrifices was regarded as the principal virtue, which was rewarded by the attainment of heaven."³

¹The term "Veda" is commonly used to refer to that large body of literature which includes the Saṁhitās, or collection of hymns, namely, the Rg-Veda, Sāma-Veda, Yajur-Veda, and Atharva-Veda; the theological treatises or Brāhmaṇas; the forest treatises or Āraṇyakas; and the Upaniṣads. The Upaniṣads are the concluding portions of the Āraṇyakas, but because of their great importance as sources of philosophical speculation are sometimes regarded as distinct from the other Vedic literature. This Vedic literature is generally believed to be the earliest literary record of the Indo-European peoples. Opinions as to the dates of the composition of the earliest portions of this literature range from about 4000 B.C. to 1200 B.C. For a discussion of dates and classification of Vedic literature see A. A. Macdonnell, A History of Sanskrit Literature (London: W. Heineman, 1928), pp. 23-37.

²Surendranath Dasgupta, Indian Idealism (Cambridge: University Press, 1933) p. 2.

³Surama Dasgupta, Development of Moral Philosophy in India (Bombay: Orient Longmans, 1961) p. 54.

According to the conception of the effects of sacrifice in the R̥g-Veda, the offering of sacrifice to the gods moves them to answer the prayer accompanying the sacrifice by effecting various changes in the universe. Thus, even though "dharma" referred directly to the benefits of sacrifice, it also referred, indirectly, to a principle of order in the universe. The effect of the sacrifice being the maintenance of the order of the universe, whatever referred to the effects of the sacrifices referred also to order in the universe. It would appear, therefore, that the concept of dharma embodied much more than merely the effects of sacrifice.

The full significance of the sacrificial aspect of dharma can be seen in the relation between dharma and rta. In the Vedas rta is the profoundest concept. Literally, it means "the course of things." But the word was also used to refer to the unalterable law of producing effects, as well as being used to refer to the "order in the moral world as truth and 'right' and in the religious world as sacrifice or 'rite'," along with the law of necessary effects.⁴

The concept of rta is most often used in the R̥g-Veda to signify the unchanging order of the universe, and this order of the universe is the source of all law and order. Thus, it is said that even the mighty gods, Mitra and Varuna, have obtained their power and might through rta.⁵ The Maruts, those heavenly powers,

⁴A. A. Macdonnell, Vedic Mythology, p. 11.

⁵R̥g-Veda, 1.2.8. (unless otherwise noted, all reference to the Vedas are to the translations of Max Müller and Hermann Oldenberg as found in the Sacred Books of the East (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1891, 1897), vols. xxvii and xlvi.)

are said to come from the seat of rta.⁶ The whole universe is founded upon rta and moves according to it.⁷ "The dawn follows the path of rta, the right path; as if she knew them before. She never oversteps the regions. The sun follows the path of rta."⁸ Rta is the way of right action; the path that leads from evil to good. In the Rg-Veda the prayer to the gods is, "O Indra, lead us on the path of rta, on the right path over all evils."⁹

The closeness of this concept of rta to the concept of dharma is seen in the fact that in a world where the chief duty of man is to offer sacrifice, because the creation of the world itself as well as its maintenance is the effect of sacrifice, offering sacrifice is the means for maintaining the order and law of the universe, which order is expressed by the concept of rta. As Surendranath Dasgupta

The objects of a sacrifice were fulfilled not by the grace of the gods, but as a natural result of the sacrifice. The performance of the rituals invariably produced certain mystic or magical results by virtue of which the object desired by the sacrificer was fulfilled in due course like the fulfillment of a natural law in the physical world.¹⁰

This would make dharma, as the effect of sacrifice (maintenance of order), and rta, as the prevailing order, nearly synonymous.

⁶Rg-Veda, 4.21.3.

⁷Rg-Veda, 4.23.9.

⁸Rg-Veda, 1.24.8.

⁹Rg-Veda, 10.133.6.

¹⁰Surendranath Dasgupta, History of Indian Philosophy (Cambridge: University Press, 1963) vol. 1, p. 22.

Whatever the precise historical relationship between the two terms, it is plausible that the concept of dharmā should, in time, come to do the work of the concept of ṛta also, for the Vedic sense of "dharmā" refers to the effect of sacrifice, which effect is the maintenance of ṛta or order.¹¹ Furthermore, it is likely that the ṛta or order of the sacrifice itself came to be regarded as dharmā, which would provide further impetus for absorbing the concept of ṛta into that of dharmā. As A. B. Keith points out, the concept of ṛta" . . . has no future history in India,"¹² which suggests that the concept became wedded to, or a part of, the concept of dharmā.

The close relationship of the concepts of ṛta and dharmā in the Vedic period suggest that the concept of dharmā (as including the concept of ṛta) was already then a very broad and pervasive concept, referring to order and law in the universe, the effects of human activity (in the form of sacrifices), the obligation to indulge in sacrificial activity for the maintenance of the order of the universe, and the rules for performing the sacrifices.

That the concept of dharmā included both the concept of right and the concept of order before the composition of the Upaniṣads is clear from the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, where the King is called the "upholder of dharmā," from

¹¹According to H. N. Sinha, dharmā is the successor of the early Vedic ṛta which the Āryans brought with them when they settled in India. (H. N. Sinha, Sovereignty in Ancient Indian Polity (Calcutta: Luzac, 1938), p. 3.).

¹²A. B. Keith, Religion and Philosophy of the Veda (Cambridge, Mass.): Harvard University Press, 1925, vol. 1, pp. 248-249.

which the conclusion is drawn that he is to do and speak only what is right.¹³

In the Upaniṣads the most remarkable statement of the nature of dharma is found in the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad:

Yet He (Brahman) did not flourish. He created further an excellent form, dharma. This is the power of the Kṣatra (ruling class). Therefore, nothing is higher than dharma. Even a weak man hopes to defeat a strong man by means of dharma, as with the help of a king. Indeed, that dharma is truth. Therefore they say of a man who speaks the truth that he speaks the dharma or of a man who speaks the dharma that he speaks the truth.¹⁴

This statement is important because (1) it reveals that dharma is of the nature both of morality and reality, (2) it shows that dharma is regarded as superior to mere physical strength, thus indicating that morality is superior to physical force, and (3) this passage, taken to imply (1) and (2), has had a great deal of influence on the thought and life of the Indian peoples.

That the identification of dharma with truth makes it a concept of reality in addition to a concept of morality is clear from the identification of truth with reality, an identification found throughout the Upaniṣads. But truth itself is regarded as being a moral concept in the Upaniṣads, as is brought out clearly in the Muṇḍaka: "Truth alone conquers, not untruth. By truth is laid out the path leading to the gods by which the sages who have their desires fulfilled travel

¹⁴Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, 1.4.14. (All references to the Upaniṣads, unless otherwise noted, are the translation of S. Radhakrishnan in The Principal Upaniṣads (London: Allen and Unwin, 1953).)

to where is that supreme abode of truth"¹⁵ Therefore, the identification of truth and dharmā results in dharmā being a concept of morality and reality, and by reason of the identification of truth and reality it follows that all three of these fundamental concepts, dharmā, truth, and reality, have a moral content. The second point, that dharmā is superior to physical force, is plausible if the universe itself is conceived to be moral, or of the nature of dharmā. This statement in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad supports the view that dharmā is both ultimate reality and ultimate value, which is a logical development of the identification of rta and the early Vedic sense of dharmā.

In addition to this rather metaphysical view of dharmā, the Upaniṣads recognize another aspect (or sense) of dharmā, as is clear from the following statement, taken from the Chāndogya:

There are three branches of dharma; sacrifice, study, and charity. The first of these is self-control, the second is pursuit of wisdom in the house of the teacher, and the third is absolutely controlling his body in the house of the teacher. All these attain to the worlds of the virtuous.¹⁶

According to this statement, one's dharmā consists in that which one ought to do, and this corresponds roughly to the concept of duty. This sense of dharmā is also brought out in the Taittirīya:

¹⁵Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, 3.1.6. The first sentence of this quotation, "Truth alone conquers, not untruth," is the motto inscribed on the seal of the Indian nation.

¹⁶Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 2.23.1.

Having taught the Veda, the teacher instructs the pupil: Speak the truth. Practice dharma. Let there be no neglect of your reading Let there be no neglect of truth. Let there be no neglect of dharma. Let there be no neglect of prosperity. Let there be no neglect of study and teaching.¹⁷

It is not clear from this statement whether dharma is merely one duty among others, or whether the listing of the various things to be done or abstained from is merely the listing of the various duties comprehended under dharma. Given the later expressions of the concept of dharma that appear in the Dharma Śāstras, the more plausible interpretation would be that dharma is not one thing to be done among others, but comprehends all the various things to be done. Interpreted in this way, the sense of the statement would be: "Do your dharma. Your dharma consists in telling the truth, providing for the welfare of others, . . ."18

From the fact that it is explicitly stated that this is the advice given to the pupils upon completion of their studies, it is not implausible to assume that one's dharma, in the sense of one's obligation to carry out one's duties, arises because of a particular position in society or station in life. That is, in virtue of being an accomplished student, one has certain duties or dharmas to perform,

¹⁷Taittiriya Upaniṣad, 1.11.1.

¹⁸There is no reason why dharma should not be used in a comprehensive sense as suggested here, and also to refer to a particular thing to be done. For example, "Do your dharma; do your dharma of reading, do your dharma of telling the truth, etc."

just as being a professor one has certain duties or dharmas to perform.

In addition to referring to the moral order of the universe and to the particular duties of a person consequent upon his station in life or position in society, "dharma" sometimes is used in the Upaniṣads to refer to the qualities of a thing. This meaning of dharma is found in the Chāndogya, where it is said: "He who knowing this meditates on the Sāman as good, all good qualities (dharmas) would quickly approach him and accrue to him."¹⁹

The different senses of dharma referred to thus far, as found in the Vedas and Upaniṣads are also found along with added senses, various analyses and explanations, and suggestions provided as to the applicability of the concept of dharma to human existence in the Dharma Sāstras, the Dharma Sūtras, the Epics, and the Bhagavad Gītā.²⁰

¹⁹Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 2.1.4.

²⁰The two most important epics are the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata, the latter containing as a part the Bhagavad Gītā, which because of its importance and tremendous influence is usually regarded independently of the rest of the epic. The Dharma Sūtras include: Apastamba, Baudhāyana, Hiranyakeśin, the Dharma Sūtra of Gauṭama, and the Dharma Sūtra of Vasiṣṭha. Of the Sāstras, the Manava Dharma Sāstra is regarded very highly by the Hindus, and the Artha Sāstra of Kauṭilya and the Kāma Sāstra of Vātsyāyana are indispensable for an analysis of traditional Indian social thought. For details concerning the character and dates of the various Dharma Sāstras and Sūtras (of which there are more than seventy) see P. V. Kane, History of the Dharma Sastras, vol. 1, pp. xii-xlvi. (Poona: Bhadarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1931, 1941.)

The oldest extant Dharma Sūtra is that of Gautama. In common with most of the literature dealing with dharma, among the earliest remarks of the work is found a description of the sources of dharma. In the Gautama Sūtra it is said that the source of dharma is the Veda, along with the tradition and practices of dharma-knowing persons.²¹

The Āpastamba Dharma Sūtra lists the same sources of dharma: "The authority for dharma is the consensus of those who know dharma and the Vedas."²²

Manu describes the Vedas, Smṛtis, character, the conduct of virtuous people, and reason as the sources of dharma.²³ Yājñyavalkya repeats Manu's list of the sources of dharma.²⁴ In the Mahābhārata none of the sources of dharma listed in the literature just referred to are excluded, and truth, wholesome custom, and applicability are added as sources of dharma.²⁵

²¹Gautama Dharma Sūtra, 1.1-2. Unless otherwise noted, references to the Gautama, Āpastamba, Vasiṣṭha, and Baudhāyan Dharma Sūtras are to the translation of Georg Buhler, in The Sacred Books of the East (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1879, 1894), vols. ii, and xlv.

²²Āpastamba Dharma Sūtra, 1.1.1.2.

²³Manu Dharma Sāstra, 2.6. References to this work are to the translation of R. Shamasastri (Mysore: Sri Raguveer Press, 5th ed., 1956.)

²⁴Yājñyavalkya Smṛti, 2.1.1.36-39. References to this work are to the translation of S. C. Vidyarnava, in The Sacred Books of the Hindus (Allahabad: The Panini Office, 1918) vol. xxi.

²⁵Mahābhārata, 12.101.2-5. References to the Mahābhārata are to translation of the critical edition, various editors (Poona: Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, 1954).

The character of the sources of dharma recognized by the various works dealing with this subject suggests that the primary meaning of dharma in these instances is "a rule for action," or, "a norm for behavior." The recognized sources of dharma provide likely answers to the question, "How can I know what is the right thing to do?" This question, if answerable by appeal to what other people are doing, or what is prescribed somewhere, is a question asking for a rule to follow in acting. The rules given, namely, custom, law, religious injunction, and reason, are the rules people all over the world do, in fact, follow in those cases where their activity is rule governed. But if this is so, then it follows that dharma is essentially that which ought to be done. It includes the duties and responsibilities (and the consequent rights) of a person in a given situation, as following from the application of the appropriate rules or norms.

That this is the primary sense of dharma in the Sūtras, Śāstras, and Epic literature will be clear from the following considerations. In addition to looking at the recognized sources of dharma in the Sūtras and Śāstras, one might just briefly examine the matters treated in the texts that purport to treat of dharma. Space does not allow, of course, for a listing of the contents of all the relevant works, but a partial list of the contents of the Dharma Sūtra of Gautama and a partial list of the contents of Kauṭilya's treatise on Artha will illustrate the point being made. In the Gautama Dharma Sūtra are included discussion of and rules for: interpretation of texts, sexual intercourse, taxation, respect for

parents and elders, the goods that a brāhmana (priest) might sell, payment of debts, goods allowable on certain occasions and for certain classes, time for initiation into study for each of the four classes, time and conditions for marriage, the dharma of women, kinds and degrees of sins, the killing of cows and other animals, etc.²⁶ In the Artha Sāstra of Kautilya is found a discussion of and rules for: kingship, provisions for state departments of commerce, agriculture, mines, forests, roads, etc., administration of justice, responsibilities to the harem, forms of marriage, etc.²⁷

An examination of the contents of the other Sāstras and Sūtras will yield similar lists. That the works on dharma should be given over to discussing and providing rules for such matters certainly shows that dharma was conceived to be a rule of action, or the action to be taken as a result of applying a rule of action. To do one's dharma is to act according to the appropriate rule, whether that rule proceed from reason, religious injunction, royal edict, or something else.

Although the Artha Sāstra of Kautilya is mainly concerned with rules for conducting the government of state, it is a useful source of information about dharma, as Kautilya claims to root his theory of state and government in

²⁶Gautama Dharma Sutra.

²⁷Kautilya Arthasāstra.

morality (dharmā).²⁸ According to Kauṭilya, the ruler of the people must be devoted to dharmā.²⁹ He is called the promulgator of dharmā, and his chief function is to uphold and administer dharmā. From the lists of duties and responsibilities of kings provided by Kauṭilya it is clear that dharmā is being used in at least three different senses, which might be labeled (1) the sense of moral duty, (2) the sense of moral law based on truth (a kind of natural law), and (3) civil law.

The king's own dharmā (sva-dharmā) is to uphold and administer dharmā, as is evident from the declaration that by the righteous performance of his dharmā (duties of office) he will secure the bliss of heaven.³⁰ This suggests that the king has a moral duty to administer the law (which law might be civil law or the law of justice and righteousness--law of dharmā). This is evidence that Kauṭilya is using dharmā to refer to moral duties. Further evidence that Kauṭilya intends the word in this sense is found in his description of the sage king. The sage king must have control over the six passions of sex, greed,

²⁸This is, of course, not to deny that Kauṭilya was realistic politician. There might be considerable incongruity between Kauṭilya's efforts in the early part of his treatise to make theory of state and government an extension of morality and his "power politics" in later portions. But unless it were felt important to ground a theory of state and government in dharmā, it is unlikely that Kauṭilya would have found it necessary to even pay lip service (if this is all it amounts to, in the end) to the ideal of dharmā.

²⁹Arthasāstra, 6.1.

³⁰Arthasāstra, 3.1.

vanity, haughtiness, and excessive pleasure.³¹ The fulfillment of the dharma (moral duty) of a king consists in providing for the happiness of the people, as is clear from the following statement:

Of a king, the sacred duty or vow is his readiness to action, satisfactory discharge of his duties, in his performance of sacrifice, and equal attention to all. In the happiness of his subjects lies his happiness; in their welfare his welfare; not what pleases him shall he consider as good, but whatever pleases his subjects shall he consider as good. Hence the king shall ever be active and perform his functions.³²

This makes it clear that the performance of kingly duties rests on the desire to serve the common good of the people, making the king's duties social as well as moral duties, for if he carried out his duties he would gain prosperity in society and bliss in heaven.³³ It is Kautilya's view that the king best fulfills his own moral duty when he sees to it that each of his subjects performs well his own duties. Thus the maintenance of the sva-dharma (self-rule) of his subjects is at the same time the sva-dharma of the king.

Kautilya also uses dharma in the sense of law, where usually it is some form of civil law that is meant, as is clear from the subjects treated in the third book of the Arthasāstra, entitled, "Concerning Dharma." This third book deals with forms of contracts, settlement of legal disputes, regulations of

³¹Arthasāstra, 1.6.

³²Arthasāstra, 1.19.

³³This view of Kautilya's is remarkably similar to that of Kaṇāda, who says that dharma is that which serves the well-being of a person both in this world and in the next. (Vaisesiksūtra, 1.2.) For Kautilya, the prosperity in society included one-sixth the produce of the community, which may provide motivation when the ideal does not!

marriage, inheritance laws, laws of ownership, debt recover, etc. But even this sense of dharma is linked with the concept of dharma as moral duty and the concept of dharma as moral law, for the very name for judges used by Kautilya--dharmamūla--means "rooted in dharma," and it is emphasized that in cases of conflict between various laws and traditions the case must be decided according to dharma, where obviously dharma is something other than civil law or tradition, as a solution being given for cases where appeal to tradition or civil law fails.³⁴ Four sources of appeal in settling legal and social controversies are provided: (1) royal edicts, (2) tradition, (3) pertinent evidence, and (4) dharma. If there be a conflict among the first three, then there can be appeal only to dharma. In explanation of this, Kautilya states that dharma is rooted in truth, and therefore is the moral law of the universe.³⁵

³⁴According to Bandyopadhyaya, "next to being impartial the king was to use discretion and reason. In adjudicating he was to consider dharma, vyavahāra (custom), and samsthā (received opinions), but in interpreting the law he was bound to follow the dictates of reason and equity (or nyāya /Logic/). In cases where custom was in disagreement with the text of the Dharma Śāstras or where the Śāstric rule was at variance with practice, he was to uphold the righteous custom by using his reason. Furthermore, in interpreting the Śāstras the king was to be guided more by the dictates of reason and equity (dharmanyāya). In such cases of disputed interpretation, the dictates of righteous conscience alone were to be the highest text of the Sruti (tradition) and the written injunction must be regarded as lost." (N.C. Bandyopadhyaya, Kautilya (Calcutta, 1927), p. 223.)

³⁵Arthasāstra, 3.1.

The connection between truth and dharma was referred to earlier, in connection with the passage from the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, in which dharma was declared to be truth and truth dharma.³⁶ This relationship was seen to rest upon the assumption of the essential morality of the universe; where the very structure and order of the universe is rule-determined, or according to dharma. It is likely that Kauṭilya's statement that dharma is rooted in truth represents his view of the universe as basically moral.³⁷

Dharma refers to the order and structure of the universe also in both of the major Epics. In the Rāmāyaṇa it is said that dharma, in addition to being a source of profit and pleasure, is the essence and strength of the world.³⁸ In the Mahābhārata, dharma is defined in terms of its capacity for the sustenance of the world.³⁹

It is thus clear that dharma is regarded as the norm of the universe and of all beings and activity in the universe, in addition to being regarded more specifically as the norm for all human activity. As referring to norms or rules of behavior of human beings, dharma is described as "forbearance, veracity,

³⁶See above, p. 26.

³⁷It is possible that Kauṭilya's view of the basic morality provided a possible justification for his social realism, on the assumption that as goes the universe, so goes man.

³⁸Rāmāyaṇa, 3.9.30. References to this work are to the translation of M. N. Dutt, Valmiki Ramayana (Calcutta, 1894).

³⁹Mahābhārata, 12.110.10-11.

restraint, self-control, ahimsā (literally, 'non-hurting'), obedience to the teachers, pilgrimages, sympathy, honesty, non-stealing, reverence for the gods and saints, and freedom from anger."⁴⁰ In the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, the dharma common to all beings is described as, ". . . ahimsā, truthfulness, non-covetousness, freedom from anger, freedom from desire, and activity directed to what is agreeable to and good for beings."⁴¹

A hierarchy of norms or dharmas is commonly recognized. A very clear recognition of a hierarchy is indicated by the statement in the Mahābhārata that "The highest dharma is ahimsā," for without a hierarchy a highest is not possible.⁴²

As is to be expected if the primary sense of dharma in the literature on dharma is that of a norm of action or a rule for action, one's dharma will depend upon one's position in society, one's social class, job, etc.⁴³ And this is precisely what is found in the Dharma Sūtras and Dharma Sāstras. Thus, in the Manu Smṛti it is said that the Smṛti came into existence because the sages asked Manu to impart instruction in the dharmas of all the varṇas (social classes).⁴⁴

⁴¹Bhāgavat Purāṇa, 11.17.21. Translation by Eugene Bournouf, Bhagavata Purana (Paris: 1847).

⁴²Mahābhārata, 12.110.10.

⁴³And social class, job, etc., will, ideally, be determined by the characteristics of the individual.

⁴⁴Manu, 1-2. (The varṇas or social classes will be considered in a subsequent portion of this chapter.)

In the Āpastamba Dharma Sūtra it is said that there are four āśramas (stages in life): (1) being in the teacher's house, (2) the stage of the householder, (3) the stage of being a forest dweller, and (4) the stage of being a muni (ascetic).⁴⁵ Various rules are then laid down for life in each of these stages. In fact, the chief function of the various works on dharma is to establish the norms of action for each of the social classes (varṇas) and to establish norms for the various stations in life with which a person might be associated (the āśramas). The dharmas (or rules) associated with the various stations in life and the various social classes will be discussed in the following two sections. But there are rules or dharmas appropriate to no peculiar station or class, but which are the norms appropriate to human beings as such. That is, as a consequence of the position that the universe is essentially moral it follows that human beings occupy a particular station in the universe and belong to a particular class of being merely in virtue of being human. This class of rules or dharmas is recognized as sādhāraṇa dharma, or dharma common to all humanity, and is usually included as one of the classes of dharmas.⁴⁶

Turning to the Bhagavad Gītā, it is found that the expression "dharma" is most frequently used in a sense closely related to the literal meaning of its root,

⁴⁵ Āpastamba Dharma Sūtra, 2.9.21.

⁴⁶ For example, the Baudhāyana Dharma Sūtra, 11.25.1.10., lists the classes of dharma as: varṇa dharma, āśrama dharma, guṇa dharma, naimittika dharma, and sadhāraṇa dharma.

"dhr" ("that which holds together and supports").⁴⁷ Dharma is considered as the innermost nature of a being; the principle of its essential being; that which is responsible for the development of the being and without which the being ceases to exist. The dharma of man, according to the Gītā, is not something imposed from the outside, but is a potentiality rendered actual by the actions he performs (and by the attitudes with which the actions are performed). Thus, every man has, in a sense, his own dharma (sva-dharma), which is the innermost law of his being, which serves to regulate his conduct, his righteousness, his very sense of right and wrong. This is especially evident in the eighteenth chapter, where dharma is declared to be of the nature of sattva, which is the true nature of the self.⁴⁸

One's sva-dharma, as his essential principle of being and action is inseparably linked up with one's position in society. Thus, when Arjuna, not knowing whether to fight or run, tells Kṛṣṇa, "I am confused about dharma, I beseech you, tell me the better thing to do," he is advised to do whatever is in accord with his nature.⁴⁹ Kṛṣṇa answers Arjuna by saying, "considering your own dharma, you should not flee. For a kṣatriya (warrior) nothing is

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The Gītā has been the principal guide to life for the majority of Hindus for many hundreds of years, and has been piously read and studied by millions. It is regarded by many to be the summation of Hindu practical philosophy. The translation used for this work is that of Swami Nikhilananda, The Bhagavad Gita (New York: Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center, 1952).

⁴⁸ Gītā, 18.9.

⁴⁹ Gītā, 2.31.

better than a just war."⁵⁰ "But if you renounce your own dharma and refuse to fight this righteous war, then certainly you will incur sin."⁵¹ This is followed by the advice, "better is one's own dharma, though imperfectly performed, than the dharma of another well performed. Better is death in the doing of one's own dharma: the dharma of another is fraught with peril."⁵²

From the foregoing it is clear that the concept of dharma in the Gītā includes the notion of a rule of action, as Arjuna is asking for a rule to apply in this particular case, and Kṛṣṇa supplies the rule by reminding Arjuna that among the duties accruing to the office of the warrior is the duty of fighting the just war. But more is at stake than just the duties attending a particular job. If it were only that Arjuna must fight because he has the job of being a warrior, then he could give up the job and take up another, say teaching the Veda. But this seems to be ruled out by the warning that it is better to die doing one's own job than to take up the job of another. The justification for the conclusion that Arjuna ought to die at his job rather than take up another, is that Arjuna is peculiarly well-suited for his present job; it is his nature to be a warrior. His very being is to be a warrior. His being might have been different, in which case it would be contrary to his nature to fight. But, his nature being what it is, he would be going contrary to his nature if he did not fight this war, thus

⁵⁰Gītā, 2.31.

⁵¹Gītā, 2.33.

⁵²Gītā, 3.35.

doing something that would tend to destroy his entire being. Therefore, he must do his duty and fight. It is his dharma because he is a kṣatriya and he is a kṣatriya because this is his nature, and to maintain its own being and the order of the universe each being must act in accord with its own peculiar nature. In fact, acting according to one's own nature, and thereby contributing to the order and maintenance of society and the entire universe is regarded as a form of worship of God, the Creator and Maintainer of the universe: "By worshipping Him from whom all beings proceed and by whom the whole universe is pervaded--by worshipping Him through the performance of dharma does a man obtain perfection."⁵³ The very next verse after the one just quoted repeats the advice given earlier: "Better is one's own dharma, though imperfect, than the dharma of another well performed. He who does the dharma ordained by his own nature incurs no sin."⁵⁴

It would thus appear that dharma in the Gītā has much in common with dharma in the Veda, for in both places dharma is what is to be done, and in both places dharma is what is to be done because so doing maintains and supports the entire universe. Of course, in the Rg-Veda, the reason dharma, as including rta, is held to maintain and support the universe is that everything is

⁵³ Gītā, 18.46.

⁵⁴ Gītā, 18.47.

thought to be regulated by sacrifice, whereas in the Gītā, the reason dharma is thought to maintain and regulate the activities of the universe is that the very nature of beings constitutes their dharma. Therefore, to realize their natures, all beings must act in accord with dharma.

From the foregoing study it is clear that the most important consideration in acting is to insure that dharma will not be violated. It follows, that in organizing society it is of the utmost importance to insure that the institutions of society will provide for activity in accord with dharma, for only in this way can the individual achieve self-fulfillment. This study has shown that running through the different senses of dharma is the common notion of a rule of action, which is connected to the literal meaning of the root, "dhr," which means "to support," "to maintain," for the justification of a rule is that it maintains or supports. By implication, dharma came to mean that which one should do, for a rule of action is a guide to action. Thus, one should do whatever the rule of action provides for. In respect to the individual, one's dharma may be one's moral duty. But with respect to society, dharma provides rules for settling disputes and possible conflicts between individuals, for only when conflicts of interests between individuals and groups are kept to a minimum can society be well maintained. Thus, dharma has a social sense and significance. This it has at two levels. First, society should be structured so as to allow the individual to fulfill his own dharma. Secondly, the rules of society should provide opportunity for self-realization greater than would be possible without social rules.

Means of Life: Artha

As man does not live by righteousness and justice alone, but requires also bread and bed, it is only natural that in addition to the puruṣārtha (human aim) of dharma, there should be the human aims of means of life (artha) and enjoyment (kāma).

One of the major treatises on artha is the Arthasāstra of Kauṭilya. In it the concept of artha is explained in the following way: "The sustenance of mankind is termed artha, the earth which contains mankind is termed artha; that science which treats of the means of acquiring and maintaining the earth is the Arthasāstra."⁵⁵ This makes it clear that this Sāstra is composed as a guide to the acquisition of the means of life in this world, a recognition of artha as one of the goals or aims of life.⁵⁶

The concept of artha in the Arthasāstra corresponds closely to the literal meaning of "artha." The root "r" from which the substantive is formed means literally, "that which one goes for." From this basic meaning which is, roughly, aim or purpose, derives the meaning of thing, matter, or affair, from which stem the meanings of advantage, wealth, profit, and prosperity. Kauṭilya is concerned primarily with artha as things and wealth, law and order, etc., which are pursued as aims or goals in society.

⁵⁵Kauṭilya, p. 494.

⁵⁶Kauṭilya defines artha as the vṛti (means) of man." (4.1)

That the various material means of life were already considered as goals or aims in life in the Vedic age is clear from the prayers to the gods requesting wealth in one form or another. Prayers such as, "O Indra and Soma, bestow upon us enduring riches and renown, accompanied by offspring," and "May we be the masters of enduring riches," are common in the Vedas.⁵⁷

Even though the Upanisads deal for the most part with the spiritual rather than with the social life of man, there is no denial of the need and desirability of artha for biological and social existence. Artha is recognized as a legitimate goal, and frequently the gods are asked to provide various forms of artha. Thus, in the Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad the god Rudra is beseeched: "Make us not suffer in our babies or in our sons, make us not suffer in lives, or in cows, or in horses; kill not our powerful warriors, O Rudra, for we call on you always with oblations."⁵⁸ And Yājñavalkya, concerned always with things of the spirit, seemingly unconcerned with material things, when asked by the king Janaka whether he desired wealth and cattle or success in philosophizing, replied that he wanted both. As R. D. Ranade interprets this episode:

⁵⁷See Rg-Veda, 1.73.1; 2.2.6; 3.1.6; 3.1.9; 4.36.9; 5.4.11; 6.31.1; 8.6.9; etc. The most common term for wealth in the Rg-Veda is rayi, which included cattle, food, progeny, shelter, abundant sustenance, etc.

⁵⁸Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad, 4.22.

It is evident that Yajnyavalkya desired both material as well as spiritual good; and in spite of his otherwise supremely idealistic teaching, he possibly wanted to set an example by showing that the consideration of external good cannot be ignored even by idealists as constituting a moment in the conception of the highest good.⁵⁹

The fact that recognition was given to artha as a legitimate goal in life in the Upaniṣads, whose chief function is to impart instruction concerning the spiritual nature of man, provides evidence for the view that artha was generally regarded as one of the basic aims of man at this time.

Turning to literature not so exclusively concerned with a metaphysic of spirit, it can be seen that artha as a goal or aim in life is given a position very high in the hierarchy of goals. It is to be expected that Kauṭilya would emphasize the importance of artha, as his job was to provide instructions of the procuring of artha. Accordingly, it is not surprising that he should say, "artha and artha alone is important, inasmuch as charity and desire depend upon artha for their fulfillment."⁶⁰ But similar importance is attached to the goal of artha in the Mahābhārata, where it is said: †

What is here regarded as dharma depends entirely upon wealth (artha). One who robs another of wealth (artha) robs him of his dharma as well. Poverty is a state of sinfulness. All kinds of meritorious acts flow from the possession of great wealth, as from wealth spring all

⁵⁹R. D. Ranade, A Constructive Survey of the Upaniṣads (Poona: Oriental Book Agency, 1926).

⁶⁰R. Shamasastri, Kauṭilya Arthasastra, p. 12.

religious acts, all pleasures, and heaven itself. Wealth brings about accession of wealth, as elephants capture elephants. Religious acts, pleasure, joy, courage, wrath, and learning; all these proceed from wealth. From wealth (artha) one's merit increases. He that has no wealth (artha) has neither this world nor the next.⁶¹

The traditions of the common people, as reflected in the literature of the Pāñcatantra,⁶² indicate that artha was regarded as being one of the basic goals of life towards the end of the traditional period. The following remarks indicate the nature of the views regarding artha in this work: "The smell of wealth is quite enough to wake a creature's sterner stuff. And wealth's enjoyment even more."⁶³ Wealth gives constant vigour, confidence and power."⁶⁴ "Poverty is a curse worse than death."⁶⁵ Virtue without wealth is of no consequence."⁶⁶ "The lack of money is the root of evil."⁶⁷

⁶¹Mahābhārata, 12.8.11.

⁶²This work was compiled sometime between 700 A.D. and 1100 A.D. See A. W. Ryder, The Panchatantra (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1925), the translation used here.

⁶³Ryder, The Panchatantra, P. 210.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 207.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 6; p. 209.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 208.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 211.

In the Sūkranītisara, artha is defined in various ways: money or capital, a substance, that which is earned, what is capable of individual appropriation, gold, that which can be accumulated, a source of prosperity, that which can be enjoyed, and that which is transferable.⁶⁸ Using artha to refer to the means of life (which includes many of the senses of the word defined in the work) it is urged that "daily acquisition of artha is proper for the man with wife, children, and friends. It is also necessary for charity. Without it what good is the existence of man?"⁶⁹ It is further said that "in this world, artha is the means of all pursuits. Let him, therefore, try to acquire artha in legitimate ways."⁷⁰

It is clear from the foregoing considerations that as one of the four purusārthas or aims in life, artha refers to whatever means are necessary for man's life. The emphasis is on the means to biological and social life, but the means to spiritual life are not excluded, as it is recognized that biological and social life are conditions of spiritual life. This analysis also shows that contrary to popular views, India, at least traditional India, was by no means a thoroughly ascetic community. The recognition of artha as one of the four basic goals of man disproves this. The securing of material plenty is advocated as a goal in life, subject only to the important restriction that no artha be pursued in violation of dharma.

⁶⁸ Sūkranītisara, 2.645-658. (The translation consulted is that of Benoy Kumar Sarkar, The Sukraniti (Allahabad: The Panini Office, 1925.)

⁶⁹ Sūkranītisara, 3.352-355.

⁷⁰ Sūkranītisara, 3.364-367.

Enjoyment (Kāma)

Accumulations of wealth or property are not valuable primarily for their own sake however, but mainly for the pleasure and enjoyment they make possible. Accordingly, it is recognized that another of the important goals of man is enjoyment of kāma.

That kāma was already recognized as one of the four basic human aims (purusārthas) in ancient times is clear from the statement in the Gautama Dharma Sūtra: "One should not allow the morning, midday and evening to remain fruitless so far as dharma, artha, and kāma are concerned."⁷¹ In the Āpastamba Dharma Sūtra it is said that "a man should enjoy all such pleasures as are not opposed to dharma."⁷² Manu, commenting on the good life for man, comments:

Some declare that the good of man consists in dharma and artha; others opine that it is to be found in artha and kāma; some say that dharma alone will give it; the rest assert that artha alone is the chief good of man here below. But the correct position is that the good of man consists in the harmonious coordination of the three.⁷³

In the Gītā, Kṛṣṇa describes himself as the dharma that is not opposed to kāma,⁷⁴ which would suggest that kāma is not wrong or evil; not something to be avoided.

⁷¹Gautama Dharma Sūtra, 9.46. Yājñyavalkya, 1.115, says the same thing.

⁷²Āpastamba Dharma Sūtra, 2.8.20.22.

⁷³Manu, 2.224.

⁷⁴Gītā, 3.38.

Manu provides the main reason for regarding kāma as a human aim (purusārtha) by explaining that "the end of all activity is some presumed good."⁷⁵ Manu develops this remark by suggesting that it is the natural proclivity of all beings to strive after the satisfaction of the common desires for food, drink, and sex, and that therefore these desires are not to be denied and frustrated, but are to be indulged and regulated.⁷⁶ This suggestion that the enjoyment associated with the satisfaction of the various desires be made, or regarded, one of the basic aims of man implies that kama is a legitimate reason for acting. It also suggests that kāma is the enjoyment of the satisfaction of regulated desires.⁷⁷

It is emphasized over and over again that kāma is to be pursued in conformity with dharma. According to Kautilya, dharma must regulate both the acquisition and the enjoyment of it. He refers to kāma as "the fruit of wealth."⁷⁸ He also advises that "one may enjoy kāma provided there is no conflict with dharma and artha. One should not lead a life of no pleasure."⁷⁹ It is clear that in this last remark Kautilya is thinking of kāma in terms of pleasurable activities.

⁷⁵Manu, 2.4.

⁷⁶Manu, 5.56.

⁷⁷Kāma as enjoyment of the satisfied regulated desires is quite a different thing from kāma as the regulated enjoyment of the satisfaction of desires. It is the former that is being advised, and not the latter. It is rarely, if ever, said that enjoyment should be controlled, but it is frequently said that desires should be controlled. It is difficult to conceive what "controlled enjoyment" would be.

⁷⁸Kautilya, 9.7.

⁷⁹Kautilya, 1.7.

That kāma should come to be used in the sense of pleasurable activities is understandable in terms of the derivation of the term. Kāma is derived from the root "kam" which means "wish, desire, love." What one enjoys one wishes for and desires, and, by definition, one enjoys pleasurable activities. The Mahābhārata says that "kāma is desirable; it is an attribute of the self. Both dharma and artha are sought for the sake of kāma."⁸⁰

The classic definition of kama is found in the Kāma Sūtra of Vātsyāyana:

Kāma is the enjoyment of the appropriate objects of the five senses of hearing, feeling, seeing, tasting, and smelling, assisted by the mind, together with the soul. The ingredient in this is a peculiar contact between the organ of sense and its object, and the consciousness of pleasure that results from the contact is called kāma. Of all three, dharma, artha and kāma, dharma is better than artha, and artha better than kāma. But artha should always be the first practice of the king, for the livelihood of the people is obtained from it only. Again, kāma being the occupation of the public women, they should prefer it to the other two.⁸¹

From Vātsyāyana's definition it is clear that kāma is used in different senses. It is used in a very broad sense to refer to any enjoyment, pleasure or happiness whatsoever. But his reason for regarding kāma inferior to artha might be that he was also thinking of kāma as sensuous pleasure or sexual pleasure, and therefore it would not be good to squander one's artha on such pleasure. Again, from his advice that the prostitutes should regard kāma as

⁸⁰Mahābhārata, Santiparva, 190.6-9.

⁸¹Vātsyāyana, ch. 1. (The translation used is that of R. Burton and F. A. Arbuthnot, The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana (London: Panther Books, 1963).)

higher than the other goals it might be inferred that he was thinking of kāma in terms of sexual activity or the various pleasures of association with women (including sexual intercourse). In either case, his advice seems sound enough, for sex is the job of the prostitute, and of course should do one's job well.

The human aim of kāma cannot be sexual activity, however, for one of the reasons for indulging in sexual activity is the enjoyment associated with it. This suggests that it is the broader sense of kāma that is to be regarded as the human aim or purusārtha. This is also suggested by the comments on kāma considered previously.

It is clear from this discussion that kāma includes the enjoyment of the objects of artha. The objects of artha are not considered as ends in themselves, apart from the enjoyment of them. Kāma is used in a very broad sense, including pleasures at different levels, and of different kinds. Recognition of kāma as one of the purusārthas is a recognition that man is a pleasure seeking animal, and that enjoyment of an activity is reason for indulging in that activity.

Complete Freedom (Moksa)

In addition to the basic human aims of dharma, artha, and kāma, there is the human aim of complete freedom or moksa. The word "moksa" derives from the root "muc" meaning "to release," "to free," and means "emancipation," "liberation," or "release from." As is to be expected from the meaning of the word, the human aim of moksa is a state of liberation or complete freedom. It is the ultimate goal of man, as it is the condition in which man is freed from all

suffering and pain, all births and deaths, and everything not of his essential nature. In the final analysis, everything is to be done for the sake of moksa, for this is the ultimate good. Even dharmā is transcended in this state. Kṛṣṇa, the embodiment of the supreme spirit of the universe advises Arjuna, "Come to me alone, leave behind all dharmas."⁸²

Complete freedom (moksa) as the supreme goal of life presupposes a certain conception of man and the universe. As the ultimate goal of life this complete freedom represents perfect existence, which depends on the perfection of man. In order to determine what man's perfection consists in, and thereby to determine what a completely free existence is, it is necessary to determine the underlying conception of man. This, though not concerning social organization directly, is directly relevant to social philosophy, for without an understanding of the underlying concept of man it is impossible to design or understand and evaluate social organization which will provide for the kind of life the nature of man requires. And to understand the nature of man it is necessary to look at what, in the last analysis, constitutes the good life for man, the provisions for which constitutes the main function of society and social organization.

Since the early Upaniṣads are concerned almost exclusively with answering the questions "What is the nature of man?" and "What is the nature

⁸²Gītā, 18.66.

of reality?" it is appropriate to turn to them for a discussion of the nature of man and the universe.

As there is repeated identification in the Upaniṣads of ātman and brahman, and ātman is always regarded as the true or genuine self of man, and brahman is regarded as the nature of reality, it is possible to get at the nature of both man and the universe by considering what ātman and brahman are.

According to Radhakrishnan, "The word 'ātman' is derived from 'an,' meaning 'to breathe.' It is the breath of life Ātman is the principle of man's life, . . ." ⁸³ Raju suggests that "ātman" may be derived from the root "āt," meaning "to move continually." Raju also points out, however, that "these etymologies do not take us very far, for in Sanskrit every letter can have many meanings, and so it is still difficult to say how a word with more than one letter was used originally." Raju's advice is well taken, but the primary concern here is not with the original meaning of the word, but the meaning of the word in the Upaniṣads, and Radhakrishnan's derivation of the word seems to fit the usage of "ātman" in the Upaniṣads. The basic sense of the word as used in the Upaniṣads seems to be that of "source of being," or "power of life and action." This would indicate the relevance of Radhakrishnan's derivation, for breathing is the power of life. This would also indicate that

⁸³ P. T. Raju, "The Concept of the Spiritual in Indian Thought," in Philosophy East and West (Oct., 1954), p. 196.

Raju's derivation is relevant if "to move continually" is taken in the sense of "power to move continually." The following quotations from the various Upanisads serve to illustrate the point that "ātman" refers to source of power; in fact, that it refers to the ultimate power in the universe.

In the Taittirīya Upanisad it is said: "From this ātman arose ether; from ether air; from air fire; from fire water; from water the earth; from the earth herbs; from herbs food; from food the person (puruṣah)."⁸⁴ This statement appears to answer the question, "What is the source of . . .?" and ātman apparently refers to the primary source. It does not seem to distort the passage to read it as follows: "From this power arose ether; from the power of ether air, etc." The suggestion is that this statement may answer either or both the what and the how of the question, "Whence this?"

In the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanisad the following statement occurs: "In the beginning there was only the ātman, in the shape of a person (puruṣah)."⁸⁵ Here again, it looks as though "ātman" refers to the primary source, in this case the primary source of the universe.

The Katha Upanisad speaks of the ātman this way: "beyond the senses are the objects (of the senses) and beyond the objects is the mind; beyond the

⁸⁴Taittirīya Upanisad, 2.1.1.

⁸⁵Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanisad, 1.4.1.

mind is the understanding and beyond the understanding is the great ātman.⁸⁶

This statement suggests that the power referred to as "ātman" is not an obvious power, but a basic power. The self (ātman) to be realized does not consist in the body or the ego or reason, but something beyond all of these; that which gives these their power.

The Māndūkya Upanisad identifies ātman with brahman in the following words: "All this is, verily, brahman. This ātman is brahman."⁸⁷ A few lines later, that which has been so identified is described as follows: "This is the lord of all, this is the knower of all, this is the inner controller; this is the source of all; this is the beginning and the end of all beings."⁸⁸ Here it is very clearly indicated that ātman refers to a power (this is the inner controller") and source of all things. The remark, "this is the lord of all" also suggests that the ātman is a controlling power. In the Brhadāranyaka Upanisad a similar characterization of the ātman occurs: "This ātman, verily, is the lord of all beings, the king (rāja) of all beings."⁸⁹

Bearing in mind the identity of ātman and brahman, it will be useful to investigate the nature of man also by considering what "brahman" refers to in the Upanisads.⁹⁰ Granted the asserted identity of ātman and brahman it is only

⁸⁶Katha Upanisad, 1.3.10.

⁸⁷Māndūkya Upanisad, 6.

⁸⁸Māndūkya Upanisad, 6.

⁸⁹Brhadāranyaka Upanisad, 2.5.15.

⁹⁰See, in addition to Māndūkya 6, also Chāndogya, 3.14.1, and Brhadāranyaka, 1.4.10, for explicit identification of ātman and brahman.

natural to expect that the two expressions will refer to one and the same thing. This is, in fact, just what is found. The word "brahman" is derived from "brh", a verb with the sense of "to make great," and "to grow." The ending of "brahman," "-man" indicates that it is the formation of a noun of action. The literal rendering of the term would be, therefore, "great making." Assuming that that which makes great is a power, it would appear that brahman would correspond to power. Usage of "brahman" in the Upaniṣads confirms this rendering of the expression.

In the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad it is said: "Brahman, indeed, was this in the beginning. It knew itself only as 'I am Brahman'. Therefore, it became all."⁹¹ There is here, in addition to the suggestion that brahman is the source of everything, the suggestion that all things proceeded from this brahman only when it recognized itself as the primary source of power.

In the Taittirīya Upaniṣad, Varuna teaches his son what brahman is, saying, "That, verily, from which these things are born, that, by which when born they live, that into which when departing they enter, that seek to know. That is brahman."⁹² Again, there is the suggestion that brahman is a source of things, and also the additional suggestion that brahman is the sustainer and destroyer of things.

The Kena Upaniṣad describes brahman as the ultimate agent. The question

⁹¹Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, 1.4.10.

⁹²Taittirīya Upaniṣad, 3.1.1.

is asked, "By whom willed and directed does the mind light on its objects? By whom commanded does life the first, move? At whose will do (people) utter this speech? And what god is it that prompts the eye and the ear?"⁹³ The forthcoming answer is that all these are done by brahman. That by which one hears is brahman, that by which one speaks is brahman, that by which one thinks is brahman, etc.⁹⁴ The first section concludes with the statement: "That which is not breathed by life, but by which life breathes; that, verily, know thou, is brahman and not what people here adore."⁹⁵ There can be no doubt that if sight, hearing, speech, etc., are regarded as powers, then brahman is the power behind the power, the ultimate power in the universe, and the ultimate power of man.

It would thus appear that the ultimate perfection of man lies in realizing himself; in identifying himself with the ultimate source and power of his being. This realization will set man free, for this is the ultimate source of power and it is held to be one with the ultimate source and power of the universe, and there is, therefore, no power to limit man, as he is, in his deepest being, his genuine self, the highest power. So long as a person identifies himself with inferior powers he is bound by the higher powers. Consequently,

⁹³Kena Upanisad, 1.1.

⁹⁴Kena Upanisad, 1.5; 6.7.

⁹⁵Kena Upanisad, 1.9.

the goal is to realize that one is not merely body, not merely biological life, not merely social organism, etc., but is, ultimately, the power and source of all these. This realization (in the sense of completely identifying oneself with this ultimate power) is the realization of the true or genuine self, and results in complete freedom (moksa).

The Dharma Sūtras and Dharma Śāstras all presuppose the goal of complete freedom (moksa), and offer instructions for living a life according to dharma in order that moksa be obtained. In the Gautama Dharma Sūtra a list of the dharmas according to which every person should act is given, followed by the remark that "he who has these qualities of the self, who acts according to the listed dharmas, realizes non-difference from Brahman and reaches the world of Brahman."⁹⁶ Manu observes that one should "assiduously do that which will give satisfaction to the inner self (antarātman). Not parents, nor wife, nor sons will be a man's friends in the next world, but only righteousness."⁹⁷ In the Mahābhārata it is said that every person should strive for moksa.⁹⁸ The advice is given that the dharmas prescribed in the Mahābhārata for the different stages in life and for the different social classes are sufficient, if well performed, for leading one to the highest fruition of truth.⁹⁹ Yājñyavalkya,

⁹⁶Gautama Dharma Sūtra, 8.23-26.

⁹⁷Manu, 4.161.

⁹⁸Mahābhārata, Sāntiparva, 320.12.

⁹⁹Mahābhārata, Sāntiparva, 353.2.

after describing the various dharmas, states that the highest dharma (paramo dharma) of man is self-realization.¹⁰⁰

In summing up the discussion of moksa, it may be pointed out that essentially moksa, as the ultimate goal of man, refers to complete self-realization or self-perfection. The supposition is that man has within himself the seeds of his own perfection, or that man is potentially perfect. But potential perfection implies actual imperfection. The problem, therefore, is one of moving from imperfect existence to perfect existence. This, according to the theory, is to be accomplished by progressively freeing the innermost self. All this is relevant to social philosophy because of the integral view of man taken in traditional India. Man is regarded as more than a biological organism, more than a social organism. But this is not to deny that man is biological or that he is social. It is to assert that those characterizations do not completely characterize man; man is something more than these, though man's being includes these elements. Consequently, it was held that the fulfillment of the biological and the social are conditions for the fulfillment of the something higher than man also is. Or, to put it differently, it was held that in order to obtain moksa man must first have a free biological and free social existence. Hence, the rules or dharmas that provided for the ideal life in the society, the rules for the different stages in life or for the different social classes, provided

¹⁰⁰Yājñyavalkya, 1.8.

also for the attainment of moksa, even though additional rules might be required.

Relations Between Human Aims (Purusārthas)

Having now considered the four purusārthas individually it is appropriate to turn to a brief consideration of them collectively, inasmuch as they are all aims or goals in life. As aims or goals in life, dharma, artha, kāma, and moksa are the goods presupposed by human action. But the Hindu view is that man always acts in order to obtain what is regarded as good, and that though there are various goods or goals in life, yet there is one goal that is sought beyond all others, and with respect to which the other goals may be (though they need not be) means. The supreme goal for the Hindu is moksa. Moksa is considered as the highest or final aim or goal. That moksa is considered to be the ultimate goal of man is clear from the previous discussion of that purusārtha. But dharma, artha, and kāma are also considered to be purusārthas, and therefore, a question arises concerning the relations between these four basic aims. First of all, the question can be raised as to whether all four are actually aims or goals, as the literal meaning of the term "purusārtha" would indicate.

Karl Potter, in his recent book on Indian philosophy, provides a brief analysis of the purusārthas in the first chapter.¹⁰¹ There he suggests that artha, kāma, and dharma are not aims or goals at all, but attitudes towards states.

¹⁰¹Karl Potter, Presuppositions of Indian Philosophy (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1963) pp. 1-25.

He says:

I do not see what else these terms (dharmā, artha, and kāma) can mean if they do not refer to attitudes. They do not refer to states, in any commonly recognized sense of that term; states are the sorts of things that people are in, and one is never in a state of artha rather than kāma; instead he takes an artha attitude towards some things in his environment and kāma attitudes towards other things. They do not refer to objects, or classes or objects, or relations or classes of relations, as has been argued above. They are "aims of life," I conclude, just in the sense that they represent capacities for taking things in a certain way. This is what I have in mind in calling them attitudes.¹⁰²

The reasons for this conclusion of Potter's are provided a few pages earlier where he says:

To call these four things (dharmā, artha, kāma and mokṣa) "aims" suggests that they are states of control toward which one aims. Now, in some sense perhaps the last of the series, mokṣa, is a state, but the sense in which this is so is one that makes it inappropriate to apply the same description to the other three. There is no state of artha, or of kāma, or of dharmā which a man may come to realize and rest in. Rather, these terms are to be construed more subtly, perhaps as attitudes or orientations.¹⁰³

The very fact that the four aims under consideration have, throughout the Hindu tradition, been referred to as puruṣārthas suggests that they have not been considered as attitudes or orientations, for there is no established sense of "artha" that coupled with "puruṣa" might refer to an attitude or orientation.

¹⁰²Potter, p. 10.

¹⁰³Potter, p. 6.

The conclusions of the studies of the four purusārthas undertaken in this chapter suggest that all four are to be taken to refer to aims or goals in life, and offer no support of Potter's position. These conclusions do suggest that dharma, artha, and kāma can mean something even if they do not refer to attitudes, for they might refer to aims or goals. When Potter says that he does not see "what else these terms can mean," he is obviously thinking that either they refer to states or that they refer to attitudes, no other alternatives being possible. That these terms do not refer to states is correct, for the reasons Potter points out. It is difficult to understand, however, where he gets the conclusion that "to call these four things 'aims' suggests that they are states." Surely, a man's goal in life might be to accumulate as much money as he can. He can aim at accumulating money. This in no way implies that he must ever be in the state of money. It does not even imply that he must ever have any money, for the goal or aim is the accumulating of money. He aims at accumulating money and accumulating money is an activity, not a state. Similarly with kāma. A man's goal in life might be to enjoy himself as much as possible. He might aim at only a variety of pleasure. But this does not imply that he must be in a state of pleasure or enjoyment; it does not even imply that he must be enjoying himself or "having" pleasure, but only that he must aim at "having" pleasure or enjoying himself. Furthermore, even if he is taking pleasure in this or that, or enjoying himself, it does not follow that he is in any particular state whatsoever. It follows only that he is indulging in some activity or the

other, and that what he is doing pleases him, or that he is enjoying what he is doing.

Potter's mistake seems to be two-fold. First, he assumes that artha and kama are either states or attitudes, when, in fact, they are activities aimed at. Secondly, he assumes that only states can be aims or goals, and this mistake supports the first. If it is insisted that the end, goal, or aim of human activity must be a state and cannot be an activity, then one must also account for Aristotle's mistake when he argues that the end of all human activity is an activity and that it cannot be a disposition or capacity.¹⁰⁴ But Aristotle seems to have much the better of it here, for as he points out, all sorts of things, non-living and living, human and non-human have capacities, but it does not follow from this that they pursue or seek some end or goal. Even if Potter were correct in claiming that the purusārthas were not aims or goals, but attitudes, it would not follow that various aims or goals have not been recognized throughout the Hindu tradition, but only that these goals have not been any of the four under consideration here. But further, if Potter were correct in maintaining this, then it would follow that there must be some aims or goals other than the commonly recognized ones, for the end at which an activity aims cannot be an attitude, for an attitude is taken towards some activity or state. But in this case Potter should not have stopped with an analysis

¹⁰⁴Aristotle, Ethics: 1176b.

of the purusārthas of dharma, artha, kāma, and moksa, for by his own admission, he is seeking to come to some understanding of the ultimate values in the philosophy of Hindu culture.¹⁰⁵

Potter's basic mistake lies in identifying aims or goals with states. His view seems to be that the aim or goal of an activity is something that comes after the activity itself. Thus, if one played a game of tennis for the pleasure of it, the pleasure would be something that one would experience after the game was finished. But this does not seem to make sense at all. The pleasure involved is not something apart from the activity of playing and consequent upon it, but is part and parcel of the activity itself. If the pleasure of playing were something that could be enjoyed only after the game was finished one would be in a hurry to get the game over so that he could enjoy the pleasure. But this is absurd. If one really enjoys (gets pleasure from) playing tennis he is not concerned to finish the activity as quickly as possible, but would rather protract the activity, which shows that pleasure is not to be regarded as a state consequent upon the completion of some activity, but is to be considered in conjunction with, or as an aspect of, the activity. To take another example: One's aim might be to beat Kramer in tennis. To beat Kramer is the end or goal of the intended activity. He aims to beat Kramer. But does he beat Kramer during or after the game? According to Potter's view of a goal or aim, beating

¹⁰⁵Potter, p. 1.

Kramer would be a state, consequent upon playing the game. But this is not so. Beating Kramer is just playing tennis and playing better or scoring more points than Kramer. Beating Kramer is not something that happens after the game is finished. Beating him is an activity, an activity of playing tennis better than Kramer, and for all that, remains the end, goal, or aim of the activity.

Potter's objections regarding dharmā, artha, kāma, and mokṣa as aims or goals in life are thus seen to be based on a mistake, and provide no reason for considering the purusārthas as other than aims or goals. He is correct in pointing out that mokṣa differs from the other aims, though he is wrong in suggesting that the difference is due to mokṣa being an aim while the other three are attitudes. The essential difference between mokṣa and the other aims is that mokṣa is the ultimate or final aim in life; that which is desired only for its own sake and not for the sake of something else, while the other aims are desired both for their own sake and for the sake of something else; namely, mokṣa.

There is also a difference between dharmā on the one hand, and artha and kāma on the other. Dharma is primarily regulatory, regulating the various activities of man so that the desired goals are reached with a minimum of undesirable consequences. In a sense one aims directly at artha or kāma, but only indirectly at dharmā, in order that artha, kāma, and mokṣa be obtained. This follows from the nature of dharmā as a rule or norm of action, for one does not so much aim at rules of action, but at employing such rules so that the consequences will be desirable. But inasmuch as none of the other aims or

goals can be accomplished unless the activity is well directed, dharmā is the most important of the puruṣārthas, for without it the other goals are not realizable. Thus, one must aim at dharmā, at employing such rules of action as well enable him to accomplish the aims of artha, kāma, and mokṣa. Consequently, dharmā is properly regarded as the first of the puruṣārthas, for unless one acts according to the moral rules governing himself and the universe he cannot attain mokṣa.

It may be noted here that Potter gives priority to the aims of artha and kāma, an order never found in the traditional literature. The traditional order accords dharmā the first place. The reason for this is that unless everything that is done is done according to the proper rules (dharmas) it all comes to nought. Thus, in order that accumulation of wealth and its enjoyment conduce to mokṣa the accumulation and enjoyment must be according to dharmā. Potter's failure to see this is most likely due to his confusing activities with attitudes.

The question might be raised as whether or not the traditional order of the puruṣārthas represents only a logical order, or whether it represents also a psychological order. It might be claimed that if it were the case that dharmā was the first puruṣārtha and mokṣa the last only logically, then perhaps a discussion of mokṣa would be irrelevant to a study of social philosophy, or relevant only incidentally.

But this order is obviously not only logical, for mokṣa could not come first in the temporal order, being dependent upon the realization of dharmā,

artha, and kāma. The realization of moksa is dependent upon a life lived according to dharma in which the goals of artha and kāma are realized. Thus, in the temporal order, dharma is the first of the purusārthas, for without attaining to dharma the other goals are unrealizable. But in logical order moksa is first, for it provides reasons and justification for realization of the other three purusārthas. Beyond this, however, it is to be recognized that the realization of all four are requisite for the unqualified good-life. That is, if man is going to actually become the being he is only potentially he must, as a first condition, live a life in which dharma, artha and kāma are realized.

In concluding this discussion, then, it might be said that since dharma, artha, kāma, and moksa represent the basic aims or goals of man, the realization of these goals will provide the good life. In other words, the question of what constitutes the good life for man is answered in traditional Indian thought by replying, "The good life is the life wherein are realized the ideals of dharma, artha, kāma and moksa."

The Fourfold Classification of Human Society

Granted that the realization of the goals of dharma, artha, kāma and moksa constitutes the good life, the question may be raised as to how, according to the thought of traditional India, society should be organized in order that these goals be most satisfactorily realized. The rest of this chapter will be devoted to answering this question.

According to one of the main principles of social organization dominant in traditional India all the members of society should be divided into different groups or classes, according to the characteristics and qualifications of the individual and according to basic activities required for the well-being of society. The result of such classification is known as varṇa, and is often confused with caste.

The expression "varṇa" will be used in this work to refer to a system of social classification of individuals according to their qualifications, tendencies, and dispositions. This scheme of classification yields the four classes or varṇas of brāhmana, ksatriya, vaiśya, and sūdra. The institution of varṇa under discussion here is to be distinguished from the practice of caste in India.

Caste is one of the most conspicuous and most discussed social practices in India. "Caste" is a word introduced by the Portuguese to refer to the practices of social classification they found in India upon their arrival.¹⁰⁶ It is usually used indiscriminately for classification according to birth (jāti) and for classification according to occupation or ability. Used in place of varṇa, caste refers to an ideal fourfold classification based upon occupation and qualification. Used as a substitute for jāti, it refers to a system of classification based on birth and heredity. Because of a failure to keep these matters separate caste has sometimes been discussed in terms of actual practices, and sometimes has

¹⁰⁶See N. K. Dutt, Origin and Growth of Caste in India (London: Paul & Trench, 1921) p. 1.

been discussed in terms of social ideals. But more often than not, both phenomenon have been lumped under caste, the result being a confusion between practice and ideal.

As an expression referring to a system of classification based on birth and heredity "caste" refers to those social groups distinguished from each other by (1) heredity (a person belongs to a group in which born), (2) endogamy and exogamy (marriage allowed only within the group and only to certain persons within the group); (3) dietary regulations (only certain foods and beverages allowed certain groups), (4) occupation (the members of a given group may follow only a given profession), and (5) position in the social scale (a given group will be either higher or lower than another group on a social scale).¹⁰⁷

As such, "caste" refers to various social practices that have been present in India from the time of the Dharma Śāstras to the present time. These practices may represent degenerations of the ideals advocated in traditional India or they may have been in existence prior to the formulation of principles for social organization and may have been the cause of attack by social critics, which attacks resulted in the formulation of the varna theory. In either event, the practices are not to be confused with the ideals of social organization advocated in the relevant literature.

¹⁰⁷ This list of characteristics of caste is in agreement with the lists of Ghurye, Caste and Race in India (Bombay: Popular Book Depot, 1932), Dutt, Origin and Growth of Caste in India, Fick, The Social Organization in North-East India in Buddha's time (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1920). trans. (London: Methuen, 1930.).

The system of social classification advocated in the Sūtra and Śāstra literature of traditional India is a scheme based upon ability and disposition, and as such has little in common with caste as explained above.¹⁰⁸ In the interests of clarity the classification according to ability and disposition will be referred to as varṇa classification, as opposed to the caste classification described above.

Caste (jāti) was never advocated in the traditional literature as an institution for the sake of realization of the purusārthas. It may be a degeneration of the ideal advocated as a social theory or ideal. Consequently, caste is of little importance for the present study, which will concern itself with the institution of varṇa.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸Manu, for example, distinguished between caste (jāti) and varṇa, recognizing only the usual four varṇas, but mentioning about fifty jātis (castes).

¹⁰⁹Whether as suggested here, caste is a degeneration of the ideal of varṇa, or whether caste is not a degeneration of varṇa at all, but has existed as a social practice already in early India, prior to any varṇa theory, is of no great importance here. If the latter view is adopted it may be suggested that the practice of caste (jāti) existed in early India and was regarded as being undesirable, therefore provoking a theory of varṇa in an attempt to reform the practice. On the other hand, even if caste is a degeneration of varṇa, and there is a connection between the two in that varṇa did, historically lead to caste, still this is of little importance to a discussion of the ideal social organization of traditional India; the social organization that was advocated in the social literature of the period. It is a irrelevant (and as relevant) as the existence of the practice of suppressing the rights of the Negroes in the United States is to a discussion of the theory of civil liberties in the United States. That is, the existence of degenerate or corrupt practices does not argue either for or against theories of social organization (though there may be a psychological connection).

The varna scheme is essentially a means of classifying persons in society according to their natures and dispositions in order that each might contribute most efficiently to the maintenance of society while at the same time realizing his own nature as fully as possible. It is recognized that not all persons are born physically identical or with the same characteristics and dispositions, and that, therefore, some are better suited for certain roles in society than are others. The consequence of the recognition is the classification of individuals into either the brāhmaṇa, ksatriya, vaiśya, or sūdra class, to which correspond the social functions of priest and teacher, security maintenance, production, and labor, respectively. Such a system of social classification has existed in India, at least as an ideal, for the last three or four thousand years, as references to it are found already in the Rg-Veda.

Origins of Caste and Class

The word varna (literally, "color") appears frequently in the Rg-Veda and is used to refer to color or to what is light on most occasions.¹¹⁰ Sometimes it is used to refer to a group of people of a light or dark color, as when it is said that "Indra having killed the dasyus protected the ārya varna."¹¹¹ At one place there is reference to "asuryam varna," which may be a reference to the

¹¹⁰See, for example, Rg-Veda, 1.73.7; 2.3.5; 9.97.15; 9.104.4; 9.105.4; 10.124.7.

¹¹¹Rg-Veda, 3.34.9. See also Rg-Veda, 2.12.4; 1.179.6; 1.130.8; 4.16.13.

sūdra tribe.¹¹² The literature of the Rg-Veda marks an antagonism between two groups of people referred to as the āryas and the dasyus.¹¹³ As Indra is asked to mark those who are āryas and those who are dasyus (who differ in culture as they are splendid (barhismat), whereas the dasyus are considered lawless (avrata)),¹¹⁴ it would appear that the two groups of people referred to in the Rk differ both in the color of their skin and in their cultures. This would support the commonly held view that the one group, the āryans, are the conquering Indo-Europeans, and the other group, the dasyus, are the conquered people native to India. It would thus appear that at least two classes of individuals were recognized already in Vedic times. But since these two classes were the conquering and the conquered classes it is unlikely that these two classes constituted classes within society, for these were two distinct societies, at war with each other, and most likely neither society would have admitted that members of the other society were also members of its own society. Consequently, the opposition between the dasyus and āryas cannot account for the origin of the various social classes within society, though this opposition may be causally connected with qualification for membership in a particular class.

¹¹²Rg-Veda, 9.71.2. In the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa, 1.2.6, it is said that the sūdra is "asūrya varṇa." Coming after the description of a fight between opponents of different tribes or cultures, this supports the view that sūdra refers to a tribe.

¹¹³Rg-Veda, 1.51.8; 1.103.3; 2.11.2, 4, 8, 19; 9.88.4. etc.

¹¹⁴Rg-Veda, 1.51.8.

Instead of looking for the source of social organization in the opposition between conquerors and conquered, it might more plausibly be assumed that when the Āryans moved into India they had within their own group already distinguished between the occupations of the priestly class, the warrior class, and the class concerned with the production of food-stuffs and daily necessities. Later, when the conquered people began to integrate with the Aryans, and were admitted within the Āryan society they, the dasyu varna, or sūdra, were used as servants or menial workers, and in time came to constitute the social class of menial laborers known as the sūdra varna.

In addition to the support for this theory received from the literature itself, this theory seems plausible on several counts. (1) It is reasonable to expect a people to make distinctions between different classes on the basis of occupation, and it would be unreasonable to expect the Āryans to be an exception to this. (2) History shows that is usually the case that a conquered people become the slaves or servants of the conquering people at first, and only gradually come to be integrated into society, starting at the lowest levels of society. There is no evidence to show that anything other than this happened when the Āryans invaded India. (3) The exception of (2) would account for the distinction between the ārya varna and the dasyu varna already indicated, and would also account for the rather sharp distinction, at least in the earlier periods, between the sūdra varna and the other three varnas, as the dasyus

made the transition from a conquered and slave people to a part, though the lowest part, of the Āryan society.

Support for the above view is found in the Rg-Veda, where there is a chant to the different classes (apparently among the āryas, for the context of the chant seems to exclude dasyus) which goes: "One to the high sway (brāhmaṇa), one to exalted glory (ksatriya), one to pursue his gain (vaisya), and one to his labor (sūdra); all to regard their different vocations, all moving creatures has the dawn awakened."¹¹⁵ Also, there is a reference by name to the "Brāhma, Ksatram, and Visah," apparently a reference to different classes and probably a reference to a strictly Āryan classification, since only three classes are mentioned.¹¹⁶

The Purusa Sūkta suggests an account of the origination of the different varnas according to which the brāhmaṇa varna represents the mouth of Purusa (the cosmic man), the rājanya (ksatriya) varna represents the arms, the vaisya varna represents the thighs, and the sūdra varna represent the feet of the Purusa.¹¹⁷ As it is likely that no need would have been felt to account

¹¹⁵Rg-Veda, 1.113.16.

¹¹⁶Rg-Veda, 8.35.16.

¹¹⁷Rg-Veda, 10.90.12. Even though this verse is a later interpolation, as suggested frequently, still it is considerably older than the Upaniṣads, and older than most of the Brahmanas. Thus, granting a later date of composition, this Sūkta still provides evidence for the existence of social classification into the various varnas in Rg-Vedic times, for apparently it was felt that this Sūkta belonged with the Rg-Veda, and had been omitted for some not very good reason, and accordingly was inserted into the Rk at 10.90.12. Furthermore, that this social classification was so obvious and thought so important at the time of the composition of the Purusa Sūkta, only a few hundred years after the rest of the Rk was composed suggests that it was not unheard of in earlier times.

for the origin of the varnas unless they had already existed, this Sūkta is strong evidence for the existence of the various varnas already in Vedic times.

Turning to the Brāhmanas, evidence is found for the existence of the four varnas throughout the literature. The Satapatha Brāhmana lists the varnas by name as brāhmana, rājanya (same as ksatriya), vaisya, and sūdra.¹¹⁸ In the same Brāhmana the various varnas are distinguished from each other according to modes of sacrifice, dress, ways of address, jobs, etc., which shows that varna classification existed at this time.¹¹⁹ The sūdra is definitely recognized as one of the varnas at this time, as evident from the following prayer: "Bestow splendour on our Brāhmanas; bestow splendour on our Ksatriyas; bestow splendour on our Vaisyas and Sūdras; bestow splendour on me."¹²⁰

The Upaniṣads presume the existence of the various varnas as is evident from the efforts to account for their origins. In the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad it is said that in the beginning was brāhman alone, who in order to flourish, created the four orders of men (and dharmā): "So these came; the brāhmana, the ksatriya, the vaisya, and the sūdra."¹²¹ The Chandogya Upaniṣad contains

¹¹⁸Satapatha Brāhmana, 5.4.6.9.

¹¹⁹Satapatha Brāhmana, 2.1.3.4; 2.4.11; 5.3.2.11; and 1.1.4.12.

¹²⁰Taittirīya Brāhmana, 5.7.6.4.

¹²¹Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, 1.4.11-16.

the account of a brāhmana teaching the Veda to a sūdra, and accepting his daughter in return,¹²² thus recognizing these two classes. In the same Upaniṣad it is said that those who conduct themselves well here will attain good birth as brāhmanas, ksatriyas, or vaisyas, while the evil will be re-born as dogs or swine.¹²³

While the foregoing may be taken to indicate existence of the varna classification in Vedic and Upaniṣadic times, the clearest statements about the nature of this classification are to be found in the Dharma Sūtras, the Dharma Sāstras, and the Epics, all of which recognized the existence, at least as an ideal, of this classification.

The duties and privileges of the varnas are discussed in all the works on dharma. The brāhmana, ksatriya, and vaisya varnas have the right and duty to study the sacred texts, to offer sacrifice and to give gifts.¹²⁴ These rights and duties are the rules (dharmas) of all these varnas. In addition to the rules common to the several varnas there are rules proper to each varna.

Maintainers of Culture (Brāhmanas)

Manu says that "a brāhmana should always and scrupulously study the Veda; that is his highest dharma; everything else is inferior dharma."¹²⁵ Yājñyavalkya

¹²²Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 4.2.

¹²³Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 5.10.7.

¹²⁴See Āpastamba Dharma Sūtra, 2.5.10.5-8; Baudhāyana Dharma Sūtra, 1.10.2-5; Vasiṣṭha Dharma Sūtra, 2.13-19; Manu, 1.88-90; Yājñyavalkya, 1.118; and Viṣṇu Dharma Sūtra, 2.10.

¹²⁵Manu, 4.147.

observes that "the Creator created brāhmana for the preservation of the Vedas, for the satisfaction of the gods and the fathers (pitṛs), and for the safeguarding of dharma."¹²⁶

The ideal of the brāhmanas was very high, for not only were they to perform sacrifices, preserve and teach the sacred literature, but they were to avoid wealth and cherish a life of poverty, while furthering cultural preservation and advancement. Manu says that a brāhmana should acquire no more wealth than required for mere sustenance, not worrying about his body.¹²⁷ The best brāhmana is one who accumulates only enough material goods for the day, without worrying about the morrow.¹²⁸ Yājñyavalkya says that a brāhmana should live on the grain left in the field after the crops have been gathered.¹²⁹ The thinking behind the frugal life prescribed for the brāhmanas seems to be that knowledge is the greatest of all wealth, and that if one attempt to pursue both knowledge and material wealth he will lose the knowledge.¹³⁰

Protectors and Administrators (Kṣatriyas)

Concerning the rights and duties of the kṣatriya varṇa, Manu says that whereas the brāhmana may teach the sacred texts, perform sacrifices for others

¹²⁶Yājñyavalkya, 1.198.

¹²⁷Manu, 4.2-3.

¹²⁸Manu, 4.7-8.

¹²⁹Yājñyavalkya, 1.128.

¹³⁰See Manu, 4.15, 17, 12; Yājñyavalkya, 1.129; Gautama, 9.63; Viṣṇu, 63.1.

and accept gifts, all of these are forbidden the ksatriya.¹³¹ A ksatriya is to carry arms,¹³² protect the world.¹³³, punish the law-breakers,¹³⁴ and see that all persons do their duties.¹³⁵ "The king (a ksatriya) has been created to be the protector of the varnas and āśramas, who, all according to their rank, discharge their duties.¹³⁶ That one of the main tasks of the ksatriyas was to carry on the business of war is indicated by the statement that "a king who, while he protects his people, is defied by foes, be they equal in strength or stronger or weaker, must not shrink from battle, remembering the duty of the ksatriya."¹³⁷ Kautilya remarks that "in virtue of his power to uphold the observance of the respective duties of the four varnas and of the four āśramas, and in virtue of his power to guard against the violation of the dharmas, the king is the fountain of justice.¹³⁸ Similar dharmas are prescribed for the ksatriyas by Yājñyavalkya,¹³⁹ and the Viṣṇu Dharma Sūtra.¹⁴⁰ In the Sukranīti it is

¹³¹Manu, 10.77.

¹³²Manu, 10.79.

¹³³Manu, 7.3.

¹³⁴Manu, 7.20.

¹³⁵Manu, 8.418.

¹³⁶Manu, 7.35.

¹³⁷Manu, 7.47.

¹³⁸Kautilya, 3.1.

¹³⁹Yājñyavalkya, 1.118-119.

¹⁴⁰Viṣṇu Dharma Sūtra, 2.5-9.

said that whoever can protect men and is valorous is a ksatriya.¹⁴¹ In the Mahābhārata those persons are classified as ksatriyas who study the Vedas, make gifts, and capture wealth.¹⁴² The Gītā lists 'heroism, high spirit, firmness, resourcefulness in battle, generosity, and sovereignty--these are the duties of a ksatriya, born of his own nature."¹⁴³

This evidence from the various texts dealing with the dharmas of this varna leaves no room for doubt that for the most part the ksatriyas were the class constituted by the rulers and administrators, head military personnel, chiefs of police forces, etc.

Producers (Vaisya)

The principal occupation of the vaisya varna was trade and agriculture, according to Yājñyavalkya.¹⁴⁴ Manu says that "after a vaisya has received the sacraments and has taken a wife, he shall be always attentive to the business whereby he may subsist and to tending cattle."¹⁴⁵ He is to "exert himself to the utmost in order to increase his property in rightful manner" and is to "zealously give food to all created beings."¹⁴⁶ The vaisya must also "know the value of gems, pearls, coral, metals, cloth, perfume and condiments."¹⁴⁷ He

¹⁴¹Sukranīti, 1.77, 78. (Benoy Kumar Sarkar, ed. and trans., The Sukranīti (Allahabad: The Panini Office, 1925.)).

¹⁴²Mahābhārata, Sāntiparva, 189.5.

¹⁴³Gītā, 18.43.

¹⁴⁴Yājñyavalkya, 2.118.

¹⁴⁵Manu, 9.326.

¹⁴⁶Manu, 9.333.

¹⁴⁷Manu, 9.329.

must know his weights and measures, how to sow and harvest, how to reckon probably loss or gain on merchandise, etc.¹⁴⁸ In the Mahābhārata the dharmas of the vaiśya are given as "study, making gifts, celebrating sacrifices and acquiring wealth by fair means."¹⁴⁹ According to the Gītā, agriculture, cattle-rearing, and trade are the duties of a vaiśya, born of his own nature.¹⁵⁰

It would seem, therefore, that the vaiśya of traditional India corresponds closely to the farmers and businessmen of modern society. His main concern is with operating a business and acquiring wealth.

Laborers (Sūdra)

The rights and duties of the sūdra are frequently given by indicating which of the privileges, rights and duties of the other three varṇas did not attend his varṇa. The sūdra is not to study or read the Veda, though the other three may. The prohibition for sūdras is indicated by the fact there is mention of the sacrament of Upanāyana only for the first three varṇas, and the study of the Vedas was never undertaken by the orthodox without this sacrament.¹⁵¹ Also,

¹⁴⁸Manu, 9.330-331.

¹⁴⁹Mahābhārata, Sāntiparva, 60.10-25.

¹⁵⁰Bhagavad Gītā, 18.44. The vaiśya varṇa dharmas listed here in the Gītā correspond almost exactly with the vaiśya varṇa dharmas given in Viṣṇu, 2.8, and in Yājnyavalkya, 1.118.

¹⁵¹The Vedic rule was that upanāyana should be performed in the spring for a brāhmaṇa, in summer for a rājanya or kṣatriya, and in autumn for the vaiśya. Considerably later this same rule is given in Āpastamba, 1.1.1.6. The fact that upanāyana is prescribed for only three varṇas may be taken to imply that only three varṇas existed at this time, which would indicate that the conquered people were not, at this time, considered part of society. Or, it may be that the fourth varṇa was included in the society, but was accorded a lower status than the other three.

the story of Satyākāma Jabala, in the Chāndogya suggests that not all of the varṇas were eligible to study the Veda.¹⁵² Satyakama, wishing to study the Veda, asked his mother if his family were such that he might study the Veda. Upon being told that he was illegitimate and the family of his father unknown, Satyākāma went to the teacher of the Veda and told him what his mother had told him about his birth. The teacher replied, "None but a brāhmaṇa could thus explain. Bring the wood, I will receive you as a pupil."¹⁵³ This story indicates that both teacher and boy were concerned with the boy's varṇa, and that his varṇa must be established before being admitted to the study of the Veda. This would have been unnecessary if all the varṇas were allowed to study the Veda.

After a very elaborate discussion of the matter, Jaimini concludes that the sūdra cannot consecrate the three sacred fires, and, therefore, cannot perform Vedic rites.¹⁵⁴ Manu advises that a sūdra could never be a judge or propound dharma.¹⁵⁵

But though there were many activities from which the sūdra was barred, and the distance between the sūdra and the vaiśya varṇas was far greater than between the other varṇas, the sūdra was a part of the society and as such had his

¹⁵²Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 4.4.1-4.

¹⁵³Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 4.4.4.

¹⁵⁴Jaimini, 1.3.25-38. M. L. Sandal, ed. and trans., Mimasa Sutras of Jaimini (Allahabad: The Panini Office, 1923).

¹⁵⁵Manu, 8.9.

duties to perform.¹⁵⁶ Manu says that "to serve brāhmanas who are learned in the Veda, householders, and the famous is the highest dharma of a sūdra, and this leads to beatitude."¹⁵⁷ A sūdra may be compelled to do servile work, for "he was created by the svayambhū (self-existent) to be the slave of the brāhmaṇa."¹⁵⁸ It is the nature of sūdra to serve and "though emancipated by his master, he is not free from servitude; as that is innate in him, who can set him free from it."¹⁵⁹ A sūdra was expected to be pure, serve his betters, be gentle in his speech,¹⁶⁰ and if he was desirous of merit and knew his dharma he committed no sin.¹⁶¹ Such a one, "keeping himself free from envy, imitating the virtuous" will not be censured, but will gain exaltations both in this world and in the next.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁶The position of the negro in the United States is in some ways comparable to the position of the sūdra in ancient India. The negroes were a conquered people, used as slaves, and gradually came to be integrated into the society, though usually not admitted to the professions or to the business world, working instead as janitors, scavengers, laborers, etc., for the most part. They were not allowed to sit next to whites, use their facilities, etc., though theoretically they were part of the same society. Nevertheless, the negroes were expected to fulfill their role in society, abiding by the law and doing their work. The same sort of situation seemed to be the case in India. Even in the case of murder the parallel holds, for in the South (U.S.A.) a negro who killed a white would invariably be put to death, though if a white killed a negro he would go free or receive a light sentence. In India a sūdra who killed a brāhmaṇa or kṣatriya would be executed, though if a brāhmaṇa killed a sūdra it was as though he had killed a goat, and probably would not be punished.

¹⁵⁷Manu, 9.334.

¹⁵⁸Manu, 8.413.

¹⁵⁹Manu, 8.414.

¹⁶⁰Manu, 9.335.

¹⁶¹Manu, 10.127.

¹⁶²Manu, 10.128.

In the Mahābhārata, the duties of the sūdra are given as service to the other varṇas, poverty and sacrifice (the sacrifice prescribed here is not Vedic sacrifice).¹⁶³ The Gītā very succinctly gives the dharma of the sūdra: "The dharma of a sūdra, born of his own nature, is action consisting of service."¹⁶⁴

The sūdra class was, it appears, a class of servant and menial laborers, given to working for the other varṇas.

Principles of Classification

These differences in the rights and duties of the various varṇas indicates that duties and rights accrue to an individual in virtue of belonging to a particular class in society. The dharmas of the four varṇas do not exhaust the dharma of man, however, as there are certain privileges and responsibilities that belong to a person inasmuch as he is a human being and a member of society. In addition to the duties and rights of their respective varṇas, the brāhmanas, ksatriyas, vaisyas, and sūdras have in common the dharmas of controlling their anger, telling the truth, forgiving others, begetting offspring of one's wife, pure conduct, avoidance of quarrels, uprightness, the maintenance of one's dependents, and justice, according to Bhishma.¹⁶⁵

Īsvara gives a similar list of dharmas common to all the varṇas (sarvaḥ varṇika dharma), suggesting also that hospitality towards all, the giving of

¹⁶³ Mahābhārata, Sāntiparva, 60.30-39.

¹⁶⁴ Gītā, 18.44.

¹⁶⁵ Mahābhārata, Sāntiparva, 60.7.

gifts according to one's means, and pursuing dharmā, artha, and kāma be included.¹⁶⁶ Ahimsā (literally, non-hurting) and self-restraint are usually also included in the list of rules for all humanity.¹⁶⁷

As seen in the section of this chapter dealing with dharmā, in traditional Hindu thought the universe is regarded as moral. Everything happens according to a rule, for the benefit of the whole; each class of beings in the universe, by functioning as designed contributes to the order and well-being of the whole. Man in society is no exception to this rule, and therefore in virtue of being human and occupying a particular place in the scheme of the universe he has certain activities to engage in, in order to maintain the well-being of the universe in general, and the well-being of society in particular. Sin and evil result when a person refuses to do those things over which he has choice and which are necessary for the well-being of the whole. The dharmas for all varṇas are the actions one should perform or the rules of action one should follow in order to avoid sin. The dharmas of the individual varṇas are rules to be followed if society is to be maintained, without which order man cannot make his contribution to the total order of creation, and if man is to realize his own nature to the fullest extent.

Looked at from a slightly different point of view, the universal dharmas

¹⁶⁶ Mahābhārata, Anusāsanaparva, 141.61-70.

¹⁶⁷ For example, see Manu, 10.63; Yājñyavalkya, 1.122; and Viṣṇu, 2.16-17.

(sādharaṇa dharmas) are those rules without which society itself would be impossible, while the varṇa dharmas are those rules without which society would not function well.

From still another angle, the distinction between varṇa dharma and sādharaṇa dharma reflects the result of considering man as man and of considering man as holding a particular office in society. This corresponds to the distinction made when it is said, "He is a very good man, but a terrible plumber." It is a recognition that a person is not to be completely identified with a job or profession. Thus, the distinction between sādharaṇa dharma and varṇa dharma is a distinction between man as man and man as a being with a particular social function.

These different ways of viewing the foundations of the varṇa system reflect the different historical attempts to explain the origin of the varṇa classification.

In the Puruṣa Sūkta the following description is found of the puruṣa: "The Puruṣa is all, that which was and which shall be."¹⁶⁸ It is of this puruṣa that it is said, "The brāhmaṇa was his mouth, his two arms were made the rājanya, his two thighs the vaiśya, from his feet the sūdra was born."¹⁶⁹ And from this same puruṣa the moon was born, as were the sun, the wind, the earth, the sky and the heavens, all from various respective parts of the puruṣa.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸Rg-Veda, 10.90.2.

¹⁶⁹Rg-Veda, 10.90.2.

¹⁷⁰Rg-Veda, 10.90.13-14.

This account of creation may be taken to suggest that the various parts of creation are related to each other according to the order present in the puruṣa, and furthermore, that the various classes of man, the four varṇas, are related to each other in a certain way, reflecting the order of their emanation from the puruṣa. Interpreted in this way, the Puruṣa Sūkta provides evidence for the view that the distinctions between classes of beings in the universe are according to a plan, and for the good of the whole.¹⁷¹

Another interpretation of the Puruṣa Sūkta¹⁷² would have it that since the brāhmanas came from the mouth of the puruṣa, which is the seat of speech, they are to be the teachers of mankind. The ksatriya, coming from the arms, the sources of strength, are to be the protectors of mankind. The vaiśya, coming from the lower part of the body, which consumes food, is to be the supplier of food for mankind. The sudra, coming from the feet, is to be the "footman" or servant of the rest of mankind. This interpretation also makes the varṇa classification functional, designed for the good of the whole.

In the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad brāhman is regarded as the creator of the varṇas. "In the beginning this world was brāhman, one only. Being one, that

¹⁷¹That this account of creation is a myth does not weaken its force as evidence of the fact that the Hindu view at the time was that the distinctions between the varṇas was functional according to an intelligent plan, whereby the whole creation benefited.

¹⁷²Suggested by Haug, "On the Origin of Brahminism," p. 4. (quoted by J. Muir, original Sanskrit Texts (London: Trubner & Co., 1868) vol. 1, p. 14.

did not flourish. Therefore, he created"173 The account of creation that follows lists the four varṇas, the various gods, the moon, the earth, etc.¹⁷⁴ The interesting feature of this account of the origin of the varṇas is that it regards the human varṇas to be constructed out of the divine varṇas: "So these four orders were created: the brāhmaṇa, the ksatriya, the vaiśya, and the sūdra. Among the gods the brāhmaṇ existed as fire, among men as brahmaṇa, as a ksatriya brāhmaṇ existed by means of the divine power . . ."175 This account suggests that it was necessary to distinguish Being into classes of beings for the benefit of Being. From this it is no great leap to the inference that classification of men into different varṇas is, according to the cosmic purpose, for the good of all.

In the Mahābhārata, the creation of the varṇas out of the Creator's body is given as the origin of the varṇa system of classification, just as it is in the Puruṣa Sūkta.¹⁷⁶ But there is also the account of the origin of the varṇas given by Bhisma in the Mahābhārata. According to Bhisma, the Lord of Men (Prajāpati) created the varṇas when he created man, for the welfare of men. But then men and women from the different varṇas intermarried and the varṇas became confused.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, 1.4.11.

¹⁷⁴Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, 1.4.11-17.

¹⁷⁵Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, 1.4.16.

¹⁷⁶Mahābhārata, Sāntiparva, 72.4-8.

¹⁷⁷Mahābhārata, Anusāsanaparva, 48.3.

Manu's explanation of the origin of the varna classification has it that "for the sake of the prosperity of the worlds He (the Creator) caused the brāhmana, the ksatriya, the vaisya, and the sūdra to proceed from his mouth, his arms, his thighs, and his feet."¹⁷⁸ Manu explicitly asserts that these classes were created for the welfare of the universe. He says, "But in order to protect this universe He, the most resplendent one, assigned separate occupations and duties to those who sprang from his mouth, arms, thighs, and feet."¹⁷⁹

The Gītā explanation of the basis of the varna classification is based on the proposition that there is no "creature here on earth, nor among the gods in heaven, who is free from the three gunas born of prakṛti."¹⁸⁰ The philosophy of prakṛti and the gunas is expounded in Sāṃkhya. Basically it is a theory about the nature and origin of the universe according to which there are two ultimate Beings; the Being of Spirit (Puruṣa) and the Being of Matter (Prakṛti). Because of the presence of Puruṣa, Prakṛti evolves into the many things that make up the furniture of the universe. Prakṛti itself is constituted of three elements, the gunas, called sattva, rajas and tamas. The differences among things are due to the proportions of these three gunas in the things. Thus,

¹⁷⁸Manu, 1.31.

¹⁷⁹Manu, 1.87.

¹⁸⁰Gītā, 18.40.

though the gunas are not qualities, but constituent elements of Prakṛti, they are the qualities of the various things that have evolved from Prakṛti. It is by reference to the gunas of a thing, therefore, that its differentiating characteristics are to be explained. Accordingly, when the Gītā says that a man belongs to a varna because of his gunas, a claim is being made that he belongs to this varna rather than another because he is different from those who belong to another varna, due to his nature being constituted by a different proportion of the gunas than is found in members of the other varnas.

This theory finds the basis of the varna classification in the differences that exist among people. It recognizes that some people have different abilities and dispositions than others, and that they are therefore better suited for certain kinds of work than are others. Kṛṣṇa says, "The four varnas were created by me according to the divisions of gunas and karmas."¹⁸¹ This statement supplies a philosophical foundation for the varnas, as the gunas are the fundamental distinguishing characteristics of things. It is only because of his gunas that a person belongs to one varna rather than another. "The duties of brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas, vaiśyas, and sūdras have been assigned according to the gunas born of nature."¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ Gītā, 4.13. Karmas are the activities or actions of beings, and follow from the nature of the being in question, being therefore a reflection of the gunas that make up that being.

¹⁸² Gītā, 18.41.

The Gītā theory of varna explains the insistence on one's doing one's own dharma rather than taking up another job with other duties or dharmas, for, while one's gunas may fit him for one job, they will render him unfit for another. The assumption is that one is in the varna for which his gunas fit him. Since the functions of the varnas differ, however, if a person qualifies for one varna by his guna arrangement it is unlikely that he will be qualified to function in another varna. Therefore, to act in accordance with his nature he must not attempt to perform the functions of a varna other than his own, but must content himself with the dharmas of his own varna.

This theory of varna also explains why it is not necessary to know the birth of a person in order to know his varna. When the teacher heard Satyakama's explanation of his illegitimacy and discovered that Satyakama did not know his father's varna, he at once recognized that the boy was a brāhmana, for it belongs to a brāhmana to desire to learn and to straightforwardly tell the truth, even in embarrassing situations.¹⁸³

That birth is not a determining characteristic of varna is clear from the conversation between Yudhiṣṭhira and the python (King Nahusha, cursed by a ṛsi). "Tell me," asked the python, "Who is a brāhmana?" Yudhiṣṭhira replied, "He in whom are noticeable truthfulness, charity, forgiveness, good character, mercy, ascetic tendencies, and compassion is regarded by the authorities as a brāhmana." Python: "But these traits may be found even in a sūdra."

¹⁸³Chāndogya Upanisad, 4.4.1.

Yudhiṣṭhira: "The sūdra in whom these traits are found is no sūdra, and the brāhmana lacking these traits is no brāhmana." This reply so pleased the python (King Nahusha) that he complimented Yudhiṣṭhira by calling him a "viditavedyah" (one who knows what ought to be known).¹⁸⁴

The Bhāgavata Purāna also carries a reminder that one's varṇa is known and designated by the deeds of a person rather than by birth.¹⁸⁵ The Sūkranīti says, "Not by birth are the brāhmana, ksatriya, vaisya, sudra, and mlechcha (outcast) differentiated, but by their respective qualities and deeds."¹⁸⁶

Even though in theory one's birth is not a determining characteristic of one's birth is not a determining characteristic of one's class in society, in fact it is likely that one will, by nature, belong to the varṇa of one's family, for it is more likely that one growing up in a world of music and musicians will be suited for a position in the world of music than one who has grown up in the world of cattle and cattle raisers. The important thing about the varṇa theory is that, even though one might most probably belong to the varṇa of his family, still, he belongs to the varṇa of his abilities and qualifications, whether this agrees or disagrees with the varṇa of his family.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁴ Mahābhārata, Vanaparva, 180.26. See also, Santiparva, 189.8.

¹⁸⁵ Bhāgavata Purāna, 7.11.31.

¹⁸⁶ Sūkranīti, 1.75-76

¹⁸⁷ It is theory, not practice, that is considered here.

This study shows that the theory of varna is a theory of social organization whereby the individuals in society are divided into different classes with different functions in society according to differing personal characteristics. The theory is that the good of society will be furthered if there are different classes of individuals who will perform the different tasks requisite for a good society, and that this classification will be to the advantage of the individual in that it will prove easier to fulfill oneself if one is engaging in those activities for which one is peculiarly well suited by temperament, disposition, and natural ability.

The Ideal Individual Life in Society

Principles of Life-Stages (Āsrama)

In addition to the institution of varna, traditional Hindu social thought recognized the institution of āsrama as a means to the realization of the purusārthas. The institution of āsrama consists in a series of stages in life classified according to the activities proper to each stage. Whereas the varṇas are the result of the classification of individuals according to their activities and dispositions in order that one might do the work for which he is best suited by nature and at the same time contribute to the well being of society, the āśramas are the result of classification of periods or stages within the individual's life in order that he might best realize his true nature and perfect himself while maintaining the order of society and satisfying the debts incurred by birth and life in society.

The expression "āśrama" derives from the root "asram," meaning "to exert," and "to labor." Etymologically, it means "a stage or place in which one exerts himself." The word is used in the Dharma Sūtras and Dharma Sāstras in a sense very close to the etymological meaning, as it is there used to refer to a period in one's life in which one is to perform certain activities in order that he obtain the goals proper to that stage, and, ultimately, mokṣa. According to Vyāsa, the āśramas are a flight of four steps. By climbing those four steps one attains to the world of brāhman.¹⁸⁸ According to the social thought of traditional India, an individual's life is to be lived in four distinct stages, or āśramas. The first stage or āśrama is that of the student, the brahmacharya āśrama. The second is that of the householder in society, the grhastha āśrama. The third āśrama is a period of retirement, the vānaprastha āśrama. After passing through these first three stages in life's journey a person enters into a life of contemplation and meditation in order that he might establish himself completely in perfection. This last stage in life is the saṁnyāsa āśrama.

The institution of āśrama is known to all the Dharma Sūtras and Dharma Sāstras. The oldest of the Dharma Sūtras, the Āpastamba, says, "There are four āśramas; the householder, staying in the teacher's house, being a muni,

¹⁸⁸ Mahābhārata, Sāntiparva, 242.15.

and being a forest dweller."¹⁸⁹ This would correspond to the grhastha, brahmacharya, saṁnyāsa, and vānaprastha, respectively. A similar classification is given in Gautama, where the stages are mentioned by name as brahmacarī, grhastha, bhikṣu, and vaikhāṇsa.¹⁹⁰

The division of the life of an individual into several stages was found already in Vedic times, though the word "āsrāma" is not used to refer to any of the divisions. The brahmacharya āsrāma is referred to in the Rg-Veda thus: "He, all pervading One, moves as a brahmac ari, pervading all sacrifices. By that assisting at sacrifice He secured a wife, Juhu, taken by Soma."¹⁹¹ The stage of the householder seemed well established by Vedic times, as one of the gods, Agni, is described as "the grhapati in our house."¹⁹² The words that the new husband says to his bride when leading her around the marriage fire, "The gods have given you to me for garhaptya," (for attaining the position of a householder) occur already in the Rg-Veda.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹Apastamba Dharma Sūtra, 9.21.1. (The order in which these are listed in the Sanskrit texts does not indicate their order in society, but is determined by grammatical and stylistic considerations.)

¹⁹⁰Gautama Dharma Sūtra, 3.2. The Baudhāyana, 2.6.17, and the Vasiṣṭha, 7.1-2, Dharma Sutras mention these same stages in life.

¹⁹¹Rg-Veda, 10.109.5.

¹⁹²Rg-Veda, 2.1.2.

¹⁹³Rg-Veda, 10.85.36. (These words are spoken by the groom even today at orthodox Hindu marriages.)

The stages of vānaprastha and saṁnyāsa do not seem to be recognized as distinct in the R̥g-Veda. But there is a recognition of a stage beyond the householder, as there is reference to munis who are clad with the wind and brownish dirt.¹⁹⁴ Furthermore, Indra is said to be a friend of the munis¹⁹⁵ and munis are said to be friends of all the gods.¹⁹⁶

Though there is reference in the R̥g-Veda to different stages in life, there is no clear reference to a well-planned scheme of life where passing through the various stages was a required procedure or an established custom in society at this time. In the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, however, there is an exhortation that seems to stress the importance of the householder's life: "Oh brāhmaṇas, desire a son; he is a world that is to be highly praised. Of what use is dirt; of what use antelope skin; what use of the beard; what use is tapas (austerity)?"¹⁹⁷ This might be advice not to forsake the grhastha āsrama for the other āsramas of vānaprastha or saṁnyāsa, which would suggest that at this time it was customary to pass through various well-marked stages of

¹⁹⁴R̥g-Veda, 10.136.2.

¹⁹⁵R̥g-Veda, 8.17.14.

¹⁹⁶R̥g-Veda, 10.136.4.

¹⁹⁷Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, 33.11. (A. B.Keith, R̥g-Veda Brahmanas: The Aitareya and Kausitaki Brahmanas (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1920).)

life, including a stage of renunciation. The statement in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad that there are three branches of dharma--one for the person studying in the house of the teacher; one for the person performing sacrifices, acts of charity and study; and one for the person practicing tapas or austerities-- suggests that not only had the various āśramas come to be recognized as such by this time, but that they had existed sufficiently long for there to grow up lists of rights and prohibitions for each āśrama.¹⁹⁸ In the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, brāhmanas who have correctly recognized the Supreme Spirit are described as turning away from the desires of progeny and wealth, and as begging and securing holy worlds.¹⁹⁹ Yājñavalkya tells his wife that he is leaving the life of the householder for a life of renunciation and meditation.²⁰⁰ In the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad the expression "saṁnyāsa" occurs,²⁰¹ and knowledge of brāhman is connected with begging.²⁰² The Jābāla Upaniṣad specifically refers to the four āśramas, saying that they must be taken up in the order of brahmacharya, grhastha, vānaprastha, and bhikṣu (saṁnyāsa).²⁰³

¹⁹⁸Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 2.23.1.

¹⁹⁹Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, 3.5.1.

²⁰⁰Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, 4.5.2.

²⁰¹Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, 3.2.6.

²⁰²Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, 1.2.11.

²⁰³Jābāla Upaniṣad, 4.

A possible explanation of why some of the earlier works refer to only three āśramas, while all of the later works refer to four is found in the Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad. The view put forth there is that a saṁnyāsi is above all of the āśramas.²⁰⁴ The reason for this seems to be that the saṁnyāsi has renounced society and the material world, and lives without property having given up the social personality. Prabhu points out that upon taking up life in the saṁnyāsa āśrama a person is presumed to be dead, the usual death ceremonies being actually performed by his kinsmen.²⁰⁵ It would not be unusual for writers to omit this last āśrama, if it was regarded as transcending the social world, provided they were regarding the āśramas as primarily stages along life's way within society; for life in the last āśrama is lived apart from the society.

The foregoing discussion makes clear that the āśramas were recognized from very early times, and that by the time of the Upaniṣads the scheme had become well structured. In the Dharma Sūtras, Dharma Sāstras, Epics, and the Gītā, the institution of āśrama is assumed; different āśramas are discussed in terms of the rights and duties attending them.

²⁰⁴ Svetāsvatara Upaniṣad, 6.2.

²⁰⁵ "In fact such a person (saṁnyāsi) is actually supposed to have been dead, the usual death ceremonies being actually performed by his kinsmen; and the saṁnyasin is said to have been born out of the ashes and flames of the funeral pyre of the dead person. Such a person, in fact, even abandons his personal name and the family surname by which he was known before he took up saṁnyāsa And, since the man is supposed to be dead, and his body is taken to have been already burnt away and the death ceremonies performed, his actual death after saṁnyāsa is accepted by him has to be by special rites" (Pandharinath H. Prabhu, Hindu Social Organization (Bombay: Popular Prakashan, 1963).)

According to the Dharma literature, a person desiring complete freedom (moksa) is to pass through the four āsramas, living in each of them according to the rules of dharmas prescribed by the Sāstras.²⁰⁶ As Manu says, "He who after passing from order to order, after offering sacrifices and subduing the senses, becomes tired with alms and offerings of food, an ascetic, gains bliss after death."²⁰⁷ According to Manu, the āsramas are to be pursued in order, starting with the brahmacharya. Thus, he says:

Having studied the Vedas in accordance with the rule, having begot sons according to the sacred law, and having offered sacrifices according to his ability, he may direct his mind to final liberation. A twice-born man who seeks final liberation, without having studied the Vedas, without having begotten sons, and without having offered sacrifices, sinks downward.²⁰⁸

From this statement it appears that not only must the āsramas be pursued in order, but that the reason for the whole āsrama scheme is that man might attain moksa and that it was thought that social activity is required for the attainment of this end.

The duties laid down for the various āsramas follow from the debts (ṛṇas) contracted by birth into the world. Life in this world is regarded as an

²⁰⁶Apastamba Dharma Sūtra, 2.21.2; Gautama Dharma Sūtra, 3.1; Manu, 6.88.

²⁰⁷Manu, 6.34. See also Baudhāyana Dharma Sūtra, 2.17.15.

²⁰⁸Manu, 6.34-37. "Twice-born" refers to having been born culturally and spiritually by study and initiation into the sacraments. The first birth is biological, the second as just described. This is not to be taken as a reference to transmigration. See Manu, 2.68.

opportunity provided as a gift to man. It is an opportunity for the self to free itself forever from the round of births and deaths. But the self does nothing to warrant this opportunity. The gods present the gift of life in this world and therefore man has a debt to the gods. He also has a debt to his parents and ancestors, for without them life would not have been possible either. With the second birth, the birth into the world of culture and ideas, he incurs a debt to the ṛsis who promulgate, preserve and teach that which is worth knowing.²⁰⁹ These three debts could be satisfied by studying (debt to the ṛsis), having children (debt to the parents and ancestors), and by offering sacrifice (debt to the gods). The three different kinds of life required to repay the debts correspond to the brahmacharya āsrama, the grhastha āsrama, and the vānaprastha āsrama, respectively. Thus it is necessary to pass through the first three āsramas to satisfy one's obligation to society and he may only then concern himself with his own perfection in the samnyāsa āsrama. From Manu's statement that one who seeks his own salvation without first having settled his debt with society will "sink low," it might be inferred that mokṣa was conditional upon a life within society. Thus, even though the ultimate goal is extra-social in one sense, in another it is social, for life in society was regarded as a necessary condition for the attainment of mokṣa. Living in society according to the appropriate rules or dharmas is part of activity involved in mokṣa realization. Living a good life in society

²⁰⁹This theory of debts or ṛṇas is commonly accepted in traditional India. For clear statements of the theory see Yājñyavalkya, 3.57, and Manu, 6.35.

is, one might say, treading the path to moksa.

Student Stage (Brahmacharya)

The first āśrama, that of schooling and education, is undertaken with the upanāyana ceremony, usually somewhere between the ages of six and ten.²¹⁰

After completing this phase of his life the student takes a bath, symbolizing completion of the duties of brahmacharya, and is ready to embark upon the next āśrama--that of the householder.

The brahmacharya āśrama was very important as education was highly regarded in traditional India. This importance is indicated in the following statement from the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa:

Now then, in praise of learning: Learning and teaching are a source of pleasure to man; he becomes ready-minded, or mentally well equipped and independent of others, and day by day he acquires prosperity. He sleeps peacefully; he is the best physician for himself; to him belong restraint of the sense, delight in steadiness in mind, development of intelligence, fame, and the task of perfecting the people.²¹¹

No one was admitted to the brahmacharya āśrama without the upanayana ceremony, which was regarded as initiation into the world of the twice-born.

The fact that this ceremony was regarded as a sacrament and was administered with very elaborate rituals indicates that this āśrama was felt to be very

²¹⁰ See Āpastamba Grhya Sūtra, 4.10.

²¹¹ Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, 11.5.7.1.

important.²¹² Manu says that those who do not go through the upanāyana ceremony are censured by the society.²¹³

During the brahmacharya āsrama the student lives in the house of the teacher (guru), learning the Vedas and Sāstras. He must also learn to speak the truth, to be modest, to control himself, to be free from lust, anger and greed, and to practice non-violence (ahimsā).²¹⁴ In addition, the student is to offer daily sacrifice. He is to "offer fuel in the sacred fire, beg food, sleep on the ground, and do what is beneficial to his teacher until returning home (samavārtāna)."²¹⁵ Gautama sums up the rules of a student by saying that the student must learn to keep his tongue, arms, and stomach under control and discipline.²¹⁶

The Upaniṣads recognize the chief duty of the teacher to be the imparting to the student the truth "exactly as he knows it."²¹⁷ In addition to helping the student learn the Vedas and Sāstras, the teacher is to instruct the pupil in rules of personal purification, conduct, fire worship, twilight worship and other matters.²¹⁸

²¹²See Āpastamba, 1.1.1.15; Gautama, 1.8; Viṣṇu, 38.37-40; Manu, 2.64; Yājñyavalkya, 1.10-14; etc.

²¹³Manu, 2.39.

²¹⁴See Āpastamba, 1.1.12-23; Gautama, 2.135.16.22; Yājñyavalkya, 1.32; and Manu, 2.177-179.

²¹⁵Manu, 2.108.

²¹⁶Gautama, 2.22.

²¹⁷Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, 1.2.23; Chāndogya Upaniṣad, 7.16.7.

²¹⁸Manu, 2.69.

The relationship between the pupil and the teacher is a very close one, the teacher (guru) providing not only various rules for living the good life, but also serving as an example, a model to be emulated by the pupil. The pupil, in grateful return, is to help the teacher in whatever way he can, learning the virtue of service in addition to obtaining mastery of various subject matters. It is in this stage of life that the individual learns the fundamentals in the art of living well, which will guide him throughout the rest of life.

Householder Stage (Grhastha)

After taking the ceremonial bath signifying completion of the first āsrāma, the individual is to engage in the activities of the second āsrāma, that of the householder (grhastha). Here he must remain until the obligations (ṛṇas) to the members of his family, his deceased ancestors, strangers, and the rest of society have been satisfied.

The grhastha āsrāma is said, in the Mahābhārata, to be the basis of the other three āsrāmas. The other three āsrāmas "derive from this āsrāma the means they live upon, the offerings they make to the departed manes and the gods, and in short, their entire support."²¹⁹ The grhastha āsrāma is considered superior to the others because only in this āsrāma could all the debts, the debt to the gods (deva ṛṇa), the debt to the ancestors (pitṛ ṛṇa), and the debt to the sages (ṛṣi ṛṇa) be satisfied.²²⁰ Manu advances a similar

²¹⁹Mahābhārata, Sāntiparva, 191.10.

²²⁰Mahābhārata, Sāntiparva, 191.13.

opinion when he says, "In accordance with the precepts of the smṛti and the Veda, the grhastha is declared to be the best of all of them; for he supports the three."²²¹

The duties of the grhastha āsrama as laid down in the various works on Dharma are summarized by Manu:

A student who has studied the Vedas without breaking the rules of the brahamcharya shall enter the order of the householder. He shall marry a wife of equal varṇa. Let every man in this āsrama daily apply himself to the daily recitation of the Veda, and also to the performance of the offering to the gods; for he who is diligent in the performances of sacrifices, supports both the movable and immovable creation. He must never neglect the five great sacrifices, and having taken a wife, he must dwell in his own house during the second period of his life.²²²

It is not difficult to see why the grhastha āsrama should be highly spoken of, as in this āsrama all four of the purusārthas could be pursued, and the first three accomplished. In this stage one is to marry, have children, support his parents, grandparents, children and wife, the poor, the priests, the teachers; in short, in this stage the whole society was to be supported.

Marriage, which in practice constituted initiation into the grhastha āsrama, was considered to be a very important sacrament, and many rules were laid down governing selection of a mate, forms of ceremony, ways of living, and

²²¹Manu, 6.89.

²²²Manu, 3.2. See also, Manu, 5.75; 5.169; Gautama, 5.9; Āpastamba, 2.1.1.11; Vasiṣṭha, 8.1-17; Yājñyavalkya, 1.9.

for achieving sexual satisfaction in marriage.²²³ Having children was considered a serious obligation, and Manu says, "To be mothers were women created, and to be fathers, men; therefore, the Vedas ordain that dharma must be practiced by man together with his wife."²²⁴ Having offspring was, in ordinary circumstances, a condition for obtaining moksa, and "only he is a perfect man who consists of his wife, himself and his offspring."²²⁵ Most of the rules surrounding the institution of marriage are ordained for the good of the children in the family and the offering of sacrifice.

The five great sacrifices that Manu prescribes for the grhastha āsrama have been recognized from early Vedic times.²²⁶ They are to be performed by every householder, being considered the discharge of duties to the Creator, the ancestors, and the whole of creation.²²⁷ These five sacrifices (brahmayājna, pitryājna, devayājna, bhūtayājna, and manuṣyayājna) are to be performed by making offsprings and carrying out certain duties in society. The sacrifice satisfying the debt to the rsis (brahmayājna) is to consist in teaching and

²²³ See the various Gṛhya and Kāma Sūtras.

²²⁴ Manu, 9.96.

²²⁵ Manu, 9.45.

²²⁶ See Rg-Veda, 3.53.4; 5.3.2; 5.28.3; 10.85.36; Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, 5.2.1.10; Āpastamba Dharma Sūtra, 2.5.11.12; Manu, 9.28; and Yājñyavalkya, 1.78.

²²⁷ See Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, 11.5.6.1; Taittirīya Āraṇyaka, 2.10; Āpastamba, 1.4.12.13-15; Gautama, 5.8; and Baudhāyana, 2.6.1-8.

studying. The sacrifice satisfying the debt to the ancestors (pitryājna) consists in taking care of a wife and children and the offering of food and water at special ceremonies. The debt to the gods (devayājna) is satisfied by making offerings to the sacred fire. The debt to the providence of creation (bhūtayājna) is satisfied by making offerings to the fire, tokening the offerings made to all needy creatures in the universe. The debt to immediate society (manusyayājna) is satisfied by offering food and hospitality to anyone in need.²²⁸

Retirement (Vānaprastha)

When a person has carried out his duties in society and has satisfied his obligations in the grhastha āśrama he is free to retire, taking up life in the next āśrama as a vanaprasthan. Literally, a vānaprasthan is a forest dweller, and the vānaprastha āśrama is a stage in life in which one withdraws, emotionally, from society and lives a quiet life in retirement, perfecting himself. In ancient times the actual procedure for one retiring from his household in society consisted in going out into the forest to live. For there, away from the cares and the worries of village life he could think and meditate on the meaning of life and the way to self-perfection. The rest of society was to supply the vānaprasthan with whatever he needed, just as when the now vānaprasthan was a householder he supplied the vānaprasthans with their needs.

According to Manu, "When a householder sees his skin wrinkled, his hair

²²⁸This summary follows Manu, 3.70, 81. But see also Yājnyavalkya, 1.102. and Asvin Grhya Sūtra, 3.1.1-4.

white, and the sons of his sons, then he may resort to the forest."²²⁹ Such a one is to "abandon all food raised by cultivation, all his belongings, and depart into the forest, either committing his wife to his sons or taking her with him."²³⁰ If a vānaprasthan dies while in this āśrama he attains liberation, provided he has lived according to the rules of the various stages.²³¹

A summary of the more important rules of this stage will provide a working definition of the vānaprastha āśrama. One enters this āśrama alone or with one's wife.²³² He takes with him his three Vedic fires and his household fire so that he may continue offering sacrifices to the gods.²³³ The five great sacrifices are to be performed daily in this āśrama.²³⁴ The comforts and conveniences of village life are to be left behind,²³⁵ and only small amounts of food that may be had without violence to nature are to be eaten.²³⁶ A vanaprasthan is expected to wear deer-skin or tattered garments,²³⁷ sleep on the bare ground,²³⁸ and bathe several times daily.²³⁹ The various austerities

²²⁹Manu, 6.2.

²³⁰Manu, 6.3.

²³¹Manu, 6.32.

²³²Yājñyavalkya, 3.45; Manu, 6.3.

²³³Manu, 6.4, 9, 10; Yājñyavalkya, 3.45.

²³⁴Manu, 6.5, 7; Yājñyavalkya, 3.45; Gautama, 3.29.

²³⁵Gautama, 3.26; Manu, 6.5.

²³⁶Manu, 6.16, 17, 19; Yājñyavalkya, 3.46, 47, 49, 50.

²³⁷Manu, 6.6; Gautama, 3.34.

²³⁸Manu, 6.22, 26; Yājñyavalkya, 4.51.

²³⁹Manu, 6.22, 24; Yājñyavalkya, 3.48.

that are to be performed by him²⁴⁰ are designed to assist him in gaining complete control over all his activities.²⁴¹ By completely controlling his senses and activities and by studying and meditation of the vānaprasthan prepares himself for ultimately realizing brāhman.²⁴²

Non-attachment and Perfection (Samnyāsa)

After satisfying the requirements of the vānaprastha āsrama one is free to move on to the fourth āsrama, the samnyāsa. As Manu says, ". . . having thus passed the third part of his life in the forest, he may live as an ascetic during the fourth part of his existence, after abandoning all attachment to worldly objects."²⁴³ This remark of Manu's suggests both that the purpose of the vānaprastha āsrama is to develop a spirit of non-attachment to worldly objects, and that life in the samnyāsa āsrama is not to be taken up until one has accomplished the purpose of the third āsrama.

A brief glance at the rules governing conduct in the samnyāsa āsrama will indicate something of the nature of this stage in life. To qualify for the samnyāsa āsrama a person must offer a sacrifice to Prajāpati which consists

²⁴⁰ Viṣṇu, 95.2-4; Yājnyavalkya, 3.52; Manu, 6.23, 24.

²⁴¹ Manu, 6.8; Yājnyavalkya, 3.45, 48.

²⁴² Manu, 6.8, 29-30; Āpastamba, 2.9.22.9.

²⁴³ Manu, 6.33.

in distributing any remaining possessions to the priests, the poor and the helpless.²⁴⁴ He is to wear only a minimum of clothing,²⁴⁵ sleep on the ground,²⁴⁶ remove his hair and nails,²⁴⁷ keep to himself, always wandering about alone,²⁴⁸ entering a village only to beg for food.²⁴⁹ He is to eat just enough to keep him alive.²⁵⁰ The samnyāsi must remain celibate, devoting himself to contemplation, always remaining silent except when praying.²⁵¹ He is to kindle no fire and cook no food, nor in any way do injury to any living thing.²⁵²

The observation of all of these rules will assist the samnyāsi in becoming desireless (vairāgya), which condition is made easier by contemplating the body as liable to disease and old age, packed full of impurities, transitory, and subject to constant births and deaths.²⁵³ Having followed all of these rules and being well established in purity, humility, steadiness of mind, restraint of senses and mind, self-knowledge, free from anger, greed and wrath, the

²⁴⁴ Yājnyavalkya, 3.56; Manu, 6.38; Viṣṇu, 96.1.

²⁴⁵ Gautama, 3.17-18; Āpastamba, 2.9.21; Vasiṣṭha, 10.9.

²⁴⁶ Manu, 6.43, 46.

²⁴⁷ Manu, 6.52; Vasiṣṭha, 10.6; Gautama, 3.21.

²⁴⁸ Manu, 6.41, 43-44; Vasiṣṭha, 10.12-15; Gautama, 3.13.

²⁴⁹ Manu, 6.43, 55; Yājnyavalkya, 3.59.

²⁵⁰ Manu, 6.57; Āpastamba, 2.4.9.13; Yājnyavalkya, 3.59.

²⁵¹ Manu, 6.41; Gautama, 3.11; Baudhāyana, 2.10.79.

²⁵² Manu, 6.38, 40, 47, 48; Gautama, 3.23; Āpastamba, 1.9.21.

²⁵³ Manu, 6.76-77; Viṣṇu, 96.25-52; Yājnyavalkya, 3.63.

saṁnyāsi should endeavor to purify himself further by the practices of yoga that he might gradually realize brahman and secure his complete freedom.²⁵⁴

A comparison of the requirements of the last two āśramas shows that they are not so clearly demarcated from each other as are the others. The difference seems almost one of a degree, as in both stages a person is expected to be possessionless, to live frugally and virtuously, and to contemplate. In the vānaprastha āśrama, however, the person is just in the process of leaving the cares and worries of society, and must train himself to live a different kind of life, a life of renunciation and contemplation. When he has trained himself to so live he automatically becomes a saṁnyāsi upon making the Prajāpati offering. There can be no sharp line separating the last years in the vānaprastha āśrama and the first years in the saṁnyāsa āśrama, for the vānaprasthan is training for the saṁnyāsa āśrama. This suggests the importance difference between the two stages. The goal of the saṁnyāsi is realization of brahman, whereas the goal of the vānaprasthan is the cultivation of the proper state of mind requisite for the contemplation that will, granted fulfillment of all other conditions, yield mokṣa. Thus, Manu says of the saṁnyāsi, "when by objects, he obtains eternal happiness both in this world and after death."²⁵⁵ But he also says of the vānaprasthan, "Having got rid of the body by one of those modes practiced by the great sages he is exalted in the world of brahman, free

²⁵⁴Manu, 6.70-75, 81; Yājñyavalkya, 3.62, 64; Vasiṣṭha, 10.30-35; Baudhāyana, 2.10.55-60.

²⁵⁵Manu, 6.80.

from sorrow and fear."²⁵⁶ Only the samnyāsi can realize moksa in this life. The vanaprasthan, if he attains moksa, does so only after the dissolution of the body.

Before concluding the study of the āsrāms it would be well to say something about the nature of the renunciation advocated so enthusiastically for the last two āsrāmas. The renunciation involved is not a renunciation of action itself or of objects themselves. It is, rather, a renunciation of attachment to actions and objects. As the Gītā says, "It is indeed impossible for an embodied being to renounce action entirely. But he who renounces the fruit of action is regarded as one who has renounced."²⁵⁷ An action is to be performed merely because it ought to be performed; because of the rule involved, without consideration of the consequences. This Kantian-like position is made explicit in the words, "When a man performs an obligatory action only because it ought to be done, and renounces all attachment, and the fruit--his renunciation, O Arjuna, is characterized by sattva (the highest quality)."²⁵⁸

This view of renunciation is not peculiar to the Gita, but is found throughout the literature on dharma.²⁵⁹ The important feature of renunciation is the attitude involved. Granted and proper attitude towards things and activities, one could be constantly busy, surrounded by luxuries and pleasures, and still be a

²⁵⁶Manu, 6.32.

²⁵⁷Bhagavad Gītā, 18.11.

²⁵⁸Gītā, 18.9.

²⁵⁹See Manu, 6.66, 92-94; Yājnyavalkya, 3.65-66; Vasiṣṭha, 10.30; Baudhāyana, 2.10.15.56; Mahābhārata, Sāntiparva, 111.13.

samnyāsi.

Human Aims and Stages in Life

The relationships between the various āśramas and their purposes can best be seen by relating them to the purusārthas, or goals in life. As seen above, an āśrama is a stage in life's journey, the goal of the journey being complete freedom (moksa). It is the purusārtha of moksa that provides the overall direction for the journey through life, the āśramas being the means devised for the realization of this goal. But it is recognized that the traveller along life's highway is constituted that in order to attain his goal of moksa he must first attain the goals of dharma, artha, and kāma, that is, live a social life. Accordingly, the journey is so divided into stages so that each of these goals can be satisfied or attained most efficiently, in a way most satisfactory to the individual.

The four āśramas are the division of life's activities into various stages. In the first stage, the brahmacharya āśrama, the individual learns about life in all its various aspects. There he learns about his social and spiritual life, becoming familiar with the ideals according to the which he is to live his life. It is here that one learns about the purusārthas, varnas, āśramas, etc.

Having learned about the theory of life, the individual passes on to the next stage in life, where he practices what he has learned in the first stage. In the grhastha āśrama the individual looks after the society that looked after

him in his first stage in life, and which will look after him in his last stages in life. Now he must maintain and support society, maintaining the mores, the economic means, and the cultural values, living a righteous life of enjoyment amidst wealth, begetting and supporting children and taking care of the old and needy.

Having fulfilled his obligations to society and having satisfied his biological and social needs he now turns, his biological and social potentialities realized, to a period of training in spiritual life, where he concentrates on putting into practice what he learned as a brahmacharin about the realization of his true nature. His training in righteousness and spirituality completed, his only concern will be with attaining moksa.

The institution of āśrama, in short, is designed to advise the individual of his various goals and to assist in the attainment of these goals by ordering his life in the best possible way. The āśramas are the stages in life in which one progressively realizes his true nature.²⁶⁰

The question might be raised as to which of the four āśramas is superior to the others and which is the least in importance. This question, however, reflects a failure to take cognizance of the fact that all four of the āśramas are

²⁶⁰Paul Deussen, speaking of the āśrama theory, said, "The entire history of mankind does not produce much that approaches this thought in its grandeur." Paul Deussen, The Philosophy of the Upanisads, Geden trans., (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1906) p. 367.

taken by traditional Hindu theorists as being necessary for the perfection of the individual. If not one can be omitted, then in one sense, one cannot be considered less important than another. It is true, the supreme goal is moksa, and as one proceeds from one āsrāma to the next, presumably he is getting closer to the ultimate goal. Still, just because the last of ten miles between A and B sees the traveller closer to his goal than did the first mile, it does not follow that the last mile is more important than the first mile. Each of the āsrāma is a necessary means to the good life, and no one can be omitted except in extraordinary circumstances. In another sense a distinction can be made between the importance of various of the āsrāmas, depending upon the point of view taken. From the educational point of view the first āsrāma is superior. From the social point of view the second is superior, etc. But so far as the total well-being of man is concerned, all the āsrāmas are equally important, though since it is in the last stage of life that the individual attains his complete perfection, it is only natural that this stage should be regarded as the best.

Critical Summary of Traditional Social

Philosophy in India

In summarizing the discussion of this chapter, it can be said that according to the dominant social thought of traditional India, society was to be organized in such a way as to provide for the attainment of basic aims or goals in life. In other words, the aims of dharma, artha, kāma, and moksa are the

guiding principles of social organization. Man was regarded as a social being and the first three of the four basic aims could be realized only within society. But man was not thought to be merely social, and consequently, though the realization of dharmā, artha, and kāma in society constituted part of the good life for man, they did not constitute the whole of it. The supreme good for man, mokṣa, is extra-social, according to the thought of this period. This does not mean that the ultimate goal of mokṣa could be attained apart from society or without society. The discussion of the preceding pages indicates clearly that the ultimate goal of man, mokṣa, is dependent upon realization of the goals of dharmā, artha, and kāma, which can be realized only within and through society. Therefore, social activity is required for the attainment of the ultimate goal, even though the individual must go beyond merely social existence and social activities in order that mokṣa be attained.

While the aims of dharmā, artha, kāma and mokṣa provide the guiding principles for social organization in traditional India, they do not themselves constitute social organization. The basic social organization consisted in the division of members of society into four main classes, and in the division of the life of the individual into separate stages. According to the theory of varṇa, each class is to perform certain of the functions requisite for the well-being of society. Social classification or varṇa in traditional India, is therefore, a matter of division of labor, a division undertaken in order that the well-being of society might prosper. But the well-being of the social order is not the only

consideration in varna classification. A second consideration is that each individual should perform those functions which are required for the maintenance of society which also contribute to self-fulfillment. That is, individuals are classified according to their abilities and qualifications, thus securing the optimum opportunity for individual self-fulfillment consistent with the maintenance of society. The tension between the principle, "So divide the members of society so that the social order might prosper," and the principle "So divide the members of society that each person might most satisfactorily achieve self-fulfillment," is due to the fact that it was thought that the ultimate good for man was, ultimately, extra-social, and also that this ultimate and extra-social good could not be achieved apart from a satisfactory social order.

According to the āśrama theory it was held that maximum opportunity of individual self-fulfillment and optimum provision for social prosperity required dividing the life of the individual into separate stages or āśramas. In this way the individual could combine the functions that were necessary for the maintenance of society and the activities required to achieve the goals of dharma, artha, kāma, and moksa. Consequently it was held that society should be so organized that each person would spend a portion of his life in study and training, educating himself in the nature of the good life and training himself to assume useful functions in society. The individual would then assume responsibility for the support and maintenance of society, after which the individual would be allowed to retire from active social service in order to concentrate on achieving the final goal

of moksa, supposedly now being established in dharma, artha and kāma.

Finally, society should provide the opportunity for the individual to meditate and free himself from all empirical ties, thus freeing the self within.

Before concluding this discussion it is necessary to consider several objections that might be raised. Two important objections that might be made concerning the social theory as outlined above are (1) the theory is excessively idealistic and not sufficiently practical, and (2) it might be objected that even if the foregoing account were satisfactory on other counts, still it is difficult to see how much of the discussion is relevant to social philosophy. In order to address these objections it is unnecessary to unpack them somewhat, for in the form stated above they are sufficiently general and vague to defy answering.

In unpacking the first objection it might be suggested that it includes the following observations: (1) People are not, in fact, divided or divisible neatly into four distinct types, despite the varna theory. (2) It is not practical to divide one's life into four separate compartments or stages, despite the āśrama theory. (3) It is possible that various of the purusārthas should come into conflict with each other, and then it becomes impossible to achieve them all, as the theory of the purusārthas would seem to suggest is required. (4) Varna, as social classification implies social immobility, restricting the freedom of the individual. (5) Implementation of the āśrama scheme interferes with the freedom of the individual in that the individual is not free to live his life as he chooses.

The second objection might involve observations which include the following: (1) What is the social significance of the purusārthas? (2) What is the social significance of varna? (3) What is the social significance of āśrama? (4) In general terms, how are the twelve concepts under consideration in this chapter relevant to social philosophy?

The objection might be either that discussion of any of the varnas, or any of the āśramas, or any of the purusārthas is irrelevant to social philosophy, or, it might be that discussion of some of the concepts is relevant whereas discussion of others is irrelevant. Specifically, it might be held that the discussion of the purusarthas of dharma, artha, and kāma are relevant, but a discussion of mokṣa is not. Or, it might be held that a discussion of the āśramas or brahmacharya and grhastha are relevant, but that the remaining two āśramas are not properly social at all, and that therefore, discussion of them is irrelevant to social philosophy. Concerning the theory of social classification (varna), it is difficult to see how one might object that this is not relevant to social philosophy.

It makes little difference whether the objection is to only some of the concepts under consideration or whether it is an objection to the consideration of any of these, for an answer to either objection would be an answer to the other. The answers to these objections turn on an analysis of the nature and function of these concepts.

The important question to answer is, what is the function of the concept of purusārtha, the concept of varna, and the concept of āsrāma. In other words, what job do these concepts do?

Turning first to the theory of the purusārthas, it may be remarked that the discussion of the various purusārthas in the early parts of this chapter has made clear that the function of the purusārtha theory is to provide direction for human activity. That is, the purusārtha theory may be regarded as an answer to the question, "what should man seek in life?" Or, what comes to the same thing, how should man live? The answer embodied in the theory is that man should seek to be moral, to accumulate means of life, to enjoy himself, and eventually, to free himself from whatever binds. Looked at in this way, the concepts of dharma, artha, kāma, and moksa are seen to be concepts embodying rules. They are normative concepts.

If the concepts in question are considered to be essentially normative, that is, for the purpose of guiding human behavior, then each concept can be regarded as the embodiment of a rule or rules. And since the function of a rule is to guide behavior,²⁶¹ it is reasonable to assume that the theory of purusārthas functions as an answer to a question; namely, the question, how should man live? Since the question, how should one act? can be raised in a variety of circumstances and with respect to a variety of possible courses of

²⁶¹This is the function of at least one kind of rule.

action, it is reasonable that there should be a number of rules. The theory of the purusārthas represents an attempt to divide the basic rules concerning possible courses of action into four categories. Thus, the rules concerning how one should act with respect to other persons are included under the heading of dharma. The rules concerning how one should act with respect to wealth and material goods are included under the heading of artha. The rules concerning how one should act with respect to possible pleasures and enjoyments of the world are included under the heading of kāma. Finally, the rules concerning how one should act with respect to realization of his inner nature are grouped under the heading of moksa.

Looked at in this way, the purusārthas are essentially answers to the question of how the good life is to be lived. Granted that it is the purpose of social organization to provide for the good life, the importance of considering the purusārthas for understanding the theory of social organization is obvious. For without understanding what the good life consists in, it would be most difficult to appreciate the means of social organization required to implement the good life in society.

Thus, the relevance of the concept of moksa to social philosophy in traditional India is that it is the basic principle guiding theory of social organization, even though it is, itself, extra-social inasmuch as social organization will never be sufficient of itself for the realization of this goal.

Turning now to the theory of the āśramas, it can be seen that this also is intended as an answer to a question. The question in this case is, how should the individual organize his life in order to most satisfactorily realize the good life? Thus, the āśrama theory, which holds that the life of an individual in society should be divided into four segments or stages, is also normative, directing human activity.

The āśrama theory assumes the answer that the purusārtha theory provides to the question, "in what does the good life consist?" and provides an answer to the question, how can an individual in society best realize the good life? The answer, provided by the theory, is "So live your life that a portion of it is spent studying and learning about the nature of self, society and the good life, and in training for useful social activity; so that a portion of it is spent in contributing to the well-being of society by performing social service in the begetting and rearing of children, in sustaining the various social institutions, etc.; so that a portion of it is spent in establishing oneself in self-control and in meditation; and so that a portion of it is spent in concerted effort to shake off any binding fetters. In other words, each āśrama provides rules for some of the activities that are required in order that the good life be realized.

Again, on the assumption that social organization is an attempt to provide for the good life, it obvious that the theory of āśramas is directly relevant to social philosophy. Also, it might be pointed out that society is responsible for providing the means of sustenance in the last two āśramas. In other words,

social organization is such that provision is made for the final two āśramas.

The theory of varna is similar to the theory of the āśramas in that both presuppose the answer provided by the theory of puruṣārthas to the question, "In what does the good life consist?" And both theories provide direction for securing the basic goals in life, the attainment of which constitutes the good life. The two theories differ basically in that whereas the āśrama theory answers the question of how the individual life should be organized in order that the good life be realized, the varna theory answers the question, "How should society be organized so as to provide for the realization of the basic goals of life for each member of society?"

The answer the varna theory provides to this question is, "So organize society that the individuals are so classified that the functions requisite for the proper functioning of society will be performed by those individuals best suited for the tasks they have to perform." In this way the theory advocates so distributing the labor required for a properly functioning society that whatever is required will be performed, while at the same time each person will be doing only the work for which he is best suited, for in this way social activity will be directly conducive to achieving the ultimate goal in life, mokṣa, which lies beyond merely social activity.

The rules for each varna or class provide direction for the activities of the members of each class such that society will prosper and the individual will have the utmost opportunity to realize the good life.

In this way the varna theory represents social classification according to a division of labor, the labor of being distributed according to the special qualifications of the individual to perform the labor in question. It answers the individual's question, "What should I do to realize the good life?" by directing him to those social tasks for which he is best suited and which will, in the long run, be most conducive to the realization of his innermost nature.²⁶²

It is thus seen that the theory of the purusārthas, āśramas, and varnas are all relevant to social philosophy, for all three are concerned with rules for realizing the good life, and social organization and theory of social organization is essentially a matter of ordering the life of the individual so that individuals may live together harmoniously, assisting each other in realizing the good life.

Having now answered the second set of objections by showing that the concepts examined are normative concepts in that embody rules for the direction of human activities in order that the good life be realized, it remains to reply to the first set of objections.

One of the objections of the first set is that people are not, in fact, neatly divided or divisible into four distinct types, as assumed by the theory of varna.

²⁶²If it were the practice rather than the theory of varna classification that was being discussed it would be necessary to question the means and methods of classification, for even granting the social need for the sūdra varṇa (which is highly doubtful), the means of classification should be such that it is guaranteed that only those unqualified for other functions be classified as sūdras. And it would be relevant to discuss the practice of casting certain individuals out of the society completely. However, many different things would have to be discussed then.

The force of this objection is that if people do not differ from each other in such ways that they can be classified into four distinct social groups with each group of class having different functions in society, then the varna theory, if put into practice, will result in certain individuals being arbitrarily saddled with jobs for which they are ill-suited, and which they would rather not do. In this way, rather than social classification according to varna providing for the well-being of society and at the same time providing optimum opportunity for individual self-fulfillment, such classification would lead to the breakdown of society and would result in forcing individuals into doing those things for which they are ill-suited and which they are not disposed to do.

This objection possesses a certain validity and cannot be completely disposed of, for surely, if a theory of social organization leads to the suppression of the individual and also contributes to the malfunctioning of society, then it is an unsatisfactory theory. And just as surely, if distribution of social tasks is made on the basis of supposed individual differences which do not, in fact, exist, it is possible that the individual will be forced to do precisely that for which he is least qualified, and the society might be the worse for this.

Despite this core of truth in the objection, some of the sting can be removed from the objection by considering that no society can function well without a division of labor within the society, for there are many different functions that must be performed in order that society be adequately maintained. Surely, there must be administrators, a military and police, producers, and laborers

within any society. The varna theory is a recognition of this basic fact. More than merely a recognition of this fact, it is an attempt to so divide the labor required to maintain society in such a way that each person will do the type of work for which he is best suited. The assumption is that there are four fundamentally different types of activities required for the maintenance of society. Unless these activities are performed, society either suffers or, in the extreme, becomes impossible. Therefore, since according to traditional Indian thought the good life is not possible without society, society must be maintained, and consequently the different requisite tasks must be performed, the different tasks being given to the individuals best (even though not perfectly) suited for the tasks assigned them.

Since, theoretically, classification into varnas is done on the basis of the qualifications of the individual being classified, it is difficult to see what more could be desired. It is doubtful that any society could function well if unqualified persons were performing vital functions, and the varna scheme is an attempt to ensure that only qualified persons would perform the various functions required in a good society. There may be questions about actual methods of classification, but these are questions about the implementation of the theory, which amount to questions about the practice of the theory, and not about the theory as such.

The second objection of the first set is that it is not practical to divide one's life into four separate stages or segments. The weight of this objection lies in

the implicit view that life is an integral affair, and, therefore to attempt to live it in separate stages is to try to make of life something it is not. This would be a serious objection if the theory of āsrāma did, in fact, require that life be divided into separate compartments or stages. To so construe the theory of āsrāma is, however, to misconstrue it. As remarked earlier, the theory of āsrāma constitutes an answer to the question, "How can an individual best organize his life in order to realize the good life?" Granted the fact that according to the dominant thought of this period the good life was held to consist in the attainment of the four goals of dharma, artha, kāma, and mokṣa, it was not held that these ought to be attained at separate stages of life.

All of the activities of one's life ought to be aimed at realizing the four basic aims. But as there is an order among these aims, in that in order that the final aim of mokṣa be obtained the other three must be attained, and the aims of artha and kāma are to be attained according to dharma, it follows that in order to attain all of the aims, special attention must be paid to each of them. Accordingly, it is held that the first task of an individual is to establish himself in dharma. Then he might attend to the aims of artha and kāma. But, of course, one cannot live without artha and kāma, and therefore it is not possible to ignore these aims at any stage in life. It is not the case that in each āsrāma one pursues a different aim. According to the theory one pursues all the aims in each stage, though not necessarily with the same enthusiasm for each. The theory involves not a division of life, but an ordering of the activities of life.

Thus, to construe the āsrāma theory as requiring that in one stage one realizes dharma, at the next, artha, at the next kāma, and then moksa, is to misconstrue the theory, for all the theory holds is that in order to attain all four of these aims it is necessary to concentrate on achieving each of them.

The objection that various of the purusārthas might come into conflict with each other overlooks both the nature of the purusārthas and the function of dharma. The theory of the purusārthas is that the good life consists in the attainment of these four aims. If, therefore, these goals should conflict such that the attainment of any one would become impossible, then it could not be the case that the good life consisted in the attainment of all four. Consequently, so long as it is agreed that the good life consists in the attainment of these four goals it cannot be argued that these four should conflict with each other. Furthermore, the function of dharma is to provide for the resolution of any conflicts of action, and, therefore, so long as dharma is included among the goals there is not possible any conflict. That is, the rules that make up the concept of dharma are rules for settling possible conflicts between courses of action that would interfere with living the good life.

The fourth objection of the first set is that varna implies social immobility, restricting the freedom of the individual. In replying to this objection it is useful to distinguish between practice and theory. It may be the case that in the practice of classification according to varna there might come to be a certain social immobility. The argument for this possibility is the fact of its

happening in India. But the question of whether or not the social classes of India did or did not become closed and whether they resulted in general social immobility is philosophically uninteresting. The interesting philosophical question is whether or not the theory of varna entails or implies closed classes and social immobility. The historical phenomena of India may be due to a lack of application of varna theory rather than to an application of it. And if the conclusions of the discussion of varna in this chapter be accepted, then clearly the theory of varna does not imply or entail closed classes of social immobility, for the principle of varna classification is the qualification of the individual. That is, the individual belongs to a certain varna in virtue of his abilities and qualifications, and the theory requires that an individual belongs to the class for which best qualified and not to the class of the parents. Thus, according to the theory, an individual is free to move from one class to another if he has the requisite qualifications. There is nothing in the theory to prevent a scavenger's son from being a priest or teacher, and nothing to prevent the daughter of a priest from being a scavenger. In fact, the theory requires that if one is qualified for a certain varna, then that is the varna to which that person belongs, regardless of one's birth.

The objection that implementation of the āśrama scheme interferes with the freedom of the individual to live his life as he chooses misses the mark also. The āśrama scheme is essentially an arrangement to enable the individual to achieve the four goals that constitute the good life, and the individual is free to live his

life as he chooses, in order to live the good life. The āsrāma theory does not require that an individual spend a specific number of years in a given stage and then move on to the next stage, spend a specific number of years there and then move on, etc. The āsrāma theory provides for an arrangement of life whereby the individual can, progressively, realize his potentialities, an arrangement providing for freedom rather than restricting it. One could argue that all this misses the point; if an individual is required to spend a part of his life studying and does not wish or choose to do this, then he is not free. One could argue that way, but then, one could also argue that according to the āsrāma theory one is being forced to live the good life, and is not free to live the bad life.

In conclusion, it might be remarked that the discussions making up this chapter reveal that traditional Indian social philosophy, as it involves the concepts of purusārthas, varnas, and āsrāmas, contains not only lofty, but theoretically plausible ideals of social organization which may well serve to inspire social planners.

CHAPTER III.

GANDHI'S SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

It is the purpose of this chapter to present and analyze the basic concepts and principles of Gandhi's social philosophy. Gandhi was no academic philosopher, and it is often rather difficult to reconcile all of his various statements and to discover the basic concepts and principles underlying both his stated philosophy and his life's activities. What follows is an interpretation of Gandhi, presented, so far as possible, in his own words, but, nevertheless, an interpretation. It is an attempt to present, in orderly fashion, the main features of his social philosophy.¹

Features of Social Organization

In his Delhi Diary, Gandhi describes what he takes to be the ideal society, Ramrajya, or the kingdom of God on earth. In such a society, he says:

There will be neither pauper s nor high nor low, neither millionaire employers nor half-starved employees, nor intoxicating drink or drugs. There will be the same respect for women as vouchsafed to men, and the chastity and purity of both men and women will be jealously

¹There has been no attempt to reconcile all the various remarks Gandhi made that might appear irreconcilable in the presentation and analysis that follows. However, the fact that the interpretation presented here results in a philosophy consistent in its basic features might be regarded as an argument in its favor.

guarded. There every women except one's wife will be treated by a man as his mother, sister or daughter according to her age. There will be no untouchability and there will be equal respect for all faiths. They will all be proudly, joyously and voluntarily bread-labourers.²

This statement of Gandhi's provides a summary of his social thought and, therefore, a starting point for a discussion of his social philosophy.

First of all, it is to be noted that Gandhi was advocating (1) the removal of untouchability, (2) equal rights for women, (3) equitable distribution of wealth, (4) a classless society, (5) a society in which each person did physical work in which temperance is observed, and (7) complete religious toleration.

Secondly, it is to be noted that Gandhi's ideal society is built on religious, moral and economic principles, and thirdly, it is to be noted that Gandhi does not distinguish very sharply between the religious, the moral, and the economic. In the following discussion of Gandhi's social thought these three points will be taken up and discussed in terms of their content, implications and justification.

Caste and Untouchability

There can be little doubt that the practice of caste in general, and the practice of untouchability in particular, has been among the worst cancers of Indian society. Much has been said and written about India's untouchables, but

² Mohandas K. Gandhi, Delhi Diary (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1948), p. 342.

no one has done more than Gandhi to eliminate untouchability. "Untouchability" refers to a practice of regarding certain individuals, generally those who are engaged in doing the scavenging and other "dirty" work in society, as being outside the society itself and, therefore, untouchable by members of the society. In practice, those born into families of untouchables were automatically untouchables also, with no possibility of integration into society, for anyone wishing to help an untouchable would himself risk being cast out of the society as also untouchable.³ Gandhi regarded this untouchability as the greatest perversion of Hinduism. "The very fact that we address God as 'the purifier of the polluted' shows," he said, "that it is a sin to regard anyone born in Hinduism as polluted--that it is satanic to do so. I have never tired of repeating that it is great sin."⁴ Gandhi emphasized that the work of the untouchable, which was to clean up filth and dirt, by no means made them dirty, and once remarked to them, "You should realize that you are cleaning Hindu society. You have, therefore, to purify your own lives."⁵

³Gandhi developed a theory of the origin of untouchability according to which "when 'cow protection' became an article of faith with our ancestors, those who persisted in eating beef were excommunicated. Social boycott was applied not only to the recalcitrants, but their sins were visited on their children also. The practice of boycott . . . hardened into harsh usage." (C. F. Andrews, Mahatma Gandhi's Ideas (London: Allen & Unwin, 1949).), p. 41.

⁴Ibid., p. 168.

⁵Andrews, Gandhi's Ideas, p. 169.

Gandhi saw the solution of many social problems in the removal of untouchability. "Surely," he said, "when Hindus by a deliberate and conscious effort, not by way of policy, but for self-purification, remove the taint of 'untouchability', that act will give the nation new strength. When we learn to regard these fifty millions of outcastes as our own we shall learn the rudiments of what it is to be one people."⁶ He objected strongly to the idea that individuals be considered inferior or superior because of the work they do. "That any person should be considered untouchable because of his calling passes my comprehension," he said.⁷ He regarded the recognition of the equality of all men and the consequent removal of untouchability as a necessary condition of self-government. In his opinion, "So long as Hindus wilfully regard 'untouchability' as part of their religion, so long as the mass of Hindus consider it a sin to touch a section of their brethren, self-rule (swaraj) is impossible of attainment."⁸

Gandhi reveals his basic objection to untouchability in the statement of rules for his fellow workers. There he says, "None can be born untouchable as all are sparks of one and the same fire. It is wrong to treat human beings as untouchable from birth."⁹ As will be seen later, Gandhi's basic postulate is

⁶Ibid., pp. 172-173.

⁷Ibid., 1. 167.

⁸Ibid., p. 167.

⁹Mohandas K. Gandhi, From Yeravda Mandir (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1937), p. 31.

that only non-violence (ahimsā) can rule the world and society properly. As untouchability is the result of hate and is a form of violence it is the opposite of ahimsā, and therefore, works for the destruction rather than the well-being of society. Consequently, untouchability must be removed. As Gandhi says, "Removal of untouchability means love for, and service of, the whole world, and thus merges into ahimsā."¹⁰

Kinship between men based on the basic equality of all requires that untouchability be removed. The removal of untouchability means that no person is to be excluded from society on the basis of his birth or the work he does.

Equal Rights for Women

Gandhi's insistence on the basic equality of all human beings not only resulted in his efforts to remove untouchability, but also led to his efforts to secure rights for women equal to those for men. In Gandhi's community (ashram) at Sabarmati, the women had equal rights. There was no observance of face-covering (pardah), no child marriages, and no denial of voting rights. Women were educated side by side with men.¹¹ The following statement by Gandhi illustrates his thought with respect to the position of women in society:

I have no difficulty about subscribing to the proposition that in order to fit ourselves for true self-rule (swaraj) men must cultivate much greater respect than they have for women and her purity. All of us men must hang our

¹⁰Ibid., p. 33.

¹¹See Andrews, Gandhi's Ideas, p. 322.

heads in shame so long as there is a single woman whom we dedicate to our passion. I passionately desire the utmost freedom for our women. I detest child marriages. I shudder to see a child-widow. I deplore the criminal indifference of parents who keep their daughters utterly ignorant and illiterate, and bring them up only for the purpose of marrying them off to some young man of means. Women must have votes and equal legal status.¹²

This statement of Gandhi indicates that he not only recognized the right and obligation of women to participate in social activity, but that he also realized that unless women also had equal opportunities of education and were regarded as something other than objects of sexual satisfaction, such rights and duties would be empty.

Economic Equality

Hand in hand with the removal of untouchability and the realization of equal rights for women goes equitable distribution of wealth. Gandhi's argument is that if the basic dignity of human beings is to be respected and basic equality realized in society, then the wealth must be justly distributed. It might seem that distribution of wealth is an economic matter and not a moral matter and that, therefore, the question of the justice of distribution would be out of place. For Gandhi this is not the case, however. He says, "I do not draw a sharp or any distinction between economics and ethics. Economics that hurt the moral well-being of an individual or a nation is immoral, and therefore sinful."¹³

¹²Ibid., p. 323.

¹³Gandhi, Young India, Oct. 13, 1921 (Young India (1919-1933) (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, n.d.).)

From this statement it is obvious that Gandhi did, in fact, distinguish between ethics and economics, for otherwise he could not pass moral judgments on economic matters. But it is one thing to distinguish between the two, as Gandhi obviously did, and quite another matter to regard the two as completely independent and separate, which Gandhi did not do. The intent of Gandhi's statement is clearly to suggest that only those systems and principles of economics are acceptable in a society that in no way does moral injury to the society as a whole or to any individual in that society.

Gandhi's plan for economic production and distribution is contained in the following statement:

The political and economic organization of the state shall be based on principles of social justice and economic freedom. While this organization shall conduce to the satisfaction of the material requirements of every member of the society, material satisfaction shall not be its sole objective. It shall aim at healthy living and the moral and intellectual development of the individual. To this end to secure social justice, the state shall endeavor to promote small scale production carried on by individual or co-operative effort for the benefit of all concerned. All large scale collective production shall be eventually brought under collective ownership and control The life of the villages shall be reorganized and the villages shall be made self-sufficient in as large a measure as is possible. The land laws of the country shall be reformed on the principle that land shall belong to the actual cultivator alone, and that no cultivator shall have more land than is necessary to support his family on a fair standard of living. In all state-owned and state-managed enterprises, the workers shall be represented in the management through their elected representatives and shall have an equal share in it with the representatives of the government.¹⁴

¹⁴ Harijan, April 20, 1940. (Harijan (1933-1948) (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, n.d.).)

The foregoing statement may be taken as a summary of the basic economic postulates of Gandhi, which include the following: (1) The well-being of the individual person is to be the supreme consideration, (2) Production and distribution schemes must be moral, (3) Life is to be lived simply, (4) Economic power is not to be centralized, (5) Machine labor is to be avoided and hand labor utilized whenever possible, and (6) The village should be the center of production.

The first of these postulates, that the well-being of the individual is the supreme consideration, is rendered explicit by Gandhi's statement that the well-being of the individual is to be the gauge of the value of an industry.

The value of an industry should be gauged less by the dividends it pays to sleeping shareholders than by its effects on the bodies, souls and spirits of the people employed in it. Cloth is dear which saves a few annas of the buyer, while it cheapens the lives of the men, women and children who live in the Bombay Chawls.¹⁵

The second postulate, that production and distribution schemes must be moral, refers to the need to respect the dignity of the individual in the economic sphere. Any economic scheme depriving man of his dignity is thereby immoral, and, in Gandhi's language, sinful. That some members of society should live in desperate poverty while others live in great luxury is immoral, and any scheme of production and distribution that allows such a state of affairs is immoral. Thus Gandhi says, "If all men realized the obligation of service (as

¹⁵ Young India, April 6, 1922.

an eternal moral law), they would regard it as a sin to amass wealth, and then, there would be no inequalities of wealth and consequently no famine or starvation."¹⁶

That capitalism is immoral and sinful according to the criterion indicated in the statement by Gandhi just quoted is clearly recognized by him. He condemns the capitalism present in his country in no uncertain terms, saying:

The greatest obstacle in the path of non-violence is the presence in our midst of the indigenous interests that have sprung from the British rule, the interests of monied men, speculators, scripholders and the like. All these do not always realize that they are living on the blood of the masses, and when they do, they become as callous as the British principals whose tools and agents they are.¹⁷

The implications of this condemnation of capitalism are made explicit in the constructive suggestion that "economic freedom means entire freedom from British capitalists and capital, as also their Indian counterpart. In other words, the humblest must feel equal with the tallest. This can take place only by capitalist sharing their skill and capital with the lowliest and the least."¹⁸ This sharing of the wealth advocated here is not a matter over which a moral person has a choice, as failure to share one's wealth with the poor is stealing.

¹⁶ Mohandas K. Gandhi, Ethical Religion (Madras: S. Ganesa, n.d.), p. 28.

¹⁷ Gandhi, Young India, Feb. 6, 1930.

¹⁸ Gandhi, Harijan, July 28, 1946.

In Gandhi's own community everyone took a vow of "non-thieving," which

Gandhi explains as follows:

I suggest that we are thieves in a way. If I take anything that I do not need for my own immediate use and keep it, I thieve it from somebody else. It is the fundamental law of nature, without exception, that Nature produces enough for our wants from day to day; and if only everybody took enough for himself and nothing more there would be no pauperism in this world, there would be no men dying of starvation. You and I have no right to anything we have until these millions of poor are clothed and fed.¹⁹

Gandhi goes on to say, however, that he does not advocate taking anything from anyone by force.²⁰ In accordance with his principle of ahimsā he says, "I have always held that social justice even unto the least and the lowliest is impossible of attainment by force."²¹ Gandhi is by no means a Bolshevik, and does not condone force and violence as a means of bringing about social changes. He remarks:

I can, most decidedly, avoid class war if only the people will follow the non-violent method. By the non-violent method we seek not to destroy the capitalist, we seek to destroy capitalism. We invite the capitalist to regard himself as a trustee for those on whom he depends for the making, the retention of, and the increase of his capital.²²

¹⁹Gandhi, in Homer A. Jack, The Gandhi Reader No. 1 (New York: Grove Press, 1961), p. 141.

²⁰Gandhi Reader, p. 141.

²¹Harijan, April 20, 1940.

²²Young India, March 26, 1931.

Obviously, Gandhi's "capitalist trustees" are not capitalists at all, but self-styled and voluntary socialists. That Gandhi recognized this is clear from his statement that the workers need not wait for the capitalist to share his wealth. He says:

Nor need the worker wait for his conversion. If capital is power, so is work. Either power can be used destructively or creatively. Either is dependent upon the other. Immediately the worker realizes his strength, he is in a position to become co-sharer with the capitalist instead of remaining his slave.²³

There is no question but that Gandhi felt it immoral for some members of society to be wealthy while others were poor. His ideal was the equal distribution of wealth, such that no one was left desperately poor, as is evident from the following statement: "My ideal is equal distribution, but so far as I can see, it cannot be realized. I, therefore, work for equitable distribution."²⁴ "Equitable distribution" apparently means distribution approaching equality as closely as possible. The idea was that even if equality could not be achieved, still, the present inequalities could be lessened.

The fourth principle, that life is to be lived simply, reflects Gandhi's thinking that a complex and complicated society makes morality and religion difficult, if not impossible and can only lead to the exploitation of certain groups. In such a society some of the people will always be exploiting others,

²³ Young India, March 26, 1931.

²⁴ Young India, March 17, 1927.

because the chief concern is with material wealth rather than with peace of mind. In his first important publication, Indian Home Rule, Gandhi issued a blistering criticism and condemnation of modern society. In the introduction to the 1946 edition of this work Gandhi himself says, "The booklet is a severe condemnation of 'modern civilization'. It was written in 1908. My conviction is deeper today than ever. I feel that if India will only discard 'modern civilization' she can only gain by doing so."²⁵

In this work, Gandhi condemns railroads, doctors, hospitals, lawyers, machinery of all kinds; in short, most of the items ordinarily pointed to when showing how the modern age has improved over the ancient. He cites the simple way of living of the Hindu peasant, using the same tools for thousands of years, wearing the same dress, etc., in contrast to 'modern civilization', praising the simple Hindu way, saying, "The tendency of the Indian civilization is to elevate the moral being, that of the Western is to propogate immorality."²⁶

Gandhi's idea is that in a complex society no one is self-sufficient; everyone is dependent upon someone else of his daily wants. This makes possible inequitable distribution which results in unsatisfied needs. But in a simple society everyone will work for his own daily needs, bartering with others for what he cannot produce himself. It is this self-sufficiency that Gandhi is

²⁵Gandhi Reader, p. 105.

²⁶Gandhi Reader, p. 110.

advocating. "It is a tragedy of the first magnitude," he remarks, "that millions have ceased to use their hands as hands. We are destroying the matchless living machines, i.e., our own bodies, by leaving them to rust and trying to substitute lifeless machinery for them."²⁷

Gandhi referred to this basic need for labor to satisfy daily needs as "bread labor," and in addition to attempting to justify his demand that everyone engage in bread labor by appeal to the reduced possibilities of exploitation, he finds a religious justification for it in the statement in the Gītā that "he who eats without offering sacrifice eats stolen food."²⁸ Gandhi interprets this to mean that a man is entitled only to that for which he has worked, and adds that "sacrifice here can mean only bread labor."²⁹

If life is to be lived simply, then it will not do to concentrate economic power in the hands of a few huge controllers, for this complicates the distribution process. Hence, upon the assumption that equitable distribution of goods is better served when life is simple, it follows that economic power is not to be centralized. Gandhi provides the following suggestion:

If India is to evolve along non-violent lines, it will
have to decentralize many things. Centralization

²⁷Young India, January 3, 1925.

²⁸Bhagavad Gītā, 3.12.

²⁹Young India, Oct. 13, 1921.

cannot be sustained and defended without adequate force. Rurally organized India will run less risk of invasion than urbanized India well equipped . . . ³⁰

But the objectionable need to use force to maintain centralized organization was not Gandhi's only reason for advocating decentralization. It was after Gandhi learned that much of the poverty in India was due to the elimination of cottage industry by the use of British machinery that he began to emphasize the need for home and cottage industry rather than large corporate industries. The following statement reveals the motive behind Gandhi's efforts for decentralization:

When I read Mr. Dutt's Economic History of India I wept, and as I think of it again my heart sickens. It is machinery that has impoverished India. It is difficult to measure the harm that Manchester has done to us. It is due to Manchester that Indian handicraft has all but disappeared. ³¹

The protest by Gandhi against the use of machines (in a far off country, at that) for the production of the cloth needed by Indians leads to his advocacy of both hand labor and the utilization of local stuffs (swadeshi). According to Gandhi, "Everyone must spin."³² When asked whether the spinning wheel had a message for the U.S.A. and the rest of the world, Gandhi replied, "I have not the slightest doubt that the saving of India and of the whole world lies in the

³⁰Harijan, Dec. 30, 1934.

³¹Hind Swaraj (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1946), p. 148.

³²Young India, Sept. 20, 1928.

wheel. If India becomes the slave of the machine, then I say, Heaven save the world."³³ This statement reveals a basic objection of Gandhi's to the use of machines. He feared that man would be enslaved by machines, an enslavement seriously impairing man's precious freedom.

But this fear of mastery by machines is only part of the story behind Gandhi's advocacy of decentralization. He also suggests that it is only natural, and therefore, right, that we confine ourselves to our immediate surroundings. The natural inclination to confine oneself to immediate surroundings he calls "swadeshi," and explains as follows:

Thus, (1) in the matter of religion I must restrict myself to my ancestral religion, i.e., the use of my immediate surrounding religion. If I find my religion defective I should serve it by purging it of its defects. (2) In the domain of politics I should make use of the indigenous institutions and serve them by curing them of their proved defects. (3) In the field of economics I should use only those things that are produced by immediate neighbors and serve those industries by making them more efficient and complete them where they may be found wanting.³⁴

In likening his doctrine of the utilization of local stuffs (swadeshi) to the Gītā doctrine that it is best to perform one's own dharma (svadharmā) even if this means death,³⁵ Gandhi remarks: "What the Gītā says with regard to

³³Harijan, Nov. 17, 1946.

³⁴Gandhi's Ideas, p. 140.

³⁵Bhagavad Gītā, 3.35.

swadharma equally applies to swadeshi, for swadeshi is swadharma applied to one's immediate environment."³⁶

Although Gandhi sought support for his program of utilization of local stuffs (swadeshi) in particular, and decentralization in general, in India's ancient literature, it is obvious that the basic justification for decentralization was to be found in the equitable distribution it would make possible. In fact, his very definition of swadeshi as "the use of all home-made things to the exclusion of foreign things insofar as such use is necessary for the protection of home things, more especially those industries without which India will become pauperized,"³⁷ indicates that the elimination of poverty would justify it.

According to Gandhi there could be no fair or equitable distribution so long as the forces of production were centralized. He said:

The only solution to achieve fair and equitable distribution is to localize the process of production and distribution in the same place. When production and consumption both become localized, the temptation to speed up production indefinitely and at any price disappears. The endless difficulties and problems that our present day economic system presents would then come to an end.³⁸

The economic postulate that machine labor must be avoided when possible, presupposes decentralization, for machine labor is a necessary condition for

³⁶Yeravda Mandir, p. 63.

³⁷Yeravda Mandir, p. 95.

³⁸Tendulkar, Mahatma (Bombay: 1952), vol. 3, p. 167.

centralized production. Gandhi's reasons for postulating that machines, which make possible industrialization and mass production, and which are to be avoided when possible because they prove detrimental to the well-being of man are contained in the following statement:

Industrialization is, I am afraid going to be a curse for mankind. Industrialization depends entirely upon your capacity to exploit, of foreign markets being open to you and on the absence of competition. I would categorically state my convictions that the mania for mass production is responsible for the world crisis. Granting for the moment that machinery may supply all the needs of humanity, still it would concentrate production in particular areas so that you would have to go about in a round about way to regulate distribution, whereas, if there is production and distribution both in the respective areas where the things are required, it is automatically regulated and there is less chance for fraud, none for speculation.³⁹

It is thus evident that Gandhi links together the postulates of simplicity, decentralization and avoidance of machine labor as necessary for equitable distribution of wealth. The argument is that complicated modes of living require increased production of consumer items which in turn leads to industrialization which implies centralization and the use of machines. This in turn leads to exploitation of the masses and inequitable distribution of goods, resulting in increased poverty for many.

The remaining postulate, that the village should be the center of production, is intended to effect the avoidance of machine labor and to prevent

³⁹Quoted in O. P. Goyal, Studies in Modern Indian Political Thought (Allahabad: Kitab Mahal, 1964), p. 62.

centralization. It is a compromise between bread labor and centralization; a concession to the fact that some degree of centralization of production is required to satisfy the immediate needs of the people, but a refusal to grant that centralization need go beyond the village level.

Social Equality

The same kind of reasoning supporting removal of untouchability, equal rights for women, and equal distribution of wealth requires Gandhi to regard a classless society as the ideal, for this is the conclusion of the argument for equality pushed to its extreme. According to Gandhi, all persons are essentially equal as all are part and parcel of the same spiritual unity. For Gandhi, this means that all are to be treated alike, not divided into higher and lower classes. Consequently, his ideal society is one in which the welfare of all is considered equally. This society is named by Gandhi, Sarvodaya. The word is a compound, being the conjunction of "sarva," meaning "all", and "udaya", meaning "welfare." Gandhi himself explained the concept of sarvodaya by reference to the first verse of the Īśa Upaniṣad, commenting on the line, "All this, whatever moves in this moving universe, is enveloped by God. By renunciation save yourself. Do not covet the wealth of anyone,"⁴⁰ in the following way:

If, it is universal brotherhood--not only brotherhood of human being, but of all living things--I find it in this

⁴⁰Īśa Upaniṣad, 1.1.

Mantra. Since He pervades every fibre of my being and all of you, I derive from it the doctrine of equality of all creatures on earth and it should satisfy the cravings of all the political communists. This Mantra tells me that I cannot hold as mine anything that belongs to God, and that, if my life . . . is to be a life of perfect dedication, it follows that it will have to be a life of continual service to fellow creatures.⁴¹

The suggestion is that because of the way the world is the well-being of one involves the well-being of all others, and therefore, the ideal society, in recognition of this, will concern itself with the well-being of all equally. An implication of Gandhi's interpretation of the Īśa mantra in question is that in the welfare society (sarvodaya), the state of affairs will represent the total and integrated progress of all towards self-perfection. As Gandhi says, "In such a state everyone is his own ruler . . . there is no political power, there is no state. Everyone rules himself in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbor."⁴²

In answer to the question of whether the welfare (sarvodaya) society represents the ideal communist society, Gandhi replied, "What does communism mean in the last analysis? It means a classless society, which is an ideal worth striving for."⁴³ This communism of Gandhi's is not, however, to be confused

⁴¹ Gandhi Sūtras (New York: Devin Adair, 1949), p. 25.

⁴² Young India, July 2, 1931.

⁴³ Harijan, Dec. 16, 1939.

with any purely economic theory. As his interpretation of the Īsa mantra shows, Gandhi is concerned with a spiritual as well as an economic communism. Gandhi's conception of communism is further clarified by his remark that "communism of the Russian type is communism which is imposed on the people would be repugnant to India."⁴⁴ He also remarked that "only if communism came without violence would it be welcome."⁴⁵ It is thus evident that Gandhi was advocating a communion of thinking, feeling, and loving, and not merely a communion of biological need satisfaction or a certain political arrangement.

The economic thought of Gandhi reflects his position that all men are not only basically equal, but ultimately, part of the same basic unity. According to such a concept of man a distinction of mine and thine is pernicious; it leads to a feeling of separateness rather than to a feeling of unity. Humanity is ultimately one and therefore for one person to claim as his exclusively what another person needs is to weaken or destroy the whole, apart from which the part is nothing. As Gandhi says,

All land belongs to Gopal Gopal means shepherd, it also means God. In modern times it means the state, i.e., the people. The means of production of the elementary necessities of life should remain in the control of the masses.

⁴⁴Harijan, Dec. 10, 1938.

⁴⁵Harijan, Dec. 10, 1938.

These should be freely available to all as God's air and water are or ought to be.⁴⁶

There is no room in this kind of thinking for special classes with special privileges. It would be inconsistent to say with Gandhi, "I believe in the absolute oneness of God and therefore also of humanity,"⁴⁷ and at the same time regard some classes of individuals as better than others, and, therefore, deserving of special privileges. In Gandhi's words, "The soul is one in all, its possibilities are therefore the same for everyone."⁴⁸

Nevertheless, even though the basic unity and equality of humanity does not, in Gandhian thought, allow for privileged classes in society, it does allow for classes. Indeed, it requires social classification. Man is, says Gandhi, "born to realize the God who dwells in him."⁴⁹ To this end the individual man must remain free, so that he might progress towards realization of God. But man is also social and realization of God requires effort in society. Gandhi says, "I value individual freedom but you must not forget that man is essentially a social being. He has risen to the present status by learning to adjust his individualism. We have learned social restraint for the sake of the well-being of the whole society of which one is a member."⁵⁰ Therefore, as social life

⁴⁶Young India, Nov. 15, 1928.

⁴⁷Young India, July 2, 1931.

⁴⁸Harijan, May 18, 1940.

⁴⁹Harijan, Feb. 1, 1935.

⁵⁰N. K. Bose, "An interview with Mahatma Gandhi," Modern Review, Oct., 1935.

is unthinkable without rules of various kinds, it follows that the freedom of the individual needs to be regulated in various ways for the good of the whole. In particular, Gandhi does not expect that society will function well without certain forms of social classification. His words are:

I believe that every man is born in the world with certain natural tendencies. Every person is born with certain definite limitations which he cannot overcome. From a careful observation of those limitations, the law of varṇa was deduced. It establishes certain tendencies. This avoided all unworthy competition. Whilst recognizing limitations the law of varṇa admitted of no distinctions of high or low; on the one hand it guaranteed to each the fruits of his labour, and on the other, it prevented him from pressing upon his neighbor. This great law has been degraded and has fallen into disrepute. But my conviction is that an ideal social order will be evolved only when the implications of this law are fully understood.⁵¹

What Gandhi is advocating here is class (varṇa) in the sense discussed in the first part of this study, and has nothing to do with caste (jāti). Gandhi called his varṇa scheme of classification the "Vedic sense of varṇa,"⁵² and explained it in the following way:

The law of varṇa means that every one shall follow, as a matter of natural law (dharma), the hereditary calling of his forefathers insofar as it is not inconsistent with fundamental ethics. He will earn his livelihood by following that calling. He may not hoard riches but devote the balance for the good of the people. It is not a system of watertight

⁵¹Harijan, May 18, 1940.

⁵²Harijan, Sept. 28, 1934.

compartments. Varna is determined by birth but can be retained only by observing its obligations. One born of Brahmin parents will be called a Brahmin, but if his wife fails to reveal the attributes of a Brahmin when he comes of age, he cannot be called a Brahmin. On the other hand, one who is born not a Brahmin will be regarded as a Brahmin.

Varna and āshrama are institutions which have nothing to do with caste. The law of varna . . . defines not our rights, but our duties. It necessarily has reference to callings that are conducive to the welfare of humanity and to no other. It also follows that there is no calling too high and none too low. Arrogation of a superior status of any of the varna is a denial of the law.⁵³

It is evident from these statements that, according to Gandhi, persons are born with different tendencies and dispositions and that society is to be so organized as to be able to take full advantage of these differences in abilities and dispositions. Gandhi's class (varna) organization is, in principle, the same as the class (varna) organization advocated in traditional India. The principle is to allow each person to perform those functions necessary for the well-being of society for which he or she is best suited, thereby allowing at the same time the fullest possible realization of the potentialities of the individual. It follows, as Gandhi points out, that if each is doing what he is best suited for and is also necessary for the maintenance of society, then there can be no distinction of higher or lower among the classes.

⁵³Harijan, July 18, 1936.

Labor

Gandhi's advocacy of "bread labor" has been discussed in connection with the basic economic postulates of his thought. There it was seen that bread labor was one of the means advocated to prevent exploitation of the masses in the production and distribution of goods. But bread labor served another function in Gandhi's scheme of social planning in that it could serve as a means to break down distinctions between classes. Gandhi emphasizes this aspect of bread labor when he says, "There is a worldwide gulf between Capital and Labor and the poor envy the rich. If all worked for their bread, distinctions of rank would be eliminated."⁵⁴ Bread Labor would serve to break down distinctions of rank in two ways. First, if the so-called higher classes did the same work as the so-called lower classes it would be impossible for any class to claim superiority on the basis of occupation or lack of occupation. Secondly, it would directly provide greater freedom for the laboring poor, for they would not be forced to sell their freedom to the capitalist for an inadequate wage.⁵⁵

Religious Toleration

The goal of complete freedom (moksa) that Gandhi attributes to man is not, according to him, a goal peculiar to the Hindu, but is a goal of Everyman, and the rules of conduct advocated for the attainment of this goal are recognized

⁵⁴Yeravda Mandir, p. 36.

⁵⁵Yeravda Mandir, p. 35.

by all the major religions. He says, "I do not believe in the exclusive divinity of the Vedas. I hold the Bible, the Koran, the Zend-Avesta to be as divinely inspired as the Vedas."⁵⁶ The different religions corresponding to these various religions are regarded as "different roads leading to the same goal."⁵⁷ Gandhi explains the common basis of all religions, saying, "All religions are founded on the same moral laws."⁵⁸ It follows, of course, that if the different religions are founded on the same fundamental moral laws, then one cannot regard one as false and another as true without repudiating the moral laws on which they are founded. Consequently, in the ideal society advocated by Gandhi there will be equal respect for all religious faiths.

Gandhi puts the argument for religious toleration this way:

Does not God himself appear to different individuals under different aspects. Still we know that He is one. The pursuit of truth is true devotion. It is the path that leads to God, and therefore, the golden rule of conduct is mutual toleration, seeing that we will never all think alike and that we shall always see Truth in fragments and from different angles of vision.⁵⁹

Obviously religious toleration for Gandhi is not so much a matter of toleration of belief in different Gods and different codes of action, as of

⁵⁶Young India, Oct. 6, 1921.

⁵⁷Indian Home Rule, p. 24.

⁵⁸Quoted by Romain Rolland, in Mahatma Gandhi (London: 1924) p. 28.

⁵⁹Gandhi Sutras, pp. 32-33.

toleration of beliefs in the same Gods and the same codes of action differently seen and differently lived by. The rule of toleration is basically a matter of respect for the thoughts and feelings of others, based on the assumption that their thoughts and feelings are not necessarily inferior to one's own.

Justification of Social Organization

The foregoing discussion may be taken as a presentation of what Gandhi considers to be the basic conditions of a satisfactory society. The question may be raised, however, as to the justification of these requirements. To answer this question it is necessary to examine the bases of Gandhi's social thought.

Individual Freedom

According to Gandhi human society has as its main function to assist man to full realization of his own nature or self, which nature or self is not regarded as different from God or the supreme reality. Gandhi regards human life as essentially a "passion" for self-realization. He says, "Life is an inspiration. Its mission is to strive after perfection, which is self-realization."⁶⁰ On another occasion, speaking as a Hindu, and presuming to speak for all Hindus, he said:

What I want to achieve--what I have been striving and pining to achieve these thirty years is self-realization,

⁶⁰Harijan, June 22, 1935.

to see God face to face, to attain Mokṣa. I live and move and have my being in pursuit of this goal. All that I do by way of speaking and writing and all of my ventures in the political field, are directed to this same end.⁶¹

The goal is mokṣa, which Gandhi identifies with self-realization and the realization of God. But this goal is to be attained through society and not through a denial of society. Therefore, the ideal society is one which is so structured that man can attain the greatest possible freedom possible with the least difficulty, so that man might realize himself. Individual freedom is of the utmost importance, but since man is a social animal and must live in society his freedom must be regulated in order that the freedom of others be guaranteed. In recognition of this Gandhi says:

I value individual freedom, but you must not forget that man is essentially a social being. He has risen to the present status by learning to adjust his individualism to the requirements of social progress. Unrestricted individualism is the law of the beast in the jungle. We have learned to strike a mean between individual freedom and social restraint for the sake of the well-being of the whole society, which enriches both the individual and the society of which he is a member.⁶²

Gandhi regards man as the soul of society. This soul must think and act properly, directing the body, the whole society, for its own welfare. The welfare of man, the soul, requires opportunities for realization of his potentialities and for the attainment of personal self-rule (swarāj). The society

⁶¹Gandhi, Experiments with Truth (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1948), p. 4.

⁶²Harijan, June 27, 1939.

must be so constructed that the welfare of the individual is thus served. In recognition of the fact that human goals are most easily and efficiently attained when activity is planned and structured according to rules, Gandhi laid down certain rules which everyone in the ideal society would follow. Although some of these rules have been discussed in the preceding pages, the two most basic rules have as yet been scarcely touched.

Truth, Ahimsā and Morality

The rules of truth-abiding and ahimsā constitute the basic moral and religious principles of Gandhi's ideal society. All human activity must be ruled by truth and done in the spirit of ahimsā. In the last analysis, says Gandhi, "To find Truth is to realize oneself and one's destiny, to become perfect."⁶³ Ahimsā is the means to realization of Truth. According to Gandhi, "without ahimsā it is not possible to seek and find Truth. Ahimsā and Truth are so intertwined that it is difficult to disentangle and separate them. Nevertheless, Ahimsā is the means, Truth is the end."⁶⁴

What is this end that Gandhi refers to as Truth? At one time in his life Gandhi used to say "God is Truth." Later he came to say, "Truth is God," emphasizing the convertibility of the two.⁶⁵ In explanation of the relationship

⁶⁴Gandhi Sūtras, p. 37.

⁶⁵Gandhi Sūtras, p. 28.

between Truth and God, Gandhi said:

The word 'Satya' (Truth) is derived from 'Sat', which means being. And nothing is or exists in reality except Truth. That is why Sat (Truth) is perhaps the most important name of God. In fact it is more correct to say that Truth is God than to say that God is Truth. Sat is the only correct and fully significant name for God.⁶⁶

According to this explanation, Gandhi would have it that Being, God, and Truth are all convertible terms, referring to one and the same reality. According to this explanation there is no distinction between Truth as religious or as metaphysical. To realize Truth in its entirety is to realize God, which is, at the same time, to identify oneself with Being, these three merely being different descriptions of one and the same reality or activity.

Gandhi's claim is that to realize Truth it is necessary to recognize the Divine Law according to which the whole universe, including human society, moves. He says, "My own experience has led me to the knowledge that the fullest life is impossible without an immovable belief in a living law in obedience to which the whole universe moves. A man without that faith is like a drop thrown out of the ocean, bound to perish."⁶⁷ According to Gandhi, this "living law" proceeds from God, the source and ruler of the universe, and is not distinct from God. Commenting on the Īśa Upanisad, Gandhi said: "All that there is in this universe, great or small, including the tiniest atom, is

⁶⁶Gandhi Sūtras, p. 27.

⁶⁷Harijan, April 25, 1936.

pervaded by God, known as Creator or Lord. 'Isa' means the Ruler, and He who is the Creator naturally, by every right, becomes the Ruler too."⁶⁸ The Rule of the Ruler, the "living law" is the basic truth in the universe, the divine law of the universe. For Gandhi, it is belief in the divine law of the universe which provides a foundation for society.

Society cannot take any form, but must be so structured that it fits in with the divine plan according to which the universe operates. This is the lesson that Gandhi learned from the first mantra of the Īsa Upaniṣad. Indicating what he takes to be an important implication of his interpretation of this mantra, he says, "This Mantra tells me that I cannot hold as mine anything that belongs to God, and if my life and that of all who believe in this Mantra has to be a life of perfect dedication, it follows that it will have to be a life of continual service of our fellow creatures."⁶⁹ The conclusion that one's entire life, including social life, is to be a life of service to others, is taken to follow from the identity of all beings with God. If, ultimately all are one, then to serve oneself includes the serving of all others.

The existence of this unity of being, of God, is not, according to Gandhi, a matter for argument. He says, "If you would have me convince others by argument, I am floored. But I can tell you this--that I am surer of his

⁶⁸Gandhi Sūtras, p. 24.

⁶⁹Gandhi Sūtras, p. 24.

existence than of the fact that you and I are sitting in this room."⁷⁰

Apparently the belief rests in an experience, an experience somehow incommunicable in words.

This belief in the unity of all being does not lead to a denial of the reality of the many beings or a denial of society and its role in assisting man in achieving God-realization. In fact, according to Gandhi, the unity of being requires recognition of the reality of the many and the need for society. Speaking of the implications of his belief in the unity of being, he says:

To be true to such a religion, one has to lose oneself in continuous and continuing service of all life. Realization of Truth is impossible without a complete merging of oneself in, and identification with, this limitless ocean of life. Hence for me, there is no escape from social service, there is no happiness on earth beyond or apart from it. Social service must be taken to include every department of life. In this scheme there is nothing high, nothing low. For all is one, though we seem to be many.⁷¹

This statement clearly indicates that Gandhi finds the need for society and social service indicated by his religious belief. "No individual may gain spiritually while those around him suffer,"⁷² he says, claiming this as an implication of his belief in God as the unity of all beings.

⁷⁰Gandhi Sūtras, p. 25.

⁷¹Harijan, April 2, 1936.

⁷²Gandhi Sūtras, p. 43.

According to this line of thinking, justification for society and for particular social institutions is to be found in their agreement with God's plan for his creatures. That is, a society with a particular structure or a particular institution in a given society is justified if it assists man in living the life he was intended to live by his creator. If social institutions prevent man from living as intended in the divine plan they are thereby evil and unjustified.

The obvious question that arises at this point is how man is to discover this divine plan; how does God intend man to live his life? The question of how the divine plan is known, along with the question of the existence of such a plan, will be discussed later. Let it suffice for now to remark that the difficulty involved is not peculiar to Gandhi's thought, but pervades any theory of law and society based on the concept of a divinely ruled universe. If the existence of a divine plan be accepted there must be found some empirical evidence which may serve as a guide or index to the divine plan. Otherwise the concept is entirely empty.

In his identification of God and Truth, Gandhi makes room for a moral basis of society. He says, "To me . . . God is ethics and morality."⁷³ In identifying God with morality Gandhi has, in effect, made morality convertible with truth. Consequently, in order to explore further what this "Truth" is that Gandhi makes the ultimate goal of human existence, it is necessary to turn to his view of morality.

⁷³Gandhi Sūtras, p. 27.

A clue to Gandhi's concept of morality is furnished by his statement that "that man alone can be called truly moral whose mind is not tainted with hatred or selfishness, and who leads a life of absolute purity and of disinterested service; and that man alone can be called truly wealthy or happy either."⁷⁴ According to this statement, the rules of morality require that (1) actions be done out of love (the opposite of hatred), and (2) actions be done in a spirit of selflessness, and (3) man must serve others. These three rules find their justification in a primary moral law. This law, according to Gandhi, is the law of service. He says, "The highest moral law is that we should work unremittingly for the good of mankind. When once we have grasped this vital truth, all other laws of morality will stand self-revealed."⁷⁵ That service of others should be regarded as the primary moral rule reflects again Gandhi's conception of the unity of mankind. As he says, "Mankind is one There are, of course, the differences of race and status and the like; but . . . all work toward a common end--the welfare of humanity."⁷⁶ This unity of mankind implies a non-distinction between self and other, and therefore a lack of distinction between service of self and service of other. One who acts only out of selfish interest obviously has not understood the identity of self and

⁷⁴Ethical Religions, p. 32.

⁷⁵Ethical Religions, p. 7.

⁷⁶Ethical Religions, p. 27.

other. Consequently, Gandhi says, "So long as we do not feel sympathy and love for every one of our fellow beings, we cannot be said to have understood the moral law."⁷⁷

If it follows from the fact of the unity and equality of mankind that the highest moral rule is that of service, then it also follows that this service cannot be motivated by selfish concern, nor can it be done except in a spirit of love.

It is from his conception of the unity and equality of mankind that Gandhi derives his universality in morality. According to him, "all the great moral virtues like love, charity, gratitude, and patriotism, have for their ultimate end the good of mankind. In fact, there is not a single virtue which aims at or is content with the welfare of the individual alone."⁷⁸ That fact that morality has its basis in the good of all mankind gives to it certain characteristics, as enumerated below. (1) Moral principles are unchanging (though particular rules may cease to have application and new ones discovered to fit new situations). Gandhi refers to this characteristic of morality by saying, "The principles of morality are eternally binding on all men and women all over the world."⁷⁹ (2) Morality is concerned with what ought to be the case rather than only with what is the case. Gandhi says, "Ethics deals with the world as

⁷⁷ Ethical Religion, p. 26.

⁷⁸ Ethical Religion, p. 2.

⁷⁹ Ethical Religion, p. 3.

it ought to be."⁸⁰ (3) An action derives its moral worth primarily from its end. It is moral when done for the right reasons. This third point, that the morality of an act depends upon the end or the reasons for which it was done requires a bit of explanation in light of certain of Gandhi's remarks that seem to contradict it.

Gandhi says, "No action can be called moral unless it is prompted by a moral intention. The end cannot justify the means."⁸¹ Off-hand, it might appear that if the end cannot justify the means, then it cannot be the case that an action derives its moral worth from its end. The difficulty is only apparent, however, as is easily seen by examining the following case. Gandhi says:

Let us suppose, for instance, that two men are in the habit of feeding the poor, the one moved by pity, the other with a view to earning a name, or maintaining his prestige, or attaining some other selfish end. Though the action is the same in these two cases, it is moral in the one case, and clearly immoral in the other.⁸²

Though these two actions are the same inasmuch as in each case the poor get fed, they are different in that they are done for different reasons, as Gandhi points out. The end of an action is, however, that for the sake of which the action is undertaken. It follows, therefore, that the ends in these two cases are different, in the one being the alleviation of hunger, in the other, being the

⁸⁰Ethical Religion, p. 3.

⁸¹Ethical Religion, pp. 8-9. (His italics.)

⁸²Ethical Religion, p. 9.

attainment of, say, praise. If Gandhi were asked why he considered the one act immoral and the other moral, it is clear that he would say that the judgment is to be made on the basis of the reasons for doing the acts in question. But if the desired good, the end, is the reason for acting in both cases, it is difficult to see how the morality of the act can be decided, except by reference to the end involved. If the man who fed the poor did so because he wanted praise it may be that the end does not, in that case, justify the means, giving food to the poor, and therefore, his action cannot be considered moral. But without reference to the end no decision could be reached as to the morality of the act. The statement, "The end cannot justify the means," is only part of the story. The full statement should read: "The end cannot justify the means when the end is immoral." (Or, instead of saying simply, and misleadingly, "The end never justifies the means," one should say, "The end never justifies the means except when the action is good, i.e., when the end does justify the means.)

If one insists on talking in terms of means and ends, then, in consistency, it must be allowed that there is nothing other than the end that could conceivably justify the means, and the distinction between a moral action and an immoral action is simply that in the first case the means are justified by the end, but in the second case the end does not, in fact, justify the means.⁸³

⁸³Gandhi himself was often reluctant to distinguish between means and ends, regarding the action as necessarily both ends and means. See Experiments with Truth, pp. 142-143.

The apparent inconsistency stemmed from a misunderstanding of what ends are. Gandhi apparently identified the end with the action itself, rather than with the reasons for which the action was undertaken. With this difficulty cleared up, and "end" used to refer to "that for the sake of which (the reason) the action is done," it is clear that Gandhi conceives of those actions as moral which are done for the right reasons. This is the force of his statement, "The morality of an action depends ultimately on the nature of the motive that prompts it."⁸⁴

From the fact that moral rightness of an action follows from the rightness of the reasons for which the action was done, it follows that (4) "the moral value of an action does not depend on our personal likes and dislikes."⁸⁵ A person may not like to obey certain laws, but he is, nevertheless, morally required to do so, if it is the right thing to do, regardless of how he feels about it. What counts is whether the reason for doing or abstaining is right or not; feelings are irrelevant. As Gandhi says, "The laws of the moral world, then, are absolutely independent of our opinions and our feelings."⁸⁶

These characteristics of morality point to a fundamental aspect of morality, the rational aspect. At bottom, the morally good life is one that consists in

⁸⁴Ethical Religion, p. 12. Gandhi does not distinguish between the different kinds of answers that might be given in answer to the question, "Why?" He uses "cause," "reason," and "motive" interchangeably for the most part.

⁸⁵Ethical Religion, p. 13.

⁸⁶Ethical Religion, p. 15.

activity in accord with right reasons. But if it is conceded that the rightness of an action depends upon the end or reason for which it is done, a question naturally arises as to the rightness of the end or reason itself. It might be thought that in this case an endless sequence of reasons might be required in order to justify an action, for a reason might be sought of the reason, a reason for that reason, etc. Such is not the case, however. A reason, if it is a good reason, provides justification for an action, and is not itself a demand for justification. In reply to the question, "Why did you do it?" the answer might be, "So that my children would not starve." It makes no sense to ask for another reason, to repeat the question, after being given the reason. It is possible, of course, that the person was lying, and this was suspected. In such a case the real reason might be wanted. But granted that the reason given was the real reason, the reason for which the person performed the action, it makes no sense to continue asking for reasons for the action, as the only possible answer consists in repeating the answer already given.

This in no way implies that a given reason must be a good reason. It still makes sense to ask if the given reason constitutes a good reason for the action in question. But this is not asking the reason for a reason. It is a demand for criteria in determining what constitutes a good reason in this case. Gandhi recognizes the validity of the question as to what constitutes a good reason for doing something, and suggests as a basic criterion the principle of self-preservation. It is, of course, not merely biological

self-preservation that Gandhi is suggesting, as is clear from the following statement:

Men in the earliest times were bound together merely by social bonds. That is to say, they were guided merely by the needs and requirements of corporate life in a community. In course of time they found that virtue always triumphed over vice, and that the evil-doer always brought destruction upon himself in the end. Thus, the instinct of self-preservation⁸⁷ led to the development of a moral instinct in man.

This statement, whatever its initial naivete, is a recognition that morality has its source in social contact. Man is by nature social; he cannot live apart from other human beings. But to live well with other human beings personal satisfaction and expediency cannot be the only reasons for acting, for one person's satisfaction is another person's death, and one person's expediency is another's burden. Therefore, resource is had to certain rules, which must be observed by all members of society, some of these being rules regulating behavior of the individual in relation to others in the most important spheres of activity.

Morality is an explicit recognition that certain conditions must be met if men are to live well together, and moral rules provide for the regulation of behavior in such a way that those basic requirements are met. Moral rules, therefore, have their basis in the welfare of the individual and society. These moral rules are the right reasons for acting, which implies that

⁸⁷ Ethical Religion, p. 18.

ultimately the criterion of right reasons amounts to whatever is for the well-being of the individual and society. Gandhi recognizes this when he argues, "Even if we can achieve some selfish end by doing ill to others, we ought not to do it; for the good that may come to us by evil-doing is only apparent, not real."⁸⁸ That is, if the good were real, and not merely apparent, then the act would not be evil; it is evil because the end or reason conflicts with the genuine good. As Gandhi says, "in judging the actions of men we should always apply this test--whether it conduces to the welfare of the world or not."⁸⁹

Morality belongs to the nature of man, according to Gandhi. It belongs to man, qua man, to be moral, for "it is the law of his being" to be moral.⁹⁰

Moral rules are not, however, to be identified with the rules of society, for there are many rules in society that are not moral rules. According to Gandhi, "the great difference between the law of the state and the moral law is that the latter has its seat in the soul of every man. Truth is within ourselves. There is an innermost center in us all where Truth abides in its fullness."⁹¹ This suggests that he considers moral rules to be self-imposed rules which are designed to regulate activity in accord with the true nature of man. These moral rules proceed from one's nature (essential being), and are

⁸⁸Ethical Religion, p. 18.

⁸⁹Ethical Religion, p. 31.

⁹⁰Ethical Religion, p. 5.

⁹¹Ethical Religion, p. 15.

intended to preserve one's nature (essential being). To live a morally righteous life is to live a life that in no way frustrates the laws of one's nature; it is to live the life of the true or authentic self. This is the realization of Truth in life. Accordingly, identifying truth and righteousness, Gandhi says, "Truth and righteousness must forever remain the law in God's world."⁹²

The identity of truth and righteousness has its basis in the unity and equality of being. The Truth that resides in the "innermost center" is the law of one's being. The presupposition of this view is that man is made according to a plan. The plan calls for certain kinds of activities, but prohibits others. The Truth is the plan, and when one acts rightly he acts according to the plan, for to act according to the plan means to act rightly.

It is because Gandhi conceives of Truth as the Plan or nature of man that he can identify finding Truth with self-realization. This also sheds light on his identification of God and Truth, for, according to Gandhi's non-dualistic position, God is not distinguished from his creation, and God as the planner is not different from the Plan, which Plan is the Truth of each being. Consequently, realization of one's self or nature is also realization of God. "To find Truth is to realize oneself and one's destiny, to become perfect."⁹³ Thus, from the religious point of view, to discover and live by Truth is to realize God. From the moral point of view it is to act according to one's nature and to become perfect.

⁹² Ethical Religion, p. 16.

⁹³ Gandhi Sūtras, p. 29.

In the light of these considerations it is not difficult to understand why Gandhi claims that the first moral rule is to abide by the truth, and why the concept of satyāgraha (holding-to-the-truth) assumes such an important position in his social philosophy. Abiding by the truth or living according to truth is the rule implicit in his technique of satyāgraha. He attempted all of his reforms and based all his actions on the twin principles of satyāgraha and ahimsā.

"Satyāgraha" is a compound expression, consisting of "satya", which means "truth," and "āgraha," which means "holding to." The truth that is to be held to is basically the fundamental law of all beings, but the law of human beings in particular. The universe is conceived of as teleological and holding to the truth consists in acting in accord with the purposes inherent in things.

Thus, Gandhi, in explanation of the vow of truth required in his community (āshram) said:

Devotion to this Truth is the sole reason for our existence. All our activities should be centered in Truth. Generally speaking, observing the law of Truth is merely understood to mean that we must speak the Truth. But we in this āshram understand the word "satya" in a much wider sense. There should be Truth in thought, Truth in speech, and Truth in action. To the man who has realized this Truth in perfection, nothing else remains to be known, because all knowledge is necessarily included in it. Here Truth is conceived to mean that we have to rule our life by this law at any cost.

⁹⁴Gandhi Sūtras, pp. 29-30.

Granting that all actions should be in accord with the Truth or Plan, it still remains to determine what this Plan or Truth is before it is possible to decide what to do. That is, life cannot, except by chance, be lived according to the plan unless it is known what the plan calls for. Gandhi is aware of this difficulty, and he suggests that the Plan of man calls for activity according to ahimsā. He says, "Ahimsā is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brutes."⁹⁵

Literally, "ahimsā" means "non-hurt." It is formed by adding the negative prefix "a" to "himsā," which means "hurt." But this is the narrowest sense of the word and not the sense Gandhi intends when he declares ahimsā to be the law of the human species. Speaking of the meaning of the word, Gandhi says, "But to me it has a world of meaning, and takes me into realms much higher, infinitely higher. It really means that you may not offend anybody; you may not harbor uncharitable thought, even in connection with one who may consider himself to be your enemy. To one who follows this doctrine there is no room for an enemy."⁹⁶

Ahimsā, then, is love: love in the broadest sense; it is love for all beings in all respects. In Gandhi's words, "Ahimsā is love and it is love that conquers. A man who believes in the efficacy of this doctrine finds in the ultimate stage,

⁹⁵Young India, August 11, 1921.

⁹⁶Gandhi Reader, p. 138. (It may well be that Gandhi is here enlarging the traditional concept of ahimsā.)

when he is about to reach his goal, the whole world at his feet."⁹⁷ Man's fundamental task and nature is to love; "If man has a divine mission to fulfill, a mission that becomes him, it is that of ahimsā."⁹⁸

Gandhi comments further on the relation between man's nature and ahimsā in the following remark:

Man's nature is not himsa (violence), but ahimsā, for he can state from experience his innermost conviction that he is not the body but the atman (self), and that he may use the body only with a view to self-realization. And from that experience he evolves an ethics of subduing desire, anger, ignorance, malice, and other passions, puts forth his best effort to achieve the end, and finally attains complete success. Only when his efforts reach that consummation can he be said to have fulfilled himself, to have acted in accord with his nature. Conquest of one's passions, therefore, is not superhuman, but human. Observance of ahimsā is heroism of the highest kind, with no room therein for cowardice or weakness.⁹⁹

The language of this statement suggests a dualism of self and body, as though a person were two things, with an inner thing, the self of atman, using the body. The language is somewhat misleading, however, for a person is only one thing and not two, though he may be described in different ways and engage in different activities. That Gandhi regarded man as essentially one rather than as a combination of two things, self and body, is reflected in his attempt to build a morality and social structure on the basis of his concept of

⁹⁸Gandhi Sūtras, p. 34.

⁹⁹Gandhi Sūtras, p. 34.

the nature of man as a being of ahimsā, essentially spiritual. If the man who eats, sleeps, cheats, lies, murders, tells the truth, loves, etc., were not one with the empirical self of daily life it would make no sense to try to build an ethics the way Gandhi does. If the body and self were two different entities, then what the body did and what happened to the body would have no bearing on the real self. Gandhi's position seems to be, not that a person is two entities, one spiritual and one physical, and inner and outer, but that the body is not the total self, but only one aspect of the self (but even though only one aspect, still an aspect).

Gandhi's position seems to be that to be true to his nature, man's actions must be ahimsā-inspired, for his nature is basically that of ahimsā. Activity in accord with ahimsā becomes the means to realization of the true self (Truth), for one's true nature can be realized only if all of one's activity is in accord with that nature. This explains why Gandhi said that though Truth and ahimsā were so intertwined as to be almost indistinguishable, still Truth is the end and ahimsā the means. For Truth, as an end, refers to the realization of the true self, which realization is not possible apart from activity in accord with ahimsā. It also reveals why ahimsā and Truth are, for Gandhi, the most basic concepts, and why the rule of holding-to-the truth (satyāgraha) is basic to society.

Gandhi explains the "root meaning" of satyāgraha by saying that it is "holding on to Truth, hence Truth force. I have called it love force or Soul

force."¹⁰⁰ He considers Truth force or Love force to be the basis of society and even of the whole world, saying, "The fact that there are still so many men alive in the world shows that it is based not on the force of arms, but on the force of truth or love."¹⁰¹

It thus appears that these two, satyāgraha and ahim̄sā, are the basic principles of Gandhi's social philosophy. The well-being of the individual requires activity in accord with his true nature. This requirement can be met only if activity is undertaken for the sake of the well-being of all individuals, and the true well-being of both the individual and society is known. The "Truth" involved here consists in the perfection of the self, for Gandhi says explicitly, "To find Truth completely is to realize oneself and one's destiny, to become perfect."¹⁰² Holding-to-the-truth consists in aiming at this self-perfection. The ahimsa inspired activity involved here is activity done for the sake of the well-being of all alike.

Economic, Religious and Moral Arguments

In view of these two basic principles of his social philosophy, Gandhi's insistence that the moral, religious, and economic bases of action are not to be separated is understandable. The foregoing study has revealed that Gandhi did,

¹⁰⁰Gandhi Sūtras, p. 126.

¹⁰¹Gandhi Sūtras, p. 127.

¹⁰²Gandhi Sūtras, p. 29.

in fact, view man under three different aspects, the religious, the moral, and the economic. The social requirements of bread labor, home industry, a simple life, abolition of capitalism, and decentralization, all aimed at securing equity in production and consumption of goods, were laid down by Gandhi in recognition of the fact that man is a consuming being, an economic animal. The social requirements of equal rights for women, the elimination of untouchability, the removal of class distinctions, equal distribution of wealth, truth-telling and self-control were laid down in recognition of the fact that man is a social and, therefore, necessarily a moral being. The requirements that there be religious toleration, that every person devote himself to God-realization, that all others be treated as though they were God, were laid down by Gandhi in recognition of man's nature as a religious being.

There is considerable overlapping here, however, for morality also requires mutual toleration. Religion too, requires equitable distribution, and economic as well as religious considerations require mutual toleration, etc. For Gandhi, especially, it is hard to distinguish between these different bases, for he considers religion to be founded on morality, and economics an application of rules of morality. This is why he can say, "I do not draw a sharp or any distinction between economics and ethics,"¹⁰³ and also, "Religion and morality are for me synonymous terms."¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³Young India, Oct. 13, 1921.

¹⁰⁴Young India, Oct. 14, 1926.

The religious, moral and economic bases of Gandhi's thought might be considered from another point of view. Granted the overlapping of the different aspects of man, it still might be argued that the conditions that must be satisfied in order to construct an ideal society can be justified from three different bases; the religious, the economic, and the moral. Thus, Gandhi's attempts to justify the requirements of bread labor, decentralization, utilization of local stuffs, abolition of capitalism, equality of distribution, and equality of classes on economic grounds. But he also attempts to base these same requirements on moral grounds when he argues that the well-being of the whole society and the well-being of the individual depend upon meeting those requirements. He attempts to justify the various conditions he has indicated are required for the ideal society on religious grounds by arguing that the well-being of the individual depends upon the satisfaction of those conditions, and that the reason these conditions should be fulfilled is that all individuals are equally God, or are all sparks of the same Divine Fire and, therefore, service to God requires the fulfillment of these conditions.

Thus, Gandhi argues for various economic conditions in society on the basis that they are required to insure the economic well-being of the individual, and therefore of the society, basing his arguments for equitable distribution and equality of social classes on the proposition that only then can society, and thereby economic conditions, prosper.

But he also argues that equal consideration should be given every individual in every sphere on the strength of the proposition, "All are sparks of the Divine Fire." And this attempt at justification, taking the basic premise to postulate a religious unity of being, is religious.

In addition to arguing for equal consideration of every individual in every sphere from economic and religious premises, Gandhi employs a moral premise. He argues that only if all individuals are considered as equal can there be a society including all persons. For discriminatory treatment of some persons ultimately results in those discriminated against being, in fact, forced outside the society. And granted that man cannot live well aside from society this argument for basic conditions required for the good life assumes the character of a moral argument. This line of reasoning is evident in his arguments against untouchability and his arguments for equal rights for women, as well as in his arguments for equitable distribution.

Social Organization and Freedom

In this way Gandhi utilizes economic, religious and moral arguments in an attempt to justify the basic conditions of society, recognizing a basic agreement in these arguments. But the basic inseparability of these arguments is seen quite clearly when it is recalled that for Gandhi the ultimate goal of economics is to satisfy all of the economic needs of the individual, thus rendering him free in the economic sphere; the ultimate goal of morality is to achieve such self-control that external controls are not required, thus providing freedom from external

social restraints. The ultimate goal of religion is to achieve such control over the self that the person becomes free from all external restraints, including the restraints of the physical being. The goal is freedom of the individual in each case. Social freedom (freedom from external social restraints) requires economic freedom, and religious freedom requires social freedom. The religious freedom is a more complete freedom than social freedom, which in turn is a more complete freedom than economic freedom. If the fundamental ideal of society be the freedom of the individual, then it follows that the social conditions required for economic freedom will be required also for social freedom, which will be required also for religious freedom, the religious freedom including the social, which includes the economic. Thus, if the goal of the society is complete or religious freedom of the individual, the society must achieve social and economic freedom also. On the other hand, if the goal of society is economic freedom it may be that there need not be concern with social or religious freedom. If the goal of society is social freedom, then economic freedom must be secured, though there need not be any concern with religious freedom.

The foregoing study has shown that for Gandhi it is the complete or absolute freedom of the individual that is the goal of the ideal society. Gandhi considers economic and social freedom to be necessary conditions of this absolute freedom, and therefore lays down various moral and economic rules for society designed to secure the requisite economic and social freedom.

Critical Summary of Gandhi's Social Philosophy

In conclusion it would be well to examine the particular social organization advocated by Gandhi, paying special attention to the relationship between Gandhi's general social requirements and the specific forms of social organization he advocates.

In the foregoing pages it has been seen that Gandhi considers the most essential function of society to be the provision for man's freedom and the other conditions requisite for self-realization. In order that the necessary freedom be secured, he claims, society must be organized in the simplest possible manner, for this will guarantee economic sufficiency, social equality, and a general moral character of society--all of which work to effect a greater freedom for the individual in society.

Gandhi argues against a complex social structure, claiming that "if India will only discard 'modern civilization' she can only gain by so doing." In support of this he cites the simple way of living of the Hindu peasant, using the same tools for thousands of years, wearing the same dress etc., in contrast to 'modern civilization,' praising the simple Hindu way, saying, "The tendency of the Indian civilization is to elevate the moral being, that of the Western is to propogate immorality."¹⁰⁵

This is no small claim, and one that may prove difficult to support. If it could be shown that lack of change and a simple manner of life entailed a moral

¹⁰⁵See above, pp. 148-149.

existence, and that rapid change and a complex mode of life entailed immorality, then Gandhi would have a good argument. It is, however, difficult to see any important connection between simplicity and morality and between a static society and morality on the one hand, and between complexity and immorality and between a dynamic society and immorality on the other.

It might well be that the sort of complexity in society that results in a sufficiency of goods for need satisfaction does more to propagate morality than does the sort of simplicity in society that leaves everyone on the point of starvation. There does not seem to be any important connection between simplicity and economic sufficiency. Nor does there seem to be anything virtuous or good about simplicity as such. And, on the other hand, there does not seem to be anything bad or immoral about complexity as such. Therefore, the argument from the simplicity of Hindu society and the complexity of Western civilization cannot, as such, be an argument against complex social structures.

Gandhi, however, does not rest his case against a modern and complex form of social organization merely on the assumption that whatever is simple is thereby better than what is complex. He argues that fair and equitable distribution, leading to general need satisfaction, is better served only when production and consumption are localized in the same place. In fact, he claims that only then is it possible to achieve equitable distribution.¹⁰⁶ In other words, Gandhi is claiming that in order to ensure adequate distribution of goods and to

¹⁰⁶ See above, p. 153.

provide everyone the necessities of life society, and production processes in particular, must be kept simple.

But this argument rests upon the assumption that it is impossible to achieve equitable distribution in a complex society where the means of production are complex, centralized, and far removed from the places of consumption. And this assumption is far from being obviously true. At best, the position could be maintained if it were shown to be the case that granted a complexity of production means and centralization of production far from consumption areas, then it would not be possible to get the needed goods where they were needed. In other words, the argument amounts to this: If complex production processes and centralization of production means entails unsatisfactory distribution, then distribution of goods will be unsatisfactory if the production processes are complex and centralized. Gandhi has done nothing to show that localization of production and simplified processes of production and distribution will result in unsatisfactory distribution of goods, nor to show that his plan for production and distribution will achieve distribution any more satisfactory than the plan he is criticizing. In other words, his assumption that localization of production forces and simplified techniques of production in a simply organized society will contribute more to the good life in society than centralized production in a complex society is wholly gratuitous.

Gandhi's advocacy of hand labor to the exclusion of machine labor is part of the same gratuitous assumption inasmuch as he merely claims, and fails to show, that the use of machines leads to centralization and thereby to inequitable

distribution. Nor does Gandhi show that the use of machines necessarily enslave man, and entails poverty for some members of the society. It might, quite as plausibly, be claimed that the use of machines will free man, rather than enslaving him, and will result in the satisfaction of the basic needs of all.

Supposing for the moment, however, that Gandhi's plan for organizing society simply, using hand labor to the exclusion of machines, utilizing only local stuffs, etc., did result in equal distribution of goods, and did result in every person in society being equal in various important ways--does this imply freedom from economic want? Does it provide adequate social status, etc.? Or, does this guarantee only that if one goes hungry then all go hungry, and if one is unfree then all are unfree? But since it is clearly Gandhi's intention in stipulating his various social postulates to secure freedom from want, freedom from oppression, etc., then society is to be so constructed that there are no unsatisfied wants, no forms of oppression, etc. If further, it is insisted, as Gandhi seems to insist, that not only must everyone be free from economic wants and needs, but also that each have an equal share of the total wealth, then society must be so constructed that such distribution is effected. But none of this requires that life must be lived simply or that machines must be avoided. There is no reason why all of the production forces of a society could be concentrated in one small area, all the work done by machine, and a plethora of both necessities and luxuries of life be so distributed that everyone had an equal share.

It would appear that Gandhi was arguing from the fact that industrialization (by a foreign power) of India had led to increased economic wants among a large number of persons and had led to the enrichment of a handful of others, that this is a necessary effect of industrialization. If, indeed, such conditions are a necessary effect of industrialization, then it may be that Gandhi is right. But he has done nothing to show this.

He has assumed that if man would not interfere with nature--if man would just let nature take its course, then there would be no unsatisfied wants. He claims that "it is the fundamental law of nature, without exception, that nature produces enough for our wants from day to day."¹⁰⁷ This claim seems quite unwarranted. If one looks to the non-human world, where there has been no attempt by man to upset the plans of nature, we see that all kinds of life forms perish because of lack of nutrition. It is obvious that nature does not provide sufficient nutritive materials for her subjects. If this is the case with the non-human world why should it be thought to be different in the human world? It would be unreasonable to expect a completely different state of affairs to exist with respect to the world of human animals. It may be the case that the scores of people who die of starvation each day in Calcutta, in the year 1965, would not so die if better schemes of wealth distribution were effected. But this is no argument for the proposition that they would not so die if there were no schemes of wealth distribution. The fact that today many people are dying of starvation may be an argument in favor of implementing better plans for distribution, but it is

¹⁰⁷See above, p. 146.

hard to see how it can serve as an argument against any and all plans of distribution, or what is the same things, an argument for letting nature take its course and thereby dispose of the problem.

Gandhi's thinking that it is stealing to have more than one requires for immediate needs¹⁰⁸ is linked up with his thinking that nature supplies man's needs of herself, without need of help from human society. It reflects his assumption that while nature will supply the basic needs, she will supply just barely enough. It is, however, difficult to see how it would amount to stealing to take and keep more than was immediately needed unless so doing would cause suffering to others. Perhaps in certain circumstances this would be the case. But surely, in a society where more than a bare existence level of life were maintained this would not be the case. And it is at least possible that only through individual's appropriating for themselves something in excess of immediate needs can the conditions in society be improved to the point where each will have more than the bare minimum required for existence. Surely, in a society where everyone has more than the minimum required for immediate needs it cannot be considered stealing to have more than is required for immediate needs. And, just as surely, other things being equal, such a society would be preferable to one in which only a bare existence level of life could be maintained.

Turning now to Gandhi's plans for a society providing for general social equality--equal rights for women, elimination of caste and untouchability, etc.

¹⁰⁸See above, p. 146.

--attention must be given to his assumption that, ideally, every person is his own ruler, not subject to the rule of another, but subject only to self-imposed rules.¹⁰⁹ (This is in addition to the assumption that all persons are essentially the same, being parts of the same Ultimate Reality.) Is not this merely naivete on the part of Gandhi? That persons should live together in society without rules of action seems impossible. At least it has seemed so unlikely to some thinkers that they have argued from the horrible conditions that would exist if man did not have rules to follow, to the need for absolute authority in society.

This objection, however, misses the point Gandhi is making. Gandhi does not claim that humanity, in its present condition, is ready for stateless and ruleless existence. He no doubt recognizes that the consequence of the removal of all rules at this time in history would be chaos. He is suggesting, rather, that a stateless society, the absence of externally enforced rules should be held before mankind as an ideal at which humanity should aim. The question might be asked whether it is realistic to aim at that which can never be achieved. But Gandhi would not admit that a state-less society could never be achieved. He would argue that granted the moral perfection of man, man would act and live better than he now does, both morally and socially, without rules and sanctions imposed by an external authority. Though Gandhi does not make this explicit, he is arguing that it is possible for man to internalize all the rules

¹⁰⁹See above, pp. 155-156.

required for social existence. That is, man would, of his own accord, because he saw the long-term advantage of so doing, do all of the things now done to make social life possible, and he would do even more. Man would act according to certain rules even though there would be no external authority to enforce compliance with the various rules. Whether or not this position is overly idealistic, Gandhi cannot be regarded as demanding something for society now for which society is totally unprepared. He is talking about ideals and not about practice.

This distinction between ideals and practice suggests an analogous distinction that can be made within Gandhi's social philosophy. Most of the foregoing objections are directed to that part of Gandhi's social philosophy concerned with social planning. It certainly appears that as a social planner Gandhi left much to be desired. But it is possible to distinguish between that aspect of Gandhi's thought concerned with theoretical requirements for the good society and that aspect of his thought concerned with advocating specific means for realizing these various requirements. In fact, the foregoing arguments which served as objections to Gandhi's proposals have assumed the same basic premises that Gandhi assumes as basic requirements of society. The effectiveness these arguments have is due to the fact that Gandhi was mistaken about the implications of his basic social requirements. The requirements of equal rights for all, complete freedom for all, mutual toleration and a sufficiency of

means for life are not objectionable as social ideals. The basic objection to Gandhi's thought is that his conclusions from these premises were mistaken. The preceding objections have aimed at pointing out that Gandhi's plan of social organization was not a necessary implication of his social ideals. No objection has been made to the social ideals of equal rights, toleration, freedom, etc. These ideals can be justified in that, as Gandhi suggests, they improve the life of man to the extent they are effected in society. Also, as embodying rules, these ideals function as basic moral rules, also as Gandhi suggests. And this would serve as a moral justification of his social ideals. In addition, Gandhi thinks his social ideals to be justified in that they are required for the sake of man's self-realization. In other words, assuming the legitimacy of man's goal of moksa or complete freedom (which for Gandhi, is also God-realization), then, if activity in accord with the rules embodied in the social ideals outlined by Gandhi is a necessary condition of attaining this goal, those social ideals are justified.

CHAPTER IV.

AUROBINDO' SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY

Social Ideals

The social thought of Aurobindo is concerned predominantly with goals and ideals of society.¹ There is little reference to practices and institutions. Guidelines for social institutions are sometimes indicated but details are never sketched. On the other hand, there is considerable description of the nature and goals of society, and a serious attempt is made to justify the picture of the proper function of society presented. Aurobindo explains his concern with the goals of society and his neglect of particular institutions and practices in the following statement.

We do not believe that by changing the machinery so as to make our society the ape of Europe we shall effect social renovation. Wido re-marriage, substitution of class for caste, adult marriage, inter-marriages, inter-dining and the other nostrums of the social reformer are mechanical changes which, whatever their merits or demerits, cannot by themselves save the soul of the nation

¹Of his philosophical works, The Life Divine, The Synthesis of Yoga, and The Human Cycle are the most original and represent Aurobindo at his best. The Life Divine is a study in the nature of and conditions for a more perfect existence. A Synthesis of Yoga is a study in the methods and techniques of achieving this more perfect existence, the divine life. The Human Cycle is a study in social evolution and contains the bulk of Aurobindo's social philosophy. The 360 pages that comprise this volume provide the chief source for a study of Aurobindo's social philosophy.

or stay the course of degradation and decline. It is the spirit alone that saves, and only by becoming great and free in heart can we become socially and politically free and great.²

In its emphasis on goals and ideals and their justification the thought of Aurobindo differs considerably from that of Gandhi who, though consciously working towards goals and ideals (which guided his social thought), concerned himself little with description and justification of the ideals, but concentrated on working out rules for social action, outlining social institutions, and on offering practical suggestions intended to be of use in transforming the present society into something closer to the ideal. Aurobindo, on the other hand, is concerned to examine the structure of the ideal rather than the institutions whereby the ideal might be realized.

The ideal that guides Aurobindo's social thought is expressed in the following statement:

What then shall be our ideal? Unity for the human race by an inner oneness and not only by an external association of interests; the resurgence of man out of the merely animal and economic life or the merely intellectual and aesthetic into the glories of the spiritual existence; the pouring of the power of the spirit into the physical mould and mental instrument so that man may develop his manhood into that true supermanhood which shall exceed our present state as much as this exceeds the animal state from which science tells us that we have issued. These three are one; for man's unity and man's self-transcendence can come only by living in the spirit.³

²Aurobindo Ghose, The Ideal of the Karmayogin (Calcutta: Arya Publishing House, 1945), p. 4.

³Aurobindo Ghose, Ideal and Progress (Calcutta: Arya Publishing House, 1946), p. 56.

According to this statement, the ideal includes the following postulates:

(1) The unification of the human race; (2) The elevation of the human race to a higher plane of existence; (3) The control of the biological, emotional, aesthetic, and mental man by the spiritual man; and (4) This ideal is to be attained not by force of either a physical or rational kind, but by a realization of the higher reality that lies within the present man.

The purpose of society is to realize this ideal in its various elements.

Aurobindo says:

The object of all society should be, therefore, and must become, as man grows conscious of his real being, nature and destiny and not as now only a part of it, first to provide the conditions of life and growth by which individual Man--not isolated men according to their capacity--and the race through the growth of its individuals may travel towards this divine perfection. It must be, secondly, as mankind generally more and more grows near to some figure of it--for the cycles are many and each cycle has its own figure of the Divine in man--to express in the general life of mankind, the light, the power, the beauty, the harmony, the joy of the Self that has been attained and that pours itself out in a freer and nobler humanity.⁴

The main suggestions of this statement are: (1) The ideal society must provide for complete self-expression of the fully-realized self; (2) The ideal society must provide the conditions that will enable man to fully realize his true nature; (3) The unification and elevation of the race is dependent upon the self-realization and elevation of the individual; (4) The unification and elevation of the race will result in greater human freedom; (5) At present man is not

⁴Aurobindo Ghose, The Human Cycle (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1962), pp. 83-84.

fully aware of his true or authentic existence; (6) Because man is not now fully aware of his true nature he does not know where he is going; and (7) Presently social structures do not allow for a full realization of the nature of the individual.

These seven points are interrelated, as the inadequacies of the present social structures are the consequence of man's not knowing his goal or destiny, which in turn is due to his ignorance of his true nature. Knowledge of the true nature of the self allows for remedying of the above noted deficiencies by the construction of a society that allows for the attainment of man's true nature and for complete self-expression within that society. Implementation of the necessary conditions in society for self-realization will result in greater human freedom and an evolution of the species, made possible by self-realization and self-elevation.

A basic supposition of Aurobindo's ideal society is found in his view that man must become something greater than he now is. The ideal of controlling the physical and mental by the spiritual implies the elevation of humanity to a higher plane of existence. This in turn requires a different mode of existence than presently found in society. Conditions must be created in society that will enable man to achieve his greater self. Presently society is not so constituted that man can live an ideal existence; present social structures are deficient and inadequate.

Critique of Social Organization

Aurobindo analyze the inadequacies in past and present social structures in considerable detail. This analysis is of no little importance for a study of Aurobindo's social thought, for indirectly, the line of his criticisms of past and present societies provides a clue to the guiding principles and institutions of the ideal society.

According to Aurobindo, the dominant societies in the world today stress the importance of living well, but this "living well" is interpreted as "living to satisfy man's vital instinct of possession . . . and for the fulfillment of his other vital instinct of self-reproduction."⁵ The first means to the satisfaction of these two vital instincts are the family and intermediate groups, but the individual obtains even greater fulfillment by turning to society. "In society he finds a less intimate but a larger expansion of himself and his instincts."⁶ The expansion of the individual and his instincts in this larger field of association and companionship, emotional satisfaction, wealth attainment, and regular amusement constitutes the main advantage of society.⁷ Aurobindo admits that in their recognition of the importance of man's vital instincts modern societies have made great progress. Insofar as they plan and build their institutions according to reason, employing the best techniques of science, they are much superior to older types of society.⁸

⁵Human Cycle, p. 212.

⁶Human Cycle, p. 213.

⁷Human Cycle, pp. 213-215.

⁸Ibid., p. 133.

According to Aurobindo, the present type of society, the rational and individualistic, is the product of forces growing out of earlier types of society among which the symbolic, typical, and conventional are the predominant types.⁹

Symbolic Society

It is usually the case, he says, that when we study human society in its earliest stages "we do find a strongly symbolic mentality that governs or at least pervades its thought, customs and institutions."¹⁰ This stage is imaginatively religious; life is regulated in terms of the religious images involved.¹¹ The distinctive characteristic of this social mentality is that the image is regarded as the ultimately real and the individual person is considered to be a representation of the symbol which is the highest reality. This type of society is represented by the early Vedic peoples who "cared little or only subordinately for material factors and looked always first and foremost to the symbolic, religious or psychological significance."¹² Aurobindo illustrates his characterization of this society as religiously symbolic by reference to the Puruṣa Sūkta, where the four classes (varṇas) of men are represented as issuing from the respective parts of the creative deity. He says, "To us, this is merely a poetical image." But, "to them this symbol of the Creator's body was more than an image, it expressed a divine reality."¹³ To them the great Puruṣa was not a symbol of

⁹Ibid., pp. 1-14.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 3.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 5-8.

¹²Human Cycle, p. 6.

¹³Ibid., p. 7.

human life, but human life was a symbol of the Puruṣa: "Human society was for them an attempt to express in life the cosmic Puruṣa who has expressed himself otherwise in the material and the supraphysical universe. Man and the cosmos are both of them symbols and expressions of the same hidden reality."¹⁴

Typal Society

The symbolic attitude resulted in making "everything in society a sacrament, religious and sacrosanct, but as yet with . . . freedom in all its forms."¹⁵ From this symbolic type of society evolved the typal society, which fixed on the psychological and ethical, which in symbolic society were subordinate to the religious and spiritual, attempting to account for the "Wonderful" in terms of ethical ideals based on psychological principles.¹⁶ In the typal society, according to Aurobindo, "religion becomes then a mystic sanction for the ethical motive and discipline."¹⁷ He says, "This typal stage creates the great social ideals which remain impressed upon the human mind even when the stage itself is passed."¹⁸ In India, these ideals included the ideal of the priests and philosophers (brahmana varna), administrators and warriors

¹⁴Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁶Human Cycle, p. 9.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 10.

(ksatriya varna), producers (vaisya varna), and laborers (sudra varna), each with its own honor and each with its own rules and duties.¹⁹

Conventional Society

The typical society passes into the conventional stage of society. "The conventional stage of human society is born when the external supports, the outward expressions of the spirit or the ideal become more important than the ideal, the body or even the clothes more important than the person."²⁰ In the conventional age the outward forms assume great importance. "The tendency of the conventional age of society is to fix, to firmly arrange, to formalize, to erect a system of rigid grades and hierarchies . . . to cast a stamp of finality on what seems to it the finished life of man."²¹ The conventional society has its day of glory, its golden age, when the life that inspired its forms still lives, but is confined within forms. When that life is extinguished by a multitude of fixed forms the forms lose their vitality and society becomes wooden and dead.²² Aurobindo sees lifeless forms behind the "growing darkness and weakness of India in her last millenium."²³ He says, "We see it in Europe in the repeated moral tragedy of ecclesiasticism and Catholic monasticism."²⁴

¹⁹Ibid., p. 10.

²⁰Ibid., p. 10.

²¹Human Cycle, p. 12.

²²Ibid., pp. 12-13.

²³Ibid., p. 13.

²⁴Ibid., p. 14.

Rationalistic Society

The petrification of the typical figure leads to a revolt against conventionality.

"An individualistic age comes as a result of the corruption and failure of the conventional."²⁵ This individualistic age is "the Age of Reason, the Age of Revolt, Progress, Freedom."²⁶ "It is in Europe that the age of individualism has taken birth and exercised full sway," says Aurobindo.²⁷ In its beginnings it was a revolt of reason, creating the various sciences and being carried triumphantly forward by them.²⁸ The individual protests against the blind rigidity he finds everywhere. "In the social order he finds a . . . stereotyped reign of convention, fixed disabilities, fixed privileges, the self-regarding arrogance of the high, the blind prostration of the low"²⁹

With a goal of practicable social justice, equipped with both speculative and scientific reason the protestant finds a standard of truth and principles of social order in the physical sciences. "Here . . . Mother Nature herself had written in her eternal book for all to read . . . and judge. Here were laws, principles, fundamental facts of the world and of our being which all could verify at once for themselves and which must, therefore, satisfy and guide the free individual. . . ."³⁰

²⁵Ibid., p. 15.

²⁶Ibid., p. 14.

²⁷Human Cycle, p. 16.

²⁸Ibid., p. 17.

²⁹Ibid., p. 17.

³⁰Ibid., p. 22.

This advent of the scientific and rational age spelled the death of conventionalism. As reason and science came into their own, justification of social forms came to be demanded. Only what passed the tests imposed by a scientific reason was allowed to remain. "The attempt to govern and organize human life by verifiable science, by a law, a truth of things, an order and principles which all can observe and verify in their ground and fact and to which therefore all may freely and must rationally subscribe, is," says Aurobindo, "the culminating movement of European society."³¹

Aurobindo recognizes that the conquering power of reason with its insistence upon a rational justification for everything is creating a society much superior to what preceded it. The chief fruits of the rational society are seen in the fact that it is a basic tenet of such a society that each member has equal right to a full life and full development of his or her potentialities. Exploitation of one class by another finds no sanction in the rational society. He says, "It is now fixed that social development and well-being mean the development and well-being of all the individuals in society and not merely a flourishing of the community in the mass which resolves itself really into the splendour and power of one or two classes."³²

Both the aim and the justification of the rational society is found in "the

³¹Human Cycle, p. 23.

³²Ibid., p. 28.

one dominant need of rediscovering the substantial truth of life, thought and action which have been overlaid with falsehood; the falsehood of conventional standards no longer alive to the truth of the ideas from which their conventions started."³³ The means to these truths are the appropriate sciences; the sciences that reveal the basic laws of the physical, psychological and social universes. Society constructed in accordance with the basic laws discovered by science is the ideal; with the improvement of the sciences will come improvement of social structures; this is the hope and the ideal of the rational-scientific age.³⁴

The evolution of society pictured by Aurobindo, which to date has passed from the symbolic to the typical, to the conventional, and which has produced today's rational society, has thus (granting the fulfillment of the present rational age) produced a society much more aware and critical of itself than any preceding. We now have a self-conscious society. Society does not just grow; it is planned and guided by reason through the tools of science, and it must develop according to those plans. Poverty is eliminated, diseases cured, longevity extended, comforts multiplied, the masses are educated; in short, the forces of material nature are conquered by man in the rational society.³⁵ In eliminating the brutish conditions of prior societies by a rational adherence to basic physical, biological, economic, and social laws, by recognizing the

³³Human Cycle, p. 30.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 97-98; 257.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 99-104.

importance of the individual and by instilling the desire for education into everyone, the age of "Science has thus prepared us for an age of wider and deeper culture."³⁶

Basic Defects of Historical Social Organization

But despite all of the advantages to humanity made possible by the rational society, Aurobindo is dissatisfied with it. He says, "Yet the truths which Europe has found by its individualistic age covered only the first and more obvious, physical and outward facts of life and only such of their more hidden realities and powers as the habit of analytical reason and the pursuit of practical utility can give to man."³⁷

Ignorance of man. -- This condemnation by Aurobindo presupposes that there is some deeper truth by which man is to be guided, but which truth is not amenable to the methods of scientific reason. Despite the advantages scientific reason has wrought, he says, it has also "encouraged more or less directly both by its attitude to life and its discoveries another kind of barbarism--that of the industrial, the commercial, the economic"³⁸ The barbaric man science makes possible is the man for whom "to arrive, to succeed, to produce, to accumulate, to possess, is his existence."³⁹ Since the ideal of society is the

³⁶Human Cycle, p. 103.

³⁷Ibid., p. 16.

³⁸Ibid., p. 103.

³⁹Human Cycle, p. 103.

cultivated man and not the barbaric, the society that produces the barbaric cannot be the ideal.

According to Aurobindo barbarism is characterized by a tendency to identify man with the body and physical life, elevating brute strength and power into ideals. He says, "To take the body and the physical life as the one thing important, to judge manhood by the physical strength, development and prowess, to be at the mercy of the instincts which rise out of the physical unconscious, to despise knowledge as a weakness and inferiority or look on it as a peculiarity and no necessary part of the conception of manhood, this is the mentality of the barbarian."⁴⁰ The similarity between the barbarian described here and the economic barbarian is that both take an inferior activity of man and regard it as the highest. The difference between them is that the primitive barbarian makes a god of brute strength and the economic barbarian makes a god of comfort and wealth.

Aurobindo characterizes the modern barbarian in the following way:

His idea of civilization is comfort, his idea of moral social respectability, his idea of politics the encouragement of industry, the opening of markets, exploitation and trade following the flag, his idea of religion at best a pietistic formalism or the satisfaction of certain vitalistic emotions. He values education for success in a competitive, or, it may be, a socialized industrial existence, science for the useful inventions and knowledge, the comforts, conveniences, machinery of production with which it arms him, its power for organization, regulation, stimulus to

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 96.

production. The opulent plutocrat and the successful mammoth capitalist and organizer of industry are the supermen of the commercial age and the true, if often occult rulers of its society.⁴¹

The condemnation of all this is not due to the existence of wealth, comfort, and mass production, but it is an objection to pursuing "satisfaction, productiveness, accumulation, possession, enjoyment, comfort, convenience for their own sake."⁴²

Aurobindo's idea is that the body and biological life exist for the sake of something higher, and must not, therefore, be made into ultimate ends. "They must be subordinated to the superior needs of the mental being, chastened and purified by a greater law of truth, good and beauty before they can take their proper place in the integrality of human perfection."⁴³ To make physical and economic existence into the ultimate goals in life is, therefore, to exist barbarically, for "barbarism is the state of society in which man is almost entirely preoccupied with his life and body, his economic and physical existence."⁴⁴

Inadequacy of scientific method. -- Man's physical and economic needs must be cared for and satisfied. This Aurobindo recognizes, and he praises the accomplishments of scientific reason for making possible such need-satisfaction.⁴⁵

⁴¹Human Cycle, p. 104.

⁴²Ibid., p. 104.

⁴³Ibid., pp. 104-105.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 112.

⁴⁵Human Cycle, pp. 298-307. (Also, Life Divine, pp. 650ff.)

But while credit must be given to science for its accomplishments in these fields, Aurobindo is of the opinion that it also is to be censured when it represents itself as the highest and surest guide to life. Science, according to him, is essentially a shallow business which deals only with externals and the laws of appearance. He says, "After all the triumphs and marvels of Science the explaining principle, the rationale, the significance of the whole is left as dark, as mysterious and even more mysterious than ever."⁴⁶ The chief defect of science, according to Aurobindo is that it is powerless to guide human existence. It can discover the how and the what, but when it comes to the why, to the purpose of things, it is, of its nature, necessarily silent.⁴⁷ This is why science, when it is put in the service of life's true purposes, is of tremendous advantage in the attainment of the good life, but it is also why, when it pretends to be the highest and surest guide to life, it is to be censured. This is why scientific reason has made possible the new economic barbarism, for this barbarism consists in misuse of the creations of the scientific reason. This is also why social organization must have a basis other than science (though science is not to be excluded).

In addition to the charge that science cannot provide the best guide to life because it investigates the how and the what but not the why, Aurobindo claims that this same scientific reason which made possible an age of individualism

⁴⁶The Riddle of This World (Calcutta: Arya Press, 1946), p. 37.

⁴⁷Life Divine, pp. 992-994.

will also be the death of individualism. He says, "The discovery by individual free-thought of universal laws of which the individual is almost a by-product and by which he must necessarily be governed, this attempt actually to govern the social life of humanity in conscious accordance with the mechanism of these laws seems to lead logically to the suppression of that very individual freedom which made the discovery and the attempt at all possible."⁴⁸

Aurobindo's claim that organization of society exclusively by scientific laws leads logically to suppression of the individual's freedom is based on the notion that laws of science are, of their nature, universal rather than particular, and that therefore variations of behavior on the part of the individual cannot be contended by the law or laws in question. The best science could do would be to build the exceptions into laws, thus maintaining the necessary universality of the laws, while at the same time supposedly allowing individual exceptions. But of course, the mere statement of this solution reveals its inadequacy, for the only exceptions allowable are the exceptions according to the law, which rather than allowing the individual human freedom, suppresses such freedom by determining even the so-called exceptions by universal laws. There cannot be laws with exceptions; a law may have exceptions built in, but then there can be no exceptions to these built in exceptions.

The consequence of this, according to Aurobindo, is that "in seeking the truth and law of his own being the individual seems to have discovered a truth

⁴⁸Human Cycle, p. 23.

and law which is not of his own individual being at all, but of the collectivity, the pack, the hive, the mass."⁴⁹ The social consequence of this is that if society is to be organized on the basis of scientific laws, "it is a new ordering of society by a rigid economic or governmental Socialism in which the individual is again deprived of his freedom in his own interest and that of humanity, and must have his whole life and action determined for him at every step and in every point from birth to old age by the well-ordered mechanism of the state."⁵⁰

Granted that it is much better that the individual be deprived of his freedom for the sake of his own welfare rather than for the welfare of someone else; if a person is truly an individual, and not just a particular member of a class distinct from other particulars only numerically, or spatially and temporally, then deprivation of his freedom is suppression of his individuality and, therefore, detrimental to the well-being of the individual. Consequently, even though a rationalistic society which regulates the lives of its members for their own benefit rather than for the exploitation by others is better than many other arrangements, it is still an inadequately organized society from the point of view of the individual. Aurobindo subscribes to the view that the individual is not merely a member of a class, but is, if you will, a class unto himself. He says, "The individual is not merely a social unity; his existence,

⁴⁹Human Cycle, p. 23.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 24.

his right and claim to live and grow are not founded solely on his social work and function. He is not merely a member of a human pack, hive, or ant-hill; he is something in himself; . . ."⁵¹

Aurobindo cannot, therefore, accept the rational society as the best possible society, if this means life organized in accordance with universal laws, applicable to classes of individuals without distinction. The basic source of the inadequacy of a society organized strictly according to the demands of scientific reason lies in the very nature of the scientific method. Accepting science as the best developed tool of reason, Aurobindo characterizes the built-in insufficiency of scientific reason by saying:

The whole difficulty of the reason in trying to govern our existence is that because of its own inherent limitations it is unable to deal with life in its complexity or in its integral movements; it is compelled to break it up into parts, to make more or less artificial classifications, to build systems with limited data which are contradicted, upset or have to be continuously modified by other data, to work out a selection of regulated potentialities which is broken down by the bursting of a new wave of yet unregulated potentialities.⁵²

Aurobindo's suggestion is that the individual is an integral unit and the life of the individual is something continuous. Scientific reason, by its very method, breaks down unities and continuities into segments and aspects and classifies the parts and aspects, building the theory of the original continuous unit on the basis

⁵¹Human Cycle, p. 28.

⁵²Human Cycle, p. 144.

of this analysis. The result is picture of the individual which is the sum of numerous parts. It is neither more nor less than the sum of these parts, so far as scientific theory is concerned. Aurobindo's objection is, therefore, that science misses the most important truths about the individual because it deals necessarily with the universal and not with the individual. When it pretends to deal with the individual, it, in fact, classifies segments and aspects of the individual according to universal principles, missing completely and necessarily the unity and continuity of the individual. It is this aspect of science that Aurobindo points to when he says, "The root of the difficulty is this, that at the very basis of all our life and existence, internal and external, there is something which the intellect can never lay a controlling hand on, the Absolute, the Infinite."⁵³

The inadequacy of scientific reason to deal with the larger and deeper truths, the truths of the individual, is reflected in the society constructed purely in accord with scientific reason. Such a society knows no principles by means of which a person's aim in life is to be guided. Unable to get beyond empirical manifestations, the appearances of its subject, science remains ignorant of the purpose of human life. Unable to deal with the individual as individual, science can know no respect for the freedom of the individual. Consequently, the scientifically organized society, while creating a more complex society, does not necessarily create a better society, and while being

a consequent of the play of individual reason, tends to suppress individual freedom.

Nature of Man

If such a critique of a scientifically organized society be accepted, a question arises as to how society should be organized in order to eliminate these defects. Aurobindo's answer to this question is that the answer depends upon an analysis of the nature of man. Such an analysis will reveal that man has constructed himself an inadequate society because he was ignorant of his nature and destiny. It will also make possible the construction of a society without the defects of the present society. He says, "The true law of our development and the entire object of our social existence can only become clear to us when we have discovered not only, like modern science, what man has been in his physical and vital evolution, but his future mental and spiritual destiny and his place in the cycles of Nature."⁵⁴ The suggestion contained in this statement is two-fold: First, man's destiny, unknown to him now, is mental and spiritual existence. Second, man can only construct an adequate society when he comes to realize the nature of his destiny. Aurobindo says, "Therefore the individuals who will help most the future of humanity in the new age will be those who will recognize a spiritual evolution as the destiny and therefore the great need of the human being."⁵⁵

⁵⁴Human Cycle, p. 80.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 356.

The new age referred to here is the age marked by social organization - designed to assist man in fully realizing all of his potentialities, and Aurobindo refers to it usually as the "spiritual age." This age is, in effect, the ideal. It is to provide the principles in terms of which society is to be improved. It follows, of course, that if man is ignorant of this ideal he cannot use it to plan his societies. Man's destiny is to become greater than he now is, this greater man called by Aurobindo the spiritual man. But so long as man does not know what he can become, so long as he is ignorant of his destiny, he cannot plan for the realization of his destiny. According to Aurobindo, man must replace his present ignorance with the knowledge that "the fulfillment of the individual is not the utmost development of his egoistic intellect, vital force, physical well-being and the utmost satisfaction of his mental, emotional, physical cravings, but the flowering of the divine in him to its utmost capacity of wisdom, power, love and universality and through this flowering of the divine his utmost realization of all the possible beauty and delight of his existence."⁵⁶

The whole point, however, is that so long as man does not know where he is going he cannot plan his journey; if he does not know his destiny he cannot plan his society so as to best attain this destiny. It is a mistake, says Aurobindo, the result of ignorance, to live the life of the ego, but "no doubt, so long as we live without self-knowledge, we can do no other; men and nations have to think and act egoistically, because in their self-ignorance that is the only

⁵⁶Human Cycle, pp. 56-57.

life known to them, . . . "57

For Aurobindo, man's ignorance of himself is understandable, for "the Self of man is a thing hidden and occult; it is not his body, it is not his life, it is not--even though he is in the scale of evolution the mental being, the Manu--his mind."⁵⁸ Small wonder, then, if man is not truly any of these--but has mistaken himself for one or the other of these--that he has not been able to organize his social life adequately. And if man is not truly any of these, then "neither the fullness of his physical, nor of his vital, nor of his mental nature can be either the last term or the true standard of his self-realization; . . ."⁵⁹

The difficulty is that "man has not possessed as a race this truth about himself, does not now possess it except in the vision and self-experience of the few."⁶⁰ In short, man is still ignorant of himself and "has not really heard and understood the message of the sages, 'know thy self'."⁶¹ It is self-knowledge that man needs and it is precisely this that he lacks; that is the crux of his ignorance. Consequently he plans and seeks blindly, blundering through life.

Aurobindo says:

In all the higher powers of his life man may be said to be seeking, blindly enough, for God. To get at the Divine and Eternal in himself and the world and to harmonize them, to put his being and his life in tune with the infinite reveals itself in these parts of his nature as his concealed aim and destiny.⁶²

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 57.

⁵⁸Human Cycle, p. 94.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 95.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 95.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 97.

⁶²Ibid., p. 206.

In view of this, the obvious course to take in attempting to arrive at an adequate social structure consists in first removing this ignorance of self and destiny by a determination of the true nature of man. Man must come to know himself, and to the extent that this self-knowledge is dependent upon a knowledge of the rest of the universe he must also come to know the nature of the external world in order to construct an adequate society. Commenting on man's need to know himself and his environment, Aurobindo says, "From a new view and knowledge of the world must proceed his new view and knowledge of himself, of his power and capacity and limitation, of his claim on existence and the high road and the distant or immediate goal of his individual and social destiny."⁶³

One way to this new knowledge is the way of science, the way familiar to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. But as already seen, this way is unacceptable for Aurobindo, as it misses the most important truths about the individual. It completely misses his "deepest spirit."⁶⁴ It falsifies the human subject by making him into an object. Aurobindo rules out knowledge of the self by scientific reason and points to a better way in the following statement:

His (man's) intellectual reason betrays itself as an insufficient light and a fumbling seeker; it is successfully analytical only of superficialities and of what lies just behind the superficialities. He finds that he can only know himself entirely by becoming actively self-conscious and not merely self-critical, by more and more living in his soul and acting out of it rather than floundering on surfaces. . . .⁶⁵

⁶³Human Cycle, p. 33.

⁶⁴Ibid., pp. 32-33.

⁶⁵Human Cycle p. 34.

Aurobindo distinguishes between the self-conscious and the self-critical on the basis of his recognition that self-criticism is a function or reason which is only an aspect of human intelligence. He says, "But the intelligence of man is not composed entirely and exclusively of the rational intellect and the rational will; there enters into it a deeper, more intuitive, more splendid and powerful, but much less clear, much less developed and as yet hardly at all self-possessing light and force for which we have not even a name."⁶⁶ It is this "deeper" force of intelligence that is to be employed in the search for true self-knowledge. It is not an intelligence that proceeds without reason, but an intelligence that employs reason in its proper role.

Aurobindo is explicit about the role of reason in the quest for self-knowledge.

He says:

The reason can govern, but only as a minister, imperfectly, or as a general arbiter and giver of suggestions which are not really supreme commands, or as one channel of sovereign authority, because that hidden Power acts at present not directly but through many agents and messengers. The real sovereign is another than the reasoning intelligence. Man's impulse to be free, master of nature in himself and his environment cannot be fully realized until by his self-consciousness has grown beyond the rational mentality, become aware of the true sovereign and either identified itself within him or entered into constant communion with his supreme will and knowledge.⁶⁷

⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 109-110.

⁶⁷Human Cycle, p. 148.

This statement indicates that it is necessary for man to become aware of a power greater than reason, a self-consciousness higher than a rational self-consciousness, though not necessarily a self-consciousness that leaves aside reason completely. This higher self-consciousness Aurobindo sometimes refers to as the "power of the spirit," and he says of it:

What is impossible or absurd to the unaided reason, becomes real and right to the reason lifted beyond itself by the power of the spirit and irradiated with its light. For then it is dominated by the intuitive mind which is our means of passage to a yet higher principle of knowledge. The widest spirituality does not exclude or discourage any essential human faculty, but works rather to lift all of them up out of their imperfections and groping ignorance, transforms them by its touch and makes them the instruments of the light, power and joy of the divine being and his divine nature.⁶⁸

The most direct suggestion of this statement is that to know himself man must pursue this knowledge with his entire being, not just a part of it, integrating all of his faculties and capacities and developing them to their utmost. This integral development and utilization of all the human potentialities is the way to knowledge of the divine in man; to the knowledge of man's highest being. This practice of integrating and utilizing all of the capacities of man to arrive at the divine within him is called by Aurobindo "integral yoga," and he clearly regards this integral yoga as the way to complete self-knowledge and self-realization.⁶⁹

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 179.

⁶⁹See Ideal and Progress, pp. 13 ff. See also Synthesis of Yoga, pp. 695 ff. (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1957).

By this integration of all his capacities man's consciousness is broadened and deepened and a better understanding of his nature is made possible.

It is important to note that Aurobindo's objection to a scientifically organized society is based on two assumptions. The first assumption, about the nature of reason, is that scientific reason operates something like an electronic computer, being merely a calculating device, able to do fantastic feats of manipulation if well programmed. But reason is not self-programming, according to Aurobindo, and when he suggests that it is necessary to go beyond reason he is suggesting it is necessary to get to the source of the programming, which is, of course, to go beyond the calculator itself. This suggestion to go beyond reason involves the second assumption, that there is a source--a power--of knowledge and being higher than reason. And it is this higher source of knowledge and being that man must realize and live by if he is to live well.

It is Aurobindo's contention that this higher source of self-knowledge, realized by this integral yoga, will reveal that "man at his highest is a half-god who has risen up out of the animal nature and is splendidly abnormal in it, but the thing which he started out to be, the whole god, is something so much greater than what he is that it seems to him as abnormal to himself as he is to the animal."⁷⁰ In other words, man's destiny is to be god; his true nature is divine, but at present he is only half-ways to this destiny; he is only half-divine, and ignorant even of

⁷⁰Human Cycle, p. 315.

that. The task is to become aware of what and where he is, and to complete the last half of the journey; to fully realize his divine nature, or in other words, to perfect himself.

At the present man is a problem to himself. He may see himself sometimes as brute, sometimes as god, but more often he is confused and lost between these extremes. As Aurobindo says, "We see that at first sight man seems to be a double nature, and animal nature of the vital and physical being which lives according to its instincts, impulses, desires, its automatic orientation and method and with that a half-divine nature of the self-conscious intellectual, ethical, aesthetic intellectually emotional, intelligently dynamic being who is capable of finding and understanding the law of his own action"71

Man as a Striving-to-be

According to Aurobindo, with the progressive active realization of the divine within him man comes to understand more completely the nature of his being. He comes to see

a truth on which the sages have always agreed, though by the intellectual thinker it may be constantly disputed. It is the truth that all active being is a seeker of God, a seeking for some highest self and deepest Reality secret within, behind and above ourselves and things, a seeking for the hidden Divinity; . . .

The seeking for God is also, subjectively, the seeking for our highest, truest, fullest, largest self.⁷²

⁷¹Ibid., p. 316.

⁷²Human Cycle, p. 193.

Man is here regarded as essentially a striving-to-be. Man, according to Aurobindo, is not so much a certain kind of thing or state of being, but, rather, a certain activity of being; in this case, an activity of God-seeking. Man's being is a striving-to-be-God; the law of his being, his svadharma, is to struggle for the attainment of the divine. To live a life of god-seeking and god-realization is to live the full and good life, and it is this life that society is to make possible if it is to fulfill its proper function. Aurobindo's assessment of the past and present civilizations is summed up in his statement that "human society itself never seized on the discovery of the soul as a means for the discovery of the law of its own being or of a knowledge of the soul's true nature and need and its fulfillment as the right way of terrestrial perfection."⁷³

Social Organization and Man's Becoming

The life of god-seeking and god-realization is life according to man's true nature; it is the life of the spirit or the life divine. It is the ideal of this life that is to guide all social organization, for it is none other than the life of self-seeking and self-realization.

It is because Aurobindo holds that man's destiny consists in becoming a more divine being that he now is what he considers it necessary to create certain conditions in society in order to effect the requisite change in man. That is, the goal is a better life for man, a goal dependent for realization upon certain changes

⁷³Ibid., p. 302.

in present social organization. Social changes are necessary if the spiritual change that will result in man's attainment of his true nature is to be effected.

Speaking of these changes, Aurobindo says:

Therefore, if the spiritual change of which we have been speaking is to be effected, it must unite two conditions which have to simultaneously satisfied but are most difficult to bring together. There must be the individual and the individuals who are able to see, to develop, and re-create themselves in the image of the Spirit and to communicate both their idea and its power to the mass. And there must be at the same time a mass, a society, a communal mind or at least the constituents of a group-body, the possibility of a group soul which is capable of receiving and effectively assimilating, ready to follow and effectively arrive, not compelled by its own inherent deficiencies, its defect of preparation to stop on the way or fall back before the decisive change is made.⁷⁴

It is with the perfection not only of the individual but also the masses that Aurobindo is here concerned. What are the conditions that will enable the masses to attain the ideal of the individual. In his words, "What then will be the state of society, what that readiness of the common mind of man which will be most favorable to this change, so that even if it cannot at once effectuate itself, it may at least make for its way a more decisive preparation than has been hitherto possible?"⁷⁵ In answer to this question he stipulates that the first condition requires "the growth of the subjective idea of life--the idea of the soul, the inner being, its powers, its possibilities, its growth, its expression and the creation of a true, beautiful and helpful environment for it as the one thing of

⁷⁴Human Cycle, p. 332.

⁷⁵Human Cycle, pp. 332-333.

first and last importance."⁷⁶

What Aurobindo has in mind here is that man must not be governed and his life regulated by restraining laws and institutions external to him, but he must regulate his life according to the law within him; social rules must become internalized. At bottom, the subjectivism being advocated by Aurobindo consists in treating man as a subject rather than as an object. It is a subjectivism that is founded on the truth of things, and not merely on prejudicial fancies. Speaking of this subjectivism, Aurobindo says: "It must find a general standard of Truth to which the individual judgment of all will be inwardly compelled to subscribe without physical constraint or imposition of irrational authority. And it, too, must reach some principle of social order which shall be equally founded on a universally recognizable truth of things; . . ."⁷⁷

The goal of such subjectivism may have as its inspiration the tradition "of a golden age in which man was freely social without society. Not bound by laws or institutions but living by natural instincts or free knowledge, he held the right law of living in himself and needed neither to prey on his fellows nor to be restrained by the iron yoke of the collectivity."⁷⁸ But even though the requisite subjectivism have its inspiration in the myth of the golden a-social age, this subjectivism must be directed towards freedom within and not without society, if man is to attain his goal, for, according to Aurobindo, "Man does

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 333.

⁷⁷Human Cycle, p. 22.

⁷⁸Ibid., pp. 383-384.

not actually live as an isolated being, nor can he grow by an isolated freedom. He grows by his relations with others and his freedom must exercise itself in a progressive self-harmonizing with the freedom of his fellow beings."⁷⁹ It may be, as Aurobindo says, that "the primal law and purpose of the individual life is to seek its own self-development."⁸⁰ And granted also that the "individual is not merely the ephemeral physical creature, a form of body and mind that aggregates and dissolves, but a being, a living power of the eternal Truth, a self-manifesting spirit,"⁸¹ still, he cannot live as an isolated being and therefore must have a certain amount of social organization.

If there were a natural drive in man to live separately from and independently of other human beings, or if there existed only the drive to live collectively, without also the tendency to assert one's individuality, then there would be no problem of social organization. But, according to Aurobindo, "human life is moved by two equally powerful impulses, one of individualistic self-assertion, the other of collective self-assertion."⁸² Consequently there is the problem of reconciling the freedom of the individual with the rights of the collectivity.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 291.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 42.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 43.

⁸²Human Cycle, p. 208.

Aurobindo argues for the priority of the individual, but also points out the responsibilities of the individual, saying, "The society has no right to crush or efface the individual for its own better development or self-satisfaction; the individual, so long at least as he chooses to live in the world, has no right to disregard for the sake of his own solitary development and satisfaction his fellow beings and to live at war with them or seek a selfishly isolated good."⁸³

In these words Aurobindo rules out a state of existence which might be, in the classic phrase, termed "the war of all against all," and also that state of existence in which the individual existed solely for the sake of the collectivity. The argument on which Aurobindo rests his case against these two possible states of existence is a simple one. Without society the individual enjoys only a brutish existence; this is not in his own interest. The state of existence in which the individual exists only to serve the collectivity is in neither the interest of the collectivity nor the individual, for what is basically contrary to the interests of individuals in society is ultimately contrary also to that society, which has no existence over and above that of its members. He sums up his argument by saying, "And when we say, no right, it is . . . simply with a view to the law of existence itself. For neither the society nor the individual can so develop to their fulfillment."⁸⁴

Social Rules and Individual Freedom

Man must, for his own welfare, in accord with the laws of his being, live a

⁸³Ibid., p. 58.

⁸⁴Human Cycle, p. 58.

social existence.⁸⁵ This implies various groupings of human beings, groupings to be so regulated that no essential freedoms are fettered. As Aurobindo says:

Individual man belongs not only to humanity in general, his nature is not only a variation of human nature in general, but he also belongs to his race-type, his class-type, his mental, vital, physical, spiritual type in which he resembles some, differs from others. According to these affinities he tends to group himself in churches, sects, communities, classes, coteries, associations whose life he helps, and by them he enriches himself and the life of the large economic, social and political group or society to which he belongs.⁸⁶

The different social groups exist in order to accomodate the peculiarities of the individuals; they have their birth in individual differences. Their existence is needed for the sake of satisfying the needs and aspirations of different individuals. The individual, in turn, must contribute to the life and well-being of the social group, for his own well-being depends upon the well-being of the group. The various social groups do not, however, exhaust the possibilities of the individual's needs and aspirations. He always remains something over and above the class type to which he belongs. As Aurobindo says, "But it must be noted that he is not limited and cannot be limited by any of these groupings; he is not merely the noble, merchant, warrior, priest, scholar, artist, cultivator or artisan And even there is a part of him, the greatest, which is not limited by humanity."⁸⁷

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 42.

⁸⁶Human Cycle, p. 88.

⁸⁷Ibid., pp. 88-89.

Consequently, the individual is not to be assimilated entirely into any social group, including state and church, but is to use such groups for his own development while at the same time transcending them. Aurobindo says, "Thus the community stands as a mid-term and intermediary between the individual and humanity and it exists not merely for itself, for the one and the other to help them fulfill each other."⁸⁸ Any claim of the community or nation--society in general--that the sole object of human life is to further the growth, power and perfection of itself is mistaken; it is "an aberration and the deformation of a truth."⁸⁹ The individual cannot live well in isolation; "Intermediate groups and aggregates must exist for the purpose of mass-differentiation and the concentration and combination of varying tendencies in the total human aggregate."⁹⁰ The existence of society is for man an absolute necessity. Aurobindo goes so far as to say: "Therefore the community has to stand . . . to the individual for humanity even at the cost of standing between him and it and limiting the reach of his universality and the wideness of his sympathies."⁹¹

This last statement indicates that Aurobindo looks for a society larger than the state or nation, a society of humanity. The common bond would be the fraternity of human beings and its membership would include every member of the

⁸⁸Human Cycle, p. 88.

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 89.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 89.

⁹¹Ibid., p. 89.

human race. But Aurobindo does not think that man can, at his present stage of evolution, dispense with smaller social groups. Consequently, the problem is one of regulating group behavior in such a way that the greatest possible freedom is allowed each individual without at the same time impairing the excellence of the group or abrogating the freedom of other individuals.

The solution to the problem lies in regulating behavior by well-devised norms or rules. According to Aurobindo, "man is distinguished from other terrestrial creatures by his capacity for seeking after a rule of life, a rule of his being and works, a principle of order and self-development, . . ." ⁹² It is up to man to give himself rules to live by. He is a restrained subject insofar as he must live by rules if he is to live well. But he is a free master insofar as he freely imposes the rule upon himself. As Aurobindo says, "He seeks for an intelligent rule of which he himself shall be the governor and master or at least partially free administrator." ⁹³ The source of man's social freedom is his capacity to regulate his life by self-imposed rules. "The rest of terrestrial existence is helplessly enslaved and tyrannised over by its nature, but the instinct of man when he finds his manhood is to be master of his nature and free." ⁹⁴

Self-imposed Rules and Freedom

What are the basic rules, then, by which man can realize the ideal life?

⁹²Human Cycle, p. 133.

⁹³Ibid., p. 133.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 134.

Whatever they are in content, says Aurobindo, they must be self-imposed; they must come from within and not be forced upon the individual from outside. "It is at the same time clear that the more the outer law is replaced by an inner law, the nearer man will draw to his true and natural perfection."⁹⁵ The fact that the rules must be self-imposed rather than forced on the individual from the outside provides a clue to the nature of the ideal society. For if there is to be no restraint and compulsion from outside the individual there can exist no punitive or regulatory institutions in that society. In fact, the ideal society is anarchistic. Aurobindo leaves no room for doubt: "And the perfect social state must be one in which governmental compulsion must be abolished and man is able to live with his fellow men by free agreement and cooperation."⁹⁶

That it is anarchism and not democracy being advocated by Aurobindo is clear from his criticism of democracy. He is opposed to government by the "democratic cultus of the average man because it produces mediocrity."⁹⁷ He regards democratic rule as "rule of the pack, the herd mentality, the type law."⁹⁸ He suggests that democracy does not amount to government of the people by and for the people, but is the rule of the bourgeoisie and the ascendancy of the plutocratic segments.⁹⁹ Something better than democracy is required, according

⁹⁵Human Cycle, p. 292.

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 292.

⁹⁷Life Divine, p. 928.

⁹⁸Life Divine, p. 483.

⁹⁹Aurobindo Ghose, Renaissance in India (Calcutta: Arya Publishing House, 3rd ed., 1946), p. 41.

to Aurobindo, and this something is a form of anarchy. He recognizes the difficulty of achieving completely free agreement and cooperation in society and asks, "But by what means is he (man) to be made ready for this great and difficult consummation? Intellectual anarchism relies on two powers in the human being of which the first is the enlightenment of his reason; . . ."100 The second required power is that of sympathy or fraternity. "Anarchistic thought finds this power in a natural human sympathy, which if it is given free play under the right conditions, can be relied upon to ensure natural cooperation."101

It is to be noted that the realization of an anarchistic society presupposes the perfection of man for Aurobindo. He does not prescribe it for man in his present imperfect state. He is, rather suggesting that it serve as an ideal in terms of which to organize society, the actual organization of which must take into consideration the actual condition of man. But man must aim higher than he now is if he is to improve himself. It may not at all be a matter of naivete to operate with an ideal such as Aurobindo's.

His assumptions are that "the mind of man, enlightened, will claim freedom for itself but will equally recognize the same right in others,"102 and that in perfected man a natural sympathy will insure mutual cooperation and assistance

¹⁰⁰Human Cycle, p. 292.

¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 293.

¹⁰²Human Cycle, p. 292.

among all men. Granted these assumptions, a free equality among men is possible, and "a free equality founded upon spontaneous cooperation, not on governmental force and social compulsion, is the highest anarchistic ideal."¹⁰³ There is no denial here of the need for rules in society; there is a denial only of a need for rules that are not self-imposed. Basic to Aurobindo's ideal anarchy are the rules that others are to be treated as self, and that another person in need is to be helped. These rules represent enlightened reason and human sympathy, respectively. Without them existence would be chaotic in the absence of external restraints. But granted self-imposition of these two basic rules there is no need for external sanctions. Even if these rules were formulated into legal codes and sanctions in the form of fines, prison internments, and executions were introduced to enforce the legal code, the society would be in principle anarchistic if everyone recognized the validity of these basic rules and applied them without fail. For under such conditions no external restraints would ever be used, though they had a theoretical existence. The rules would be self-imposed and the individuals remain free.

The assumptions here are, of course, that all human beings would in fact recognize the need to impose these basic rules upon themselves and would unflinchingly impose them, and that granted all this, satisfactory social existence would be ensured.

¹⁰³Ibid., p. 293.

Self-Realization and Complete Freedom

In such a society--a society regulated according to the self-imposed rules of "equal treatment for all, " and "help the needy"--"a full and well-appointed life" would become possible.¹⁰⁴ The well-appointed life--that is, a life satisfying all of the basic needs and aspirations of man--would, in the ideal society, be available to every individual. In fact, according to Aurobindo, the ideal society could not be achieved unless a majority of individuals had the advantage of highly cultured existence. He says that the ideal society cannot be attained by "confining the cultured mentality to a small minority" ¹⁰⁵ Knowledge, through education must be the common property of all members of society.

Aurobindo emphasizes the role of education in achieving the ideal society, where the chief aim of education is to "help the child develop his intellectual, aesthetic, emotional, moral, spiritual being and his communal life and impulses out of his own temperament and capacities."¹⁰⁶ This is quite a different thing than the old education "which was simply to pack so much stereotyped knowledge into his resisting brains and impose a stereotyped rule of conduct on his struggling and dominated impulses."¹⁰⁷ According to Aurobindo, "the evocation

¹⁰⁴Human Cycle, p. 104.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 98.

¹⁰⁶Human Cycle, p. 55.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 55.

of the real man within is the right object of education and indeed of all human life if it would find and live according to the hidden Truth and deepest law of its own being."¹⁰⁸ In other words, education must aim to develop the capacities of man to their utmost that man might realize all of his potentialities.¹⁰⁹

Aurobindo's idea of education is that it is essentially an acquiring of self-knowledge aimed at self-realization. This self-realization is to be taken in the broadest sense. It refers to the realization in the fullest extent possible of all of man's capacities; of every aspect of his being.¹¹⁰ It is an education aimed at complete self-determination, which means this that within every living human creature, man, woman and child, and equally within every distinct human collectivity growing or grown, half-developed or adult there is a self, a being, which has the right to grow in its own way, to find itself, to make its life a full and satisfied instrument and image of its being."¹¹¹

The consequence of such education in an ideal society will be that the individual will seek to find itself in "a fullness of life."¹¹² In such a society, life "will not proceed by a scornful neglect of the body, nor by an ascetic starving of the vital being and an utmost bareness or even squalor as the rule"¹¹³

¹⁰⁸Ibid., p. 40.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p. 40.

¹¹⁰Aurobindo Ghose, War and Self-Determination (Pondicherry: Sri Aurobindo Ashram, 1962), p. 838.

¹¹¹Human Cycle, p. 40.

¹¹²Ibid., p. 310.

¹¹³Ibid., p. 310.

Art, science, and philosophy will be emphasized.¹¹⁴ But in the ideal society all of these--the body, the vital being, science, art and philosophy--will be the expression of the true self and will be regulated by the best in man, being ruled by rather than ruling the inner man. They will be means to the divine knowledge. As Aurobindo says, in emphasizing the need for aesthetic expression, "The highest aim of the aesthetic being is to find the Divine through beauty; the highest Art is that which by an inspired use of significant and interpretative form unseals the door of the spirit."¹¹⁵ And what he says of aesthetic expression holds also for other forms of expression. It is characteristic of the ideal society that it allows for the fullest possible self-expression in every sphere.

A clue to the forms of self-expression essential to the ideal society is provided by Aurobindo's statement that "we are tempted to give the name of a full culture to all those periods and civilizations, whatever their defects, which have encouraged a freely human development and, like ancient Athens, have concentrated on thought and beauty and the delight of living."¹¹⁶ Freedom of expression in thought and feeling is a primary requisite for the ideal society. The individual demands "freedom, space, initiative for his soul, for his nature, that puissant and tremendous thing which society so much distrusts and has labored in the past either to suppress altogether or to relegate to the purely

¹¹⁴Ibid., p. 2.

¹¹⁵Ibid., p. 308.

¹¹⁶Human Cycle, p. 128.

spiritual field, an individual thought, will and conscience."¹¹⁷ To develop these to their fullest and to integrate properly these powers the individual must be "both allowed and helped freely to grow."¹¹⁸ The individual "needs freedom of thought and life and action in order that he may grow, otherwise he will remain fixed where he was, a stunted and static being."¹¹⁹

This freedom of the individual in all the spheres of his activity is essential to perfection of the individual and humanity. Each person must be free to develop "on the lines of his own nature and to arrive at his possible perfection by growth from within. So only can the race itself attain to anything profound, living and deep-rooted,"¹²⁰ says Aurobindo. "The free development of individuals from within is the best condition for the growth and perfection of the community,"¹²¹ and must, therefore, in the ideal society be ensured.

According to Aurobindo, the ideal society will

regard man not as a mind, a life and a body, but as a soul incarnated for a divine fulfillment upon earth, not only in heavens beyond It will, therefore, regard the life, mind and body neither as ends in themselves, sufficient for their own satisfaction, nor as mortal members full of disease which have only to be dropped off for the rescued spirit to fleece away into its own pure regions, but as first instruments of the soul.¹²²

¹¹⁷Ibid., p. 28.

¹¹⁸Ibid., p. 29.

¹¹⁹Ibid., p. 284.

¹²⁰Human Cycle, pp. 85-86.

¹²¹Ibid., p. 91.

¹²²Ibid., p. 305.

The effect of so regarding man will be that this society "will hold sacred all the different parts of man's life which correspond to the parts of his being, all his physical, vital, dynamic, emotional, aesthetic, ethical, intellectual, psychic evolution."¹²³ In such a society "the possible god-head of man because he is inwardly of one being with God will be its one solitary creed and dogma."¹²⁴ In other words, in such a society man will be sacred, revered and honored.¹²⁵ Worship of God will consist in worship of man.

The fundamental idea is that mankind is the godhead to be worshipped and served by man and that the respect, the service, the progress of the human being and human life are the chief duty and chief of the human spirit. No other idol, neither the nation, the State, the family nor anything else ought to take its place; they are only worthy of respect so far as they are images of the human spirit and enshrine its presence and aid its self-manifestation.¹²⁶

In such a society effort will be devoted to "removing avoidable injustice, to secure for every individual a just and equal chance for self-development and satisfaction to the extent of his powers and in the line of his nature.

Aurobindo says that "the recognition and fulfillment of the divine being in oneself and in man, the kingdom of God within and in the race is the basis on which man must come in the end to the possession of himself as a free self-determining united existence."¹²⁷

¹²³Ibid., p. 306.

¹²⁴Human Cycle, p. 306.

¹²⁵Ideal of Human Unity, p. 758.

¹²⁶Ideal of Human Unity, p. 757.

¹²⁷Ideal of Human Unitey, p. 396.

It appears that Aurobindo utilizes certain features of earlier types of society in evolving his concept of the ideal society. From the symbolic society he rescues the characteristic of looking beyond the immediately given to a deeper reality, with free rein given to the individual's tendency to communicate with this deeper reality through various symbolic forms. He leaves aside all the superficialities of early religious practices. From the typical society he rescues the characteristic of incorporating ethical and psychological modes of life as means of self-expression. But he does not adopt such modes of self-expression as the only or even the predominant modes of existence. From the conventional age Aurobindo adopts the characteristic of establishing forms and patterns of activity, but rejects complete formalization and insists that the forms be imposed from within by the individual, utilizing only such forms as are justified in terms of the greater freedom of self-expression they make possible. From the rational and individualistic age he adopts the tenet of individualism, which regards the individual person as the primary value rather than considering the class to be primary. He adopts the scientific reason of the rational society as a means for shaping and forming the means to a complete life. But he rejects the claim of scientific reason to be the ultimate guide to life. In short, Aurobindo takes what is best in each of these societies and his ideal society is the organization of the best features of each, and organization designed to allow man to express all of his capacities in the best possible ways.

Primacy of the Individual Person

In Aurobindo's ideal society the individual is the unit of primary importance. Again and again he emphasizes the importance of the individual person. The freedom of the individual must not be impaired in society. The assumption is that society exists for the sake of the individual persons within the society and that the benefits of the society must be extended to every member. This basic postulate of society is so obvious, according to Aurobindo, that even in the imperfect societies of the present day "it is now fixed that social development and well-being mean the development and well-being of all the individuals in the society and not merely a flourishing of the community in the mass."¹²⁸

The well-being of the individual requires that he remains free, and therefore society must not restrict his freedom. But also for its own sake the society may not restrict the individual's freedom, for "the free individual is the conscious progressive: it is only when he is able to impart his own creative and mobile consciousness to the mass that a progressive society becomes possible."¹²⁹ It is the free individual who can reform society, and Aurobindo says that "the coming of a spiritual age must be preceded by an increasing number of individuals who are no longer satisfied with the normal intellectual, vital and physical existence of man, . . ."¹³⁰ These free individuals are required to lead mankind to a better

¹²⁸Human Cycle, p. 28.

¹²⁹Ideal of Human Unity, p. 295.

¹³⁰Human Cycle, p. 353.

existence and "in proportion as they succeed . . . the yet unrealized potentiality they represent will become an actual possibility of the future."¹³¹

Man is social and therefore requires to live in society. "He grows by his relations with others and his freedom must exercise itself in a progressive self-harmonizing of his fellow beings. The social principle, therefore, apart from the forms it has taken, would be perfectly justified, if by nothing else, then by the need of society as a field of relations which afford to the individual his occasion for growing towards a greater perfection."¹³² This statement indicates the importance Aurobindo attaches to the individual requires him also to attach considerable importance to society, man's freedom being not a freedom apart from society but a freedom within society. "The primal law and purpose of the individual life is to seek its own development."¹³³ But for the individual person self-development must be sought through society, and therefore a satisfactory society must be arranged--so that the individual may develop "according to the individual law of its own being."¹³⁴ And to this end it becomes necessary to have social rules, rules which Aurobindo urges should be self-imposed and not imposed by external forces.

¹³¹ Human Cycle, p. 353.

¹³² Ibid., p. 291.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 42.

¹³⁴ Human Cycle, p. 81.

This society exists for the sake of the individual and the individual must "arrive at his possible perfection from a growth from within."¹³⁵ Therefore, the society must guarantee the individual the necessary freedom to develop. Emphasizing the place of the individual in society, Aurobindo says, "The law for the individual is to perfect his individuality by free development from within, but to respect and to aid and be aided by the same free development in others."¹³⁶ Man, individual man, "needs freedom of thought and life and action in order that he may grow,"¹³⁷ and therefore must hold sacred the freedom of other individuals.

The freedom of the individual is the ultimate consideration, and Aurobindo says, "the development of the free individual is, we have said, the first condition for the development of the perfect society. From the individual we have to start; he is our index and our foundation."¹³⁸ In fact, "Society is only an enlargement of the individual."¹³⁹ If this be the case, society cannot regard the individual as merely an instrument of itself without jeopardizing its very existence. Considerations aimed at securing the maximum freedom of the individual must guide all social organization. The dominant concern and principle in Aurobindo's thought

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 85.

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 86.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 284.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. 94.

¹³⁹ Human Cycle, p. 125.

is that though each person is a member of the human species and, therefore, is subject to the laws of that species, he is also a species unto himself, and therefore must be subject to the laws of his own individual being. Accordingly, to obtain maximum freedom, the individual must be freed from the constraint of externally imposed laws. He must be allowed to act according to his own perfected being, this perfected man being the divine being. And at the same time he must regulate his own activities so that the freedom of others is guaranteed.

Critical Summary of Aurobindo's Social Philosophy

In conclusion, it may be remarked that according to Aurobindo it is the function of society to provide for the fulfillment of the human being in every sphere of activity. Thus, society must be organized so as to provide for food, shelter, clothing, education, medical care, etc., as well as providing an environment where the human being can develop satisfactorily emotionally and intellectually. But the satisfaction of physical, emotional, and intellectual needs of the person is not the only function of society. Society must also provide the conditions that will enable man to fulfill the higher aspects of his being, which fulfillment demands, as a first condition, the fulfillment of the physical, emotional, and intellectual. The fulfillment of this higher man requires the greatest possible freedom, for this is the sort of fulfillment that cannot be provided for according to general and universal laws. To attempt to fulfill these higher needs on the basis of provisions according to universal laws would be to ignore the individuality of man, to make of man an object instead of considering him to be the subject he is.

The consequence of this reasoning of Aurobindo's is that though the laws of scientific reason are quite sufficient at one level, the level of physical, emotional, and intellectual need satisfaction, it is quite inadequate to provide for the type of social organization that will serve to provide for the fulfillment of the higher needs. Something higher is needed as a guide to social organization-- something higher than the scientific reason. This something higher will include the total knowing abilities of the well developed person.

Aurobindo's vision of the ideal society reflects what will occur when the total knowledge of the fully developed person is used to provide social organization. This is the vision of a society comprising all humanity so organized that every individual is completely free to seek and accomplish self-perfection or self-fulfillment. The rules of this society are self-imposed, being demanded by the highest powers of man.

To this idealistic view of society may be presented several objections. First, it may be said that Aurobindo's social philosophy is unsatisfactory because it does not deal sufficiently with social organization, being concerned almost exclusively with pointing out the functions that an ideal society should perform, caring almost nothing for consideration of social institutions and means whereby these functions may be realized.

This objection admits of a very short answer and a longer answer. The short answer consists in pointing out that Aurobindo did one thing and not another, and that to point out what was left undone is not to criticize what was

done. In other words, the short answer consists in pointing out that it is no objection that Aurobindo's thought to point out that he did not do something he did not do. The difficulty with this short answer is that practically its only value lies in its length, for it fails to reveal anything about Aurobindo's social philosophy, and fails to recognize a more relevant claim being made in the objection.

Consequently, it is necessary to turn to the longer answer, an answer which takes into account the fact that the above objection is an objection to what is considered a form of naive idealism in Aurobindo's social thought. Considered in this way, the objection makes reference to Aurobindo's talk of elevating the human race to a higher plane of existence and to his suggestion that human society could provide the conditions needed to transform human society into super-human society, thereby transforming the human race into a super-human race. This is the objection to Aurobindo's argument that present social structures are defective because they do not provide the conditions requisite for an ideal existence. This is the objection to Aurobindo's claim that there is something--an absolute or infinite--which lies at the very root of human existence, and which must provide the guide to social organization. It may be the objection to Aurobindo's view that society must always treat man as subject and never as object. It is an objection to Aurobindo's claim that the ideal society will have no externally imposed rules. It is an objection to thinking that all human beings would impose on themselves unflinchingly the rules requisite for a satisfactory society.

But this objection, in the forms indicated above, overlooks the fact that Aurobindo is not talking about man in his present condition. Aurobindo is assuming that present conditions are not good enough; that present society is not good enough. His claim is that when society makes possible the kind of existence he is postulating it will be good enough; not before. This objection to Aurobindo's naive idealism is the objection, essentially, that it is not possible to have anything more than we now have. And Aurobindo is not concerned with what we now have, but with what we could have; this idealism is of the essence of his social philosophy.

But again, this may be too short an answer. A longer answer recognizes that behind these objections to Aurobindo is the claim that Aurobindo does not offer empirical substantiation either for his criticisms of various historical schemes of social organization, nor for the vision contained in his own writings. The validity of this claim must be admitted, and with this admission the objection stands. But for all that, the fact remains that Aurobindo did present a social ideal, a social ideal that may prove useful in re-organizing society. And it well may be that to look for either empirical substantiation or logical necessity in respect to ideals of this sort is to look for the hare's horn.

It might also be objected that Aurobindo has mistaken the nature of reason, and as a consequence of this mistake, argues that something more than reason is needed for the organization of society. This objection stands only if it is the case that reason refers to the total knowing abilities of a person. For then it makes

no sense to talk about knowing powers higher than reason. But though the objection must stand if taken in this way, it loses most of its force, for then Aurobindo would admit that reason must be the guide to social organization. However, it is obvious that Aurobindo is not referring to reason in this way. He is talking about reason as the ability to compute. And granted this interpretation of reason, it is perfectly reasonable to say that something higher than reason must guide the reason in order that satisfactory social organization be achieved.

The claim Aurobindo is making can be put so that is not relevant to the particular sense given to the expression "reason." Aurobindo's claim is simply that, ideally, society must provide for the self-perfection of every aspect of man, or, what is the same thing, for the self-perfection of the total man. Consequently, society must not be organized according to the rules of and for the partial man, total knowledge of man. That is, Aurobindo would argue that feeling and imagination and any other powers should rightfully figure as guides to social organization. His suggestion is that it is not satisfactory to utilize only some of the human powers of self-understanding to guide social organization.

Perhaps it would not be going too far afield to suggest, in support of the answers given to the above objections, that although Aurobindo does not offer details of social organization, it is possible to speculate, on the basis of the conditions he lays down for the ideal society, as to what constitute satisfactory social organization.

Since Aurobindo does not object to organization of society in accord with scientific reason up to a point, it is likely that he could have agreed to the use of the various sciences for the purposes of setting up institutions that would insure necessary food supplies, medical equipment and skill, suitable housing and clothing, schools and universities, etc .

Furthermore, since he argues that to ensure the maximum freedom of the individual rules of actions should be self-imposed rather than other-imposed , it is possible that he should subscribe to a form of democratic society . Not the democratic society that he regarded as the rule of the vulgar or mediocre, but the type of democracy where there is genuinely a rule of all by all, for in such a society it is the case (theoretically, at least) that rules are self-imposed .

Therefore, it is possible that Aurobindo should agree that a democratically organized society which utilized the most advanced technologies available are superior to other types of social organization . He would, of course, want to ensure that there was something higher than technological information guiding the development of society; a higher knowledge that guides the use of scientific knowledge .

If this be the case, then it could be argued that Aurobindo would be satisfied to a certain degree with certain patterns of social organization in the West, if it could be shown that they have goals in life higher than physical and emotional need satisfaction . And this does not seem a difficult thing to show, though to do so would be to go considerably beyond the scope of this work . If it be assumed,

therefore, that at least some societies in the West are organized according to a goal higher than the physical, psychological, or intellectual, then it would seem that Aurobindo should praise rather than criticize them. But instead, he offer criticisms of Western societies. The explanation for this is not hard to find. It is basically due to his interpretation of reason. He considers reason to be of the nature of a computing machine, where one can get out what one puts in, but the decisions as to what should be put in must, eventually, be made by a power higher than reason. But his is obviously a narrow view of reason, for in those societies where computers are most intensively used there are powers that construct, program and use computers. That is, decisions are made as to what types of computers to make, how to program them, and how to use them. Clearly, in such cases there is at work a power higher than a mere computing power. Therefore, granted that Aurobindo took an unduly narrow view of reason, this is no argument against his claim that society must be organized according to a guide higher than computer reason. Indeed, it is a vindication of his claim.

The foregoing answers to objections raised against Aurobindo's social philosophy rest on the view that, fundamentally, he is providing social norms, not descriptive analysis. What is fundamental to Aurobindo's social philosophy is the rule, contained in his vision of the ideal, that man must be thoroughly humanized. He is suggesting that an under-developed and perverted consciousness of man is responsible for corruption, barbarity, and suffering. A new vision is required for man's consciousness that he might escape his present plight. The

thoroughly human values of integrity of being and freedom should be incorporated into man's consciousness. Instead of allowing that man should be satisfied with his present conditions, making the best of them, being satisfied with partial humanization, Aurobindo urges the complete humanization of man and society. He presents an ideal at which man might aim in effecting his greater humanization.

CHAPTER V.

CONCLUSION

Social Organization in Gandhi, Aurobindo, and

Traditional India: Some Comparisons

As announced in the introduction to this work, the major thesis is that there is a basic continuity running through the social philosophies of traditional India, Gandhi, and Aurobindo. Having now concluded the studies of the social philosophies in question, it is time to turn to a comparison and analysis of the social philosophies examined in order to indicate the basic continuity in question.

At first glance, the differences between the social philosophies examined might be more striking than the similarities. Gandhi is primarily interested in practice, even if idealistic practice, whereas Aurobindo is interested in theory. The study of traditional India indicated that a major aspect of social philosophy in this period was focused on the functioning of the two basic social institutions of varna and āśrama, which are not at all predominant in the thought of Aurobindo, and which certainly do not play as large a role in the social thought of Gandhi as they do in the thought of traditional India. Gandhi is concerned to organize society according to the principle, "social organization must be simple if it is to be satisfactory." In neither traditional India nor in Aurobindo is this principle adopted. There seems little evidence that according to the social philosophy of ancient India

it would be argued that it would be wrong for an individual to appropriate more than required for his immediate needs, nor would it be wrong or unsatisfactory to centralize forces of production, nor wrong to have a strong government at a national level. Gandhi, on the other hand, claims that all these are inconsistent with satisfactory social organization. Nor would Aurobindo agree with Gandhi, for though he holds that a society based simply on reason would be inadequate, he also claims that reason must be consulted as a guide, and what is justified by reason is not to be rejected. There is nothing in Aurobindo to suggest that he would find social organization with centralized forces of production and complex systems of distribution repugnant to reason. On the other hand, it would seem that the only possible justification of the institutions of varna and āśrama in traditional India is that they are reasonable means for effecting a balance between the freedom of the individual and the well-being and support of society. There is no suggestion that one must go beyond reason to justify such social organization, as there is in Aurobindo.

There is also a difference in approaches to social philosophy in that the areas of concern differ. Gandhi says that his ideal society is justified by the nature of man and the universe, but does not explain what the nature of man and the universe are, although he does tell us what his ideal society is like in terms of social organization. Aurobindo claims that society must be organized in accord with the nature of man and the universe, but does not provide the specific features of social organization. He does, however, elaborate on the nature of man and the universe. There is

this disagreement between Gandhi and Aurobindo. In the traditional social philosophy specific social organization is provided for and there is an attempt to indicate the nature of man and to show that the social organization advocated is required by the nature of man.

Aurobindo admits that modern societies have made great progress in recognizing the importance of the vital needs of man. Gandhi condemns modern societies, on the assumption that provision is made for the vital needs of man in these societies at the expense of something higher, the spiritual man. Aurobindo obviously is arguing that a first step in providing for the higher man, the spiritual man, is providing for the lower, the vital man. And, it might be speculated that the principal social philosophers of traditional India would be in favor of supplying the needs of the vital man as is done in a technological age.

It would seem that Aurobindo could hardly accept Gandhi's social organization. In fact, this would appear less acceptable than the rational society rejected by him, for Gandhi does not provide for even the vital and economic needs of society, without which anything higher would seem impossible.

On the other side of the ledger, however, it is to be noted that Gandhi, Aurobindo, and traditional India are agreed that education is the process of realizing the true self within. And all three social philosophies regard social activity to be part of the activity required for self-realization and complete freedom.

These three social philosophies also agree in presupposing that man is, essentially, good. It is supposed that the good is within man, and that granted requisite social and other conditions, this good will be evoked. Society is not for the sake of restraining individuals, but for the sake of liberating them. The opposing supposition would be that man is essentially evil, and the laws of society are required to restrain his evil tendencies. According to this view it is evil that lurks within man. If society were to bring out what is within man it would flood itself with evil. Therefore, the task of society is to restrain and subdue the evil in man.

It might appear that in light of the powers and duties accruing to the king or ruler according to some of the sāstras in the traditional period man was considered to be essentially evil and the task of society that of restraining and subduing the evil in man. Among the pieces of evidence that might be cited in support of this view is a statement in the Artha-Sāstra which most clearly appears to support this view. The statement is as follows (Ch. 4.):

But whoever imposes punishment as deserved becomes respectable. For punishment, when awarded with due consideration, makes the people devoted to the righteousness and to works productive of wealth and enjoyment; while punishment, when ill-awarded under the influence of greed and anger or owing to ignorance, excites fury even among hermits and ascetics dwelling in forests, not to speak of householders.

But when the law of punishment is kept in abeyance, it gives rise to such disorder as is implied in the proverb of the fishes (A great fish swallows a small one); for in

absence of a magistrate, the strong will swallow the weak; but under his protection the weak resist the strong.

This people, consisting of four castes (varṇas) and four orders of religious life, when governed by the king with his sceptre, will keep to their respective paths, ever devotedly adhering to their respective duties and occupations.

This statement leaves no room for doubt that punishment was regarded as an essential means of maintaining social order. But to say that punishment is necessary to maintain order in society is not necessarily the same as to say that man is essentially evil. If it can be shown that rules of law (whether issuing from a king or a democratic legislature) are synonymous with the sanctions (punishments) imposed to enforce the laws and it is agreed that rules of law are required for social organization, then it might be argued that the existence of laws provides evidence for the proposition that man is by nature evil.

Obviously, however, laws are one thing and sanctions are another. One might follow or comply with rules of law for reasons other than fear of punishment consequent upon disregarding the law. In fact, it would appear that force on the part of the law-enforcer and fear of this force upon the citizen would ordinarily not be adequate to maintain social order, for the force of the citizens combined would ordinarily exceed the force of the law-enforcer. Something more than fear of punishment is required to ensure compliance with the law, as seen by the preceding argument and also in the fact that fear is inadequate to ensure the acceptance of authority in society. It would seem, therefore, that the acceptance of authority and laws in society point to the fact that people recognize the need for law in order to live together in society, and that punishment for transgression

of laws provides incentive for observance of the law and is acceptable to the extent that it increases or maintains the benefits of social living. Consequently, the statement from the Arthasāstra does not provide evidence that man was considered essentially evil.

Presuming the essential goodness of man, these three social philosophies agree that the individual must remain free if he is to realize the good that lies within him. Thus, freedom of the individual in society is the goal of all three social philosophies examined. Though the forms of social organization advocated by or acceptable within the philosophies examined may differ, the social ideal of the greatest possible freedom of the individual is common to all three.

All three social philosophies recognize that the well-being of man depends upon a life in society where it is possible for the individual to realize his various potentialities. And there is common agreement that social life requires rules for regulating the activity of the individual in society. In Gandhi and Aurobindo it is explicitly claimed that the freedom of the individual demands that these rules be internalized, and this suggestion is also present in traditional thought, as the idea is that the individual should follow the requisite rules (do his dharma) simply because the rules are required (dharma for dharma's sake).

But more significant than the individual differences or similarities that might be found in particular rules for social organization, and more significant even than those similarities and differences that might be found in the social ideals guiding and justifying particular rules of social organization are the differences or

similarities to be found in the basic ideal of the social philosophies. This basic ideal gives life to and provides justification for the social ideals themselves, which ideals guide and give life to rules for social organization. The basic ideal is the ideal of the good life for man. It represents the ultimate and final good for man. Consequently, in social philosophies where it is thought there exists a direct correlation between social organization and the basic ideal, an analysis of the basic ideal is directly relevant to an understanding and appreciation of the whole social philosophy. Since the foregoing studies have shown that with respect to all three of the social philosophies examined the rules for social organization and the social ideals guiding these rules are held to be necessary for the attainment of the basic ideal(s), an analysis of the basic ideal(s) underlying those social philosophies will provide a more basic characterization of the similarities than would a lengthy consideration of various social rules.

Basic Ideals in Gandhi, Aurobindo, and Traditional India

It has been suggested that there is a thread of continuity running through the three social philosophies examined, a continuity furnished primarily by the basic ideal of each philosophy. In the traditional social philosophy the primary consideration guiding social organization was the complete freedom of the individual (moksa), which realization depended upon complete self-realization (ātman realization), the self-realized man being considered the perfect man, the ideal to be aimed at. In Gandhi's social philosophy there is reference to the basic ideal as

God-realization, but this was seen to be none other than the attainment of the individual's complete freedom (moksa), which was held to consist in self-perfection. In Aurobindo's social philosophy too, the ideal at which society is to aim and which is to guide its organization is the complete freedom of the individual, the perfection of the self, which is equated with the attainment of the fully spiritual or divine life.

Two comments about the ideal common to the three social philosophies examined are in order. First, it is primarily because this ideal of complete freedom of the individual, held to consist in God-realization, realization of the Divine, self-realization (ātman-realization), etc., has dominated and guided the lives and thoughts of many Indians, both past and present, that India is regarded as spiritual, by Indians and foreigners alike. The second comment is that granted this ideal of the completely free individual--this spirituality--it remains to indicate more adequately just what this spirituality or freedom consists in. It has not been indicated what relationship self-realization and complete freedom have to the empirical man for whom society is to provide.

Nature of the Basic Ideal

The problem of indicating what the ultimate ideal is, and how it is related to the social man, though common to all three of the philosophies examined, is especially acute in the case of Aurobindo, who uses the expressions, "divine," and "spiritual" in scatter-gun fashion, seemingly unable to talk about man without,

at the same time, talking about the divine and the spiritual. The problem involved can be formulated in the question, In what does the perfect life of man consist? Put slightly differently, the question is, To what do the expressions, "divine," "spiritual," etc., refer? An answer to these questions will disclose what the ultimate ideal--complete freedom--consists in.

On the assumption that if complete freedom of the individual is dependent upon self (ātman)-realization or upon the realization of the spirit or divine within, then there is something--a self (ātman), divine, or spirit--to be realized, the question can be approached by asking, What, if anything, in man is to be realized? Picking on one of Aurobindo's favorite expression, it might be asked, Is there a Divine in man? Having asked the question, the next task is to set about answering it, a task in this case offering special difficulties, for it is not clear as to what would count as an answer. Obviously, it will not do to say simply yes or no, for it would not be known what was being affirmed or denied. In this respect the matter is similar to the question of God's existence. The theist says that God does exist and claims that the atheist is blind. The atheist denies that God exists, and claims that the theist is superstitious. But nothing is settled in this way. We have no idea of what the atheist is not seeing, nor do we have any idea of what the theist's mistake consists in.

Nor will it do to conduct a scientific experiment to find out if there is a divine in man. If it is asked whether there is an ant in a box one can perform certain experiments which will reveal the animal, if there. Descartes suggested

that anatomical analysis would reveal the existence of the soul in the pineal gland. Only the experiment need be performed. But of course, the experiment could reveal the existence of the soul in the pineal gland only if were the kind of thing it could not be and still remain a soul. Similarly, it is no good examining man's anatomy in order to find the divine. Whatever the divine is, it is not the kind of thing an operation would reveal.

It might be that belief in a divine in man is not so much a matter of thinking that there is a special little person or thing inside him who secretly causes him to do the things he does--a person or thing whose existence could somehow be revealed by an experiment--but an attitude towards something. It might be an attitude reflecting the feeling that there will be life after death. Certainly some who have believed in a divine in man have also believed that there is an aspect or part of man that survives death. But perhaps expectation of survival of death is not essential to a belief in the existence of a divine in man. At any rate, it will be assumed here that the two beliefs are separable; that a belief in a divine in man is not identical with a belief in survival of death. That is, the question of the existence of a divine in man will be discussed as though it were a matter independent of survival of death.

But even if a belief in the existence of a divine in man does not necessarily involve an attitude towards the survival of death, it still might refer to an attitude, an attitude not towards another world, but towards this world. A person who believed in the existence of a divine in man might regard himself and others in a way different from the non-believer. It might also be the case that this attitude

is reflected in various behavior patterns, which might serve as evidence of a belief in the divine. This seems more fruitful, for it does seem to be the case that a person who believes in the existence of a divine within him necessarily holds a certain attitude towards himself and others, an attitude which may regard life as sacred, other persons inviolable, etc.

Granted some such connection between the existence of a divine in man and a certain attitude, the question arises as to whether everyone who shares the attitude in question is, thereby, a believer in the existence of a divine within him. If this question is answered in the affirmative, then it is assumed that belief in the existence of the divine is simply this attitude. If the question is answered negatively, then it must be asked what this belief in the divine is, over and above a particular attitude or set of attitudes. It is, therefore, a matter of either conceding that having a certain attitude towards one's environment is synonymous with believing in the existence of a divine within him, or of specifying what more the divine is.

Approaching the problem from a slightly different angle, the belief in the existence of a divine in man can be considered as an hypothesis. Calling this belief the hypothesis of man's spirituality, the reasonableness of the hypothesis of man's spirituality might be considered. In what does the reasonableness of the hypothesis of spirituality consist? Is it a matter of man's ability to do things for inexplicable reasons or unknown causes? Or, is it a matter of seeing or noticing something about man's actions, maybe a certain pattern? Or is it primarily a matter of recognizing a certain feeling? Or is it a matter of having a certain attitude?

These questions might be approached by comparing the hypothesis of man's spirituality with the hypothesis of the existence of other minds. Admitting that there may be important differences between these two hypotheses, they are similar in that their reasonableness depends, in large part, on how well certain behavior corresponds with the hypothesis. The important difference, however, is that we are all convinced of the existence of our own mind, whereas the existence of the divine within is open to question. The chief difficulty is that it is difficult to know what to look for when looking for the divine; what would be a good reason for believing in its existence? It must first be established what would count as evidence in favor of the hypothesis in question.

An attempt must be made to discover what to look for when looking for a divine in persons, in trying to decide whether or not persons are spiritual. Perhaps an analogy will be of help. Suppose two persons watching the behavior of a strange animal. The first person says that the animal in question is rational, but the second person disagrees. Both have seen all of the movements of the animal in question, but they disagree. It might be said that one has noticed something about the animal's behavior that the second has missed, even though both saw all of the movements. It is possible that the first person detected certain patterns in the animal's behavior that the second person missed, and on the basis of the noticed patterns declared the animal to be rational. Suppose the first person attempted to convince the second that the animal was rational by suggesting that the reason he described the animal in question as being rational was that the animal was

acting out of reason, saying, "Obviously, the animal has reason, see what it does." This remark would be misleading, however, if it lead the second person to look within the animal for some entity called Reason, taking the animal to have some special entity within it directing its behavior. Quite clearly, under the conditions described, it is simply a matter of the first person having noticed something about what the animal did or the way in which it did something that led him to describe the animal as being rational. The description is a reflection of what the animal does and how he does it, and it would be a mistake to look for the animal's rationality apart from the animal's activity, for nothing could conceivably count as evidence for the existence of reason except the animal's activity.

But the matter might not be quite so simple. Suppose again a certain animal exhibiting certain behavior, being watched by two persons. This time suppose that they both noticed not only the same movements, but they also both noticed the same patterns in the movements. Again, the first person describes the animal as rational and the second disagrees. Granted exactly equivalent understanding and appreciation of the animal's behavior, it might be thought that any possible disagreement over a description could only be a matter of disagreeing over the application of a name (not that the matter of "only a name" cannot be a very consequential affair at times).

It might, however, be more than merely the application of a name to given behavior. Instead of suggesting to the second person that the described animal is rational because of certain patterns noticed in the animal's behavior, the first

person might admit to seeing only the same behavior patterns the second person has seen, but claim that the description fits because of something he expected the animal to do. He might, for instance, suggest that he noticed a certain progression in the behavior patterns of the animal, and that this counts as evidence in favor of the existence of reason in the animal. This matter, when pushed far enough, would come down to the question of whether or not the animal was capable of doing certain things. It has already been admitted that it has not done the requisite things to date, and that it is simply a matter of whether or not the animal has the power of reason, or what amounts to the same thing, whether it has the ability to do more than it has yet done.

It might also be the case that when a person is said to have a divine within him or to be spiritual, it is not a claim that he has some entity within him, but that he does things in a certain way, or that he does certain things. The hypothesis of spirituality might be reasonable because a person's behavior exhibits certain relevant patterns. It might also be that to speak of the divine within a person, or to speak of a person's spirituality, is to speak of a certain capacity or power, in addition to being a remark about his own actual behavior. If this were the case, the reasonableness of the hypothesis of spirituality would depend not only upon how well human behavior supported the hypothesis that this behavior exhibited certain patterns, but also on how well it supported the hypothesis that this behavior indicated a capacity or ability to do certain things other than those observed.

If these suggestions are correct, then the disagreement between the one who affirms the existence of a divine in man and the one who denies the existence of a divine in man is understandable. The claim is complex. It consists, in part, in the claim that certain patterns are present in human behavior. It is possible that there could be disagreement here, for one might fail to recognize the patterns. But if this were the total claim, it is difficult to understand why the believer could not educate the non-believer to see the patterns. There seems to be something more involved, however, for there still might be disagreement, even when the behavior patterns are recognized and understood equally by both. This disagreement is plausible if the claim that a person is spiritual is not simply a claim about actual behavior patterns, but about possible behavior patterns as well.

This account would suggest that the alternatives proposed earlier, that the reasonableness of the hypothesis of spirituality depended on either (1) man's ability to exhibit behavior for inexplicable reasons or unknown causes, or (2) man's behavior exhibiting certain patterns, or (3) man's having a certain attitude towards himself and others, are not exclusive of each other, but are all involved. The first alternative corresponds to the claim that man has the power or ability within him to do certain things, though he has not yet done them or ordinarily does not do them. (Witness the claim that the spirit of god dwells in the heart of each person, though some are ignorant of, and deny its existence.) It is an admission of powers within man greater than the familiar and understood powers. The second alternative corresponds to the claim that spirituality consists in the exhibiting of

certain behavior, in doing certain things. The third alternative, that spirituality consists in having a certain attitude, is really not an alternative separate from (1) and (2), for an attitude (or a disposition) could not possibly involve anything over and above the exhibition of certain behavior plus an ability to exhibit certain behavior and a tendency to exhibit such behavior.

The Ideal of Self-Perfection

The suggestion is that when a person is described as being spiritual or having a divine within there is reference both to a certain attitude or set of attitudes as evidenced by behavior patterns of the individual and to an ability of persons to do certain things over and above the observed behavior patterns. It may be that the abilities referred to when a person is described as spiritual are known (and knowable) only on the basis of observed or experienced behavior, but this does not alter the fact that the abilities referred to are (or might be) abilities to do things over and above what has been observed and experienced. The claim that a person is spiritual is thus a claim that a person can do and does certain things. The spirit is the power to do the requisite things.

According to this explanation of what "spiritual" refers to, it would be a mistake to look for an entity when looking for the spirit because the spirit is a power to do things, a power partially evident in certain manifested activities, but which might manifest itself in as yet unobserved or as yet unexperienced behavior. It would also be a mistake to look for a special faculty, an "inner eye,"

which would be a secret power enabling one to do certain things, if the power referred to by spirit is analogous to the power referred to by "reason." For reason is not a power enabling one to do things, but is the power to do things. That is, reason is not a special faculty, analogous to sight, in virtue of which one can do certain things. It simply is the ability to do certain things. Similarly, it has been suggested that spirit is the power or ability to do certain things (those activities, whatever they may be, involved in spiritual activity) and is not a special faculty in virtue of which one does the requisite things.

It might be objected that the spirit or the divine must be something over and above an ability to do things, otherwise why the tendency to erect the spirit into an entity, albeit a mystic entity? In part this objection overlooks the ease of entification through language. Because of a linguistic similarity to substantive expressions, an expression such as "reason," which properly points to activities and abilities, is easily taken to be itself a substantive expression, referring, therefore, to some entity or the other. When there is no observable entity to which it might refer a mystic entity is created as a referent. This can be seen more easily in a case where the mistake is not quite so easy to make. A dancer might be described as graceful, and in reply to a question concerning why she is so described it is said that she has a certain grace about her. Here it would be unlikely--for anyone familiar with the language--to suspect there was an entity within her called Grace. It is quite obvious that the grace present is not to be found apart from the activity and ability to indulge in the activity. But for some

reason, there seems a greater temptation to erect such activity-referring expressions as "reason," "will," or "spirit" into entities. However, once having entified the activities and abilities to which these expressions refer, no one seems quite able to identify the entity in question. There is, nevertheless, a tendency to insist that there is an entity--though unknown--involved. Thus, the objection that "spirit" cannot refer only to activity and ability because of the widespread tendency to regard the spirit as an entity loses some of its force when the ease with which such entification is pointed out. There still is a point to the objection, however, for there has so far been no account of the appeal such entification has in this sphere.

The remarks so far might be taken to suggest that the spirit of divine in man is nothing over and above the ability or power to do various things, which might lead to the view that the completely spiritual or divine life would consist in a life lived in the full awareness of the integrated and fully developed abilities and powers of man.

The objection to this view is that the divine or spiritual life must be something over and above the life just outlined, or else there would be no problem; there would be no temptation to make the mistake of erecting the spirit into a mystic entity. The objection is not satisfied with the retort that linguistic usage has led to this mistake, and maintains that there is something more involved than a mere linguistic mistake. After all, people are described as having grace and no one erects grace into an entity, nor does anyone think that a fruitful conversation contains a fruit.

The objector is right in demanding some explanation beyond the remark about linguistic entification. The objection overlooks, however, the important fact that man has been and is now, to a very large extent, ignorant of himself. In fact, the source of the tendency to erect spirit into an entity lies in self-ignorance.

The fact is that men do not now and have not in the past known what they can do. They are and have been ignorant of their abilities; ignorant of the powers within. It is probably true that every person has at various times done things without knowing why, or often, without knowing even that he could do such a thing. It is an ordinary fact that people can and do surprise themselves with what they do. It is also a common observation that people generally are of the opinion that there is something responsible for the activities of man. Certain causes and reasons can be pointed to in indicating the source of and responsibility for what takes place. Sometimes, maybe usually, one can specify what is responsible for his actions, as when he can give satisfactory reasons for the actions or when he can adequately describe the causes. But sometimes there is a breakdown in this accounting procedure. For example, often one does not know precisely why he likes a painting, or why he loves a certain person, but is nevertheless, well aware that he likes the painting or loves the person. And sometimes a person loves with an intensity amazing even to himself, a case where he does something he was not aware of being able to do.

In such cases there is something of a mystery involved; one does not know why he feels this or does that or how it is possible, although it is quite evident that

he does feel this or that he can do that. As yet there is no temptation to entify anything. But the serpent of temptation appears when one begins to attempt explanations of certain actions or attitudes, not understood, or not understood completely, on the model of those actions he understands quite well, assuming that reasons exist or that powers exist, even though unknown, which are quite similar to the reasons and powers which are quite familiar. As long as there is concern with only what is known and familiar there is no temptation to make gods of these familiar activities and powers, or if there is, there is a ready antidote to such an attempt. But when the powers supposed to explain and account for behavior are not familiar it is much easier to make them into strange gods.

It is possible (and temptingly easy) to ascribe all sorts of characteristics to these unknown powers, precisely because they are unknown. Because the supposed powers are unknown no one set of characteristics can definitively be affirmed or denied of these powers, and there may be a temptation to suppose these powers to be embodied in an omnipotent Person (for, despite self-ignorance, the human person is still the most familiar model available) similar to (but, of course, different from) the human person. The result is entification of the powers within, a mistaking of abilities for entities. If the mystical "entity" within is thought to represent or embody the greatest powers in the universe it is no mystery why the realization of, or identification with, this entity (supreme power) should be the highest aspiration of man.

Thus, the second part of the objection to regarding the entification of spirit

as a mistake, the part of the objection insisting that there must be tempting reasons for entifying spirit, is correct insofar as there are certain reasons for regarding spirit as an entity, reasons which render the entification understandable. But by this very correctness it ceases to be an objection to the view that entification of spirit is a mistake, and instead, adds weight to this conclusion.

In passing, it might be noted that even if entification of spirit is a mistake, this in no way bears on the question of whether or not there are hidden powers within man (which appears to be a plausible assumption) nor on the question of whether or not these powers are identical with the basic powers present in the universe, and whether or not realization of, and identification with, those powers would set man completely free, or indeed, whether it would be good for man at all.

Before concluding, however, that the preceding analysis and interpretation of the basic ideal guiding the social philosophies examined is correct, it would be well to investigate the support such an interpretation of the ideal receives in the relevant literature. In a sense, much of this work is an argument for this interpretation, but it will be useful to consider specific sources of support at this time.

Aurobindo and Self-Perfection

Aurobindo, in his remarks about education, lays down a first principle of teaching clearly based on his view that there are greater powers within man which the teacher must assist the student in realizing. He says:

The first principle of true teaching is that nothing can be taught. The teacher is not an instructor or taskmaster; he is a helper and a guide. He does not actually train the pupil's mind, he only shows him how to perfect his instruments of knowledge and helps and encourages in the process.¹

The chief aim of education should be to help the growing soul to draw out that in itself which is best and make it perfect for a noble use.²

In The Ideal of the Karmayogin, Aurobindo remarks, "The problems which have troubled mankind can only be solved by conquering the kingdom within, . . ."³ This remark suggests that man has the abilities within him to solve his problems; the task is to become the master of those inner powers. In the same work he emphasizes the spirituality is not something over and above life, but is part and parcel of it. He says, "It is an error, we repeat, to think that spirituality is a thing divorced from life."⁴ Also, in the same work, identifying religion with spirituality, he says, "It is an error to think that the heights of religion are above the struggles of this world."⁵ Again, there is the suggestion that living spiritually or religiously is a matter of living this ordinary existence, but living it in terms of the higher and better developed powers within.

¹Aurobindo Ghose, A System of National Education (Some Preliminary Ideas) (Calcutta: Arya Publishing House, 1948 ed.) p. 3.

²Ibid., p. 5.

³The Ideal of the Karmayogin, p. 6.

⁴Ibid., p. 13.

⁵Ibid., p. 13.

In Ideal and Progress, Aurobindo says:

Man also is God and it is through his developing manhood that he approaches the god-head; Life also is the Divine, its progressive expansion is the self-expression of the Brahman (Holy Power), and to deny life is to diminish the godhead within us.⁶

The necessary God and power are within man, according to this statement, and to live the divine life it is necessary only to realize the god, the power, within and to express this realized power in life. This point is further emphasized by his remark that "the message of the East to the West is a true message, "Only by finding himself can man be saved".⁷

In The Human Cycle, Aurobindo says, "We must remember that our aim of fulfillment is an integral unfolding of the Divine within us, a complete evolution of the hidden divinity in the individual soul and the collective life."⁸ The divine is within us, but hidden. It needs to be realized and expressed. That the realization and expression of this hidden divinity is not something apart from ordinary empirical existence is evident from the following statement of Aurobindo:

The spiritual aim will seek to fulfill itself therefore in a fullness of life and man's being in the individual and the race which will be the base for the heights of the spirit--the base becoming in the end of one substance with the peaks. It will not proceed by a scornful neglect of the body, nor by an ascetic starving of the vital being, and an utmost bareness and even aqualor as the rule of spiritual living, nor by a puritanical denial of⁹

⁶Ideal and Progress, p. 53.

⁷Ibid., p. 52.

⁸Human Cycle, p. 166.

⁹Human Cycle, p. 10.

In fact, this remark seems to suggest that the spiritual life is ordinary life lived well, lived in the best possible way (which may well make it an extraordinary life!).

In his magnum opus, The Life Divine, Aurobindo says, "The divine being dwells in all that is; we ourselves are that in our self, in our own deepest being; . . ." ¹⁰ The language of the first sentence might suggest that the Divine is an entity, requiring a place to occupy. But when Aurobindo goes on to assert that we ourselves are the Divine, it begins to look less like there are two entities, the ordinary person and the Divine person within the ordinary person, and more like there are different descriptions of the same person--the ordinary person--with the one description emphasizing certain aspects of the person and the other description emphasizing other aspects. And again the suggestion is made that the divine is "deep" and "hidden," something which must be realized and brought to the surface, to the light. Aurobindo spells out this suggestion by remarking that "the distinction between the divine life and the undivine life is in fact identical with the root distinction between a life of knowledge lived in self-awareness and in the power of the Light and the life of ignorance, . . ." ¹¹

Though the expression "in the power of the light" might present some difficulty, the expression "in self-awareness" is a quite familiar one, and there is nothing mysterious about the distinction between a life lived in self-awareness

¹⁰ Life Divine, p. 460

¹¹ Ibid., p. 461.

and a life lived in ignorance. This statement suggests, therefore, that in looking for the divine in man we ought to look at man's activities to see if they are done in a certain way; namely, in self-awareness.

The "Light" referred to seems to be no more than the "light of knowledge." Aurobindo says, "To be aware wholly and integrally of oneself and of all the truth of one's being is the necessary condition of true possession of existence. This self-awareness is what is meant by spiritual knowledge."¹² The second sentence of this quotation suggests that although he does not say so, Aurobindo takes complete and integral self-awareness to be not only the necessary but also the sufficient condition of true existence. This second sentence also provides evidence for taking this true existence to be spiritual existence.

This brief survey of Aurobindo's conception of the ideal, the spiritual or divine life, shows that he held the following views: (1) The powers and forces that constitute the divine are within man; (2) Man is ignorant of the forces and powers within him; (3) Man must search within himself to find these powers and forces; (4) The solution to man's problems lies in obtaining mastery over the powers and forces within him; (5) These forces and powers that constitute the divine within must pervade and transform the activities of man; (6) Realization of the forces within means the possibility of performing activities in the best possible way with the best possible direction; and (7) Such performance, in the light of full awareness of what he is, constitutes the spiritual life for man.

¹²Life Divine, p. 1217.

It would seem, therefore, that the suggested interpretation of the ideal of self-realization as the realization of the hidden powers within, and the integrated perfection of the individual such realization makes possible, is warranted by Aurobindo's statements about the Divine or Spiritual life. That is, it seems that Aurobindo is using the expressions "spirit" and "divine" to refer to the ultimate forces and powers within the individual, and the divine life consists in living according to the light of these inner forces.

Gandhi and Self-Perfection

Gandhi's conception of the ideal of the perfect life which guides his social thought, though not so explicitly stated, seems to be quite similar to Aurobindo's.

In the light of Gandhi's statement that man "is not the body, but ātman (self) and that he may use the body only with a view to self-realization,"¹³ it would appear that he is concerned with the realization and expression of some force greater than that of the body. From his declaration that "to find Truth completely is to realize oneself and one's destiny to become perfect,"¹⁴ it is evident that the ideal of self-perfection consists in the attainment of full knowledge of one's being; of realizing fully the forces and powers within.

Gandhi's statement, "What I want to achieve--what I have been striving and pining to achieve these thirty years, is self-realization, to see God face to face, to attain Moksa,"¹⁵ suggests that he identified God-realization with

¹³Gandhi Sutras, p. 34.

¹⁴Gandhi Sutras, p. 29.

¹⁵Experiments with Truth, p. 4.

self-realization, the God being the greatest power within, the ideal being the realization of this God. Inasmuch as Gandhi sought his ideal of God-realization in continuous activity it would appear that his view of self-realization was that it consisted in the realization of the God within and the expression of such realization in activity. He said, "For me there is no escape from social service, there is no happiness on earth beyond or apart from it."¹⁶

It would appear, therefore, that Gandhi did not regard God or self (ātman) as an entity, but as a source of activity, and God-realization consists in living the life directed according to the dictates of this source.¹⁷

Traditional Thought and Self-Perfection

The analysis of the goal of complete freedom (mokṣa) in the social philosophy of traditional India revealed that the goal consisted in self-realization (ātman-realization), where the self (ātman) was identified with the ultimate source of power in the universe.¹⁸ It was seen that "atman-realization" referred to the complete freedom of the individual consequent upon realization of those deepest powers of being.

It might be objected that although the word "ātman" can be, and was, in the Upaniṣads, used to refer to a force or power, it also can be and was, in the

¹⁶Ibid., p. 167.

¹⁷For further support for this view, see above, pp. 162-169.

¹⁸See above, pp. 53-61.

Upaniṣads, used to refer to an entity. There is no denying that there is entification, at least linguistic entification, of the self (ātman) in the Upaniṣads, the most obvious example of which is found in the Katha Upaniṣad. It is said there that "a conscious being (purusa), no larger than a man's thumb, stands in the center of our self (ātman)."¹⁹ This "person," the size of a thumb, is described as "Lord of the past and the future."²⁰ But in the same work it is said, "The self (ātman) is not to be sought through the senses."²¹ This indicates that the remark about the self having in its center a thumb sized being is not to be taken literally.

The fact that the self (ātman) is spoken of as a little person suggests that maybe something could be done to get a peek at that little person or to get him to come out. There is, however, nothing in the early Upaniṣads to suggest that one could get a little person to come out of himself or that it would in any way be possible to see a little entity (the ātman) inside of him, no matter what efforts might be made. The nearly unanimous suggestion of the early Upaniṣads is that the way to realize the self (ātman) is through activity, activity at all levels, in all spheres, including activities (yogic activities) specially designed to enable one to realize the forces within him, which realization is the goal.

¹⁹Katha Upaniṣad, 2.1.12. ("Anguṣṭha-mātmah puruso madhya ātmani tisthati.")

²⁰Katha Upaniṣad, 2.1.13.

²¹Katha Upaniṣad, 2.1.1.

It would appear, therefore, from a consideration of Aurobindo's, Gandhi's and the traditional view of the basic ideal of life guiding the respective social philosophies, that the suggestions made earlier concerning the nature of this ideal are in the right direction. The suggestion there was that the expressions, "self-realization," "ātman-realization," "God realization," and "realization of the Spirit" when used to refer to activities, refer to the same activities, those activities directed at realizing the potentialities within man. These same expressions, when used to refer to the aim of those activities as accomplished, refer to "a perfect life," an expression synonymous with "moksa," "the Divine Life," "a fully spiritual life," and "a God-realized life."

Presuppositions of the Basic Ideal

The ideal common to these three philosophies may be taken then, as the ideal of the man who has realized all of his potentialities. This ideal, as conceived in these philosophies, presupposes that there are, within man, as yet unrealized, powers and forces not different from the basic powers and forces of the universe, which, when realized by man will free him completely from the restraints of any higher forces. The philosophy behind the means for the realization of these deepest powers within man and the universe presupposes that these powers manifest themselves according to certain rules, the basic rules governing man and the universe, which guide and direct all activity, and that acting according to these rules enables one to realize identity with the forces

expressing themselves through these rules, thus achieving freedom. These rules governing all activity in the universe are not regarded as merely statistical regularities, but are conceived as the norms formulated by the basic forces of the universe to enable all beings to attain the goal of complete identity with these basic powers.

These two presuppositions of the basic ideal are the ultimate assumptions of these philosophies, not to be justified by appeal to further assumptions, but to be accepted as valid because of their plausibility either insofar as they are satisfactory explanatory principles or because of personal experience, which may or may not be communicable. In either case they remain philosophically hypothetical for their certitude is not demonstrable, though a given individual may, in either case (maybe necessarily in the second case), be fully convinced of the truth of these assumptions and will not regard them as assumptions at all.

Social Ideals in Gandhi, Aurobindo, and Traditional India

There is thus seen to be agreement within the social philosophies of traditional India, Gandhi, and Aurobindo with respect to the basic ideal of self-perfection or self-realization. It is not, however, a sufficient guarantee that the social organization advocated or provided for within the social philosophies examined will be similar merely because the basic ideals are similar. For it is possible that even though there is agreement as to what constitutes the good life for man, there might be substantial disagreement as to what social arrangements will be most conducive to realizing the good life. Self-realization, as embodying the

concept of the greatest possible well being of man, is an ideal which society is to aim at rendering a reality, but it does not operate directly as a principle of social organization. For this reason it is possible that agreement should exist with respect to the nature of the good life for man and that there should be agreement that it is the function of society to contribute, in a maximal way, to the attainment of the good life, but that there could be wide disagreement with respect to the principles of social organization that determine how society is to be organized in order to contribute to the realization of the good life. The task at hand, therefore, is to show that not only is there the basic agreement shown above, with respect to the basic ideal, but that there is also agreement with respect to the basic principles of social organization, or what is the same thing, agreement not only with respect to the basic ideal of society, but also agreement with respect to the basic ideals within society.

The first part of this study has shown that the basic forms of social organization in traditional India were the institutions of varna and āśrama. These institutions were seen to be designed to facilitate achievement of the basic aims of man--dharma, artha, kāma, and moksa--which were considered to represent the good life for man. What is now required is an analysis of those institutions and aims that will reveal the basic concepts involved in relating the basic aims of man to the basic institutions designed to realize those aims; an analysis that will shed light on the rationale of the social organization of traditional India, and then to determine whether or not these same concepts are basic to the social philosophies of Gandhi and Aurobindo.

Inasmuch as the institutions of varna and āsrama serve to provide for individual freedom within society and to make possible a distribution of the goods provided by social organization such that each member of the society receives what he deserves, it would appear that freedom and justice were basic social ideals in traditional India, and operated as principles of social organization. To say that the concepts of freedom and justice operated as principles of social organization is to say, roughly, that they provide the criteria in terms of which the social institutions might be evaluated. If it is the case that the concepts of freedom and justice embody the basic principles of social organization in traditional India, then the questions "How can individual freedom in society be achieved?" and "How can justice in society be secured?" would be the basic questions, the answers to which would determine the forms of social organization.

Before any attempt can be made to determine whether or not these were the basic questions of the theory of social organization of traditional India, it is necessary to indicate what is being asked with these questions. One might meet at least an initial skepticism in claiming that freedom and justice were basic social ideals in traditional India. It might be thought that in a society in which some persons were denied education, others denied material prosperity, in which some were required to be the servants of others, etc., could hardly be called a just society, and if the guiding principles of social organization provided for such arrangements, then justice could hardly be said to be a basic

principle of social organization. And, in the same way, it might be thought that a society in which each person was assigned to a particular class for life, being prohibited by the social institutions from taking up any occupation he chose, and in a society in which the individual is required to live his life in various stages there could be no recognizable ideal of freedom. The possibility of skepticism arising from such as the above suggests that it would be well to indicate, at the outset, what is being referred to in the name of social justice, and what is being claimed in the name of freedom.

To begin with, social justice can be regarded as an arrangement of distribution of goods in society whereby each member of the society receives what is due him. The difficulty with such a statement is that it is practically empty. Everything depends on how one's due is determined. A society in which one's due is determined by his needs might be quite different from a society in which one's due were determined by his merit. And both of these might be different from a society in which one's due is determined according to his production. In yet another society one's due might be determined solely according to agreements made. Or, there might be a society in which a combination of these principles were used in determining what was due a person. It goes without saying that a society that conceived of justice as a matter of giving each his due where due was determined according to needs could well regard another society (which took itself to be just) as unjust if the second society gave each individual his due, but determined what was due the individual by considering his production, ignoring his needs.

From this brief discussion it becomes clear that if it is maintained that in the social philosophies under consideration social justice was a basic ideal, then it will be necessary to make clear the conception of justice employed, and to show that this is not an inappropriate concept of justice.

A similar problem poses itself with respect to an attempt to show that freedom is a basic social ideal, for probably the only effect of announcing that in the society under consideration freedom was a highly valued ideal, without establishing what one was free from or free to do, is the evocation of a "pro" attitude. And it is, of course, not the emotive character but the descriptive character of "freedom" that is of primary concern here. It is, accordingly, necessary in connection with maintaining that in the social philosophies under consideration individual freedom in society was regarded as a primary social ideal, to make clear what the freedom consists in, and to show that the freedoms provided for are significant freedoms.

Bearing in mind that the criteria of justice and freedom will have to be indicated and justified, the analysis may best proceed by indicating those characteristics of society which according to the theories of traditional India provide for justice, in the sense of securing for each what is due him, and for freedom of the individual, in the sense that he is without constraints. Then, consequent upon an analysis of the main features of the social organization advocated in the social philosophies of Gandhi and Aurobindo that are relevant to freedom and justice, it will be possible to compare the social philosophies in terms of the

principles of social organization embodied in the concepts of freedom and justice.

Justice: Traditional India

With respect to the social philosophy of traditional India, what is now required is a consideration of whether or not the question "How can the goods required for the good life be distributed so that each gets his due share?" is among the basic questions underlying the institutions of varna and āśrama.

One of the most striking features of the varna scheme is that it does not provide equal treatment for all individuals. The examination of the requirements of the different varnas in the first part of this work revealed considerable inequalities of treatment among them. If, therefore, it is held that each person's due share is the same as that of any other person, then obviously the varna arrangement is not an answer to a question concerning due shares in society. But this is not to say that varna is not an answer to the question of how due shares are to be achieved, but only that either it is not such, or due share is not decided on the basis of the equality of all persons. If it is the case that varna is an answer to the question of how due shares of the common good can be achieved in society, then obviously the assumption was not that all persons are equal, and therefore deserve the same share, but rather, that persons are unequal, and therefore require unequal shares if each is to get his due. The plausibility of this latter suggestion lies in the fact that the varna theory makes sense only upon recognition of individual differences that can be classified in some way; a

recognition that allows inequalities of various kinds to exist between individuals and groups of individuals.

But it will not do to conclude that social justice was a social ideal merely because individual differences were recognized and a distribution of goods made possible (in theory) that took such differences into account, for there is something about the concept of justice that suggests impartiality of treatment, which is often expressed in the slogan that justice is treatment of like cases in like manner. That is, if two individuals, A and B, were equally well qualified for and had equal rights to a good X, there is no recognized interpretation of justice according to which it would be possible to suggest that anything other than an injustice had been committed if B were given only half as much X as A. There are, of course, serious difficulties in establishing rights and qualification, but once the decision has been made that the qualifications and rights of A and B are the same, then there is no justifying, on the basis of justice, unequal distribution (although justification may be possible on other grounds).

The varna arrangement does, however, provide for equal treatment of like cases in that the rules of a particular social class hold good for every member of that class. Thus, each sūdra has the same rights to the goods of society as any other sūdra, even though he may not have the same rights as the brāhmana. In respect to the qualifications in virtue of which one is classified as sūdra each sūdra is equal to any other, though possible unequal to any individual belonging

to any other class. Each sūdra, as sūdra (i.e., belonging to a certain social class in virtue of certain qualifications), has rights and duties equal to any other sūdra.²²

But even though justice is secured (provided for) in the sense that within the various classes all are treated in the same manner, there is a question of whether or not an arrangement whereby some members of society are denied the rights of others is just. This is the question not of whether justice is done according to the law, but whether the law itself is just. The question is whether or not the principle of social organization that requires inequalities of rights and duties among individuals is just. Thus, it might be agreed that justice was secured within a particular social social class, or even within all the social classes, but argued that justice was being flouted in the very organization that was based on the inequalities of individuals.

²²The rights of one class are often the duties of another, as the right of the sūdra to food and shelter becomes the duty of those for whom he works, and the right of other classes to the services of the sūdra is the duty of the sūdra. In the same way, the duty of the brāhmana to study and teach the Veda is the correlative right of the ksatriya and vaiśya to an education. Thus, in society, certain classes have certain rights which it is the obligation of the society to protect, and this means that other classes in society have certain duties, the duties that make secure the rights of others. It need not be the case that because an individual has a right he has a corresponding duty, but it surely is the case that if an individual or a class has a right, then someone has a duty, for it would make no sense to say that A has a right to X but that no one has a duty to provide X for A. In such a case, in the social realm, there would be no right. In the same way, to say that A has a duty to Y is to say that B has a right to the results of the performance of Y. If B has no right, then A has no duty.

However, if it be recalled that the institutions of varna and āsrāma are answers to the question of how society can contribute to the good life of man it becomes apparent that the inequalities that lead to the different social classes are recognized in light of a deeper equality. There is an assumption of the equality of man that lies behind the recognized inequalities upon which varna is predicated.

Suppose the question be asked, "Why organize individuals according to their differences so that their inequalities become apparent?" According to the philosophy of traditional India, the answer is "So that each person may have an equal opportunity to secure the good life (the life in which the purusārthas are secured, to whatever extent possible)." In other words, the underlying assumption is that each person has an equal right to the good life. But it is further recognized that the capacities of individuals differ, and that therefore, not all individuals require the same goods or the same quantity of certain goods in order to achieve the good life according to their capacity.²³

Thus, rather than argue that an injustice is being done when a sūdra is denied a library and the brāhmana is provided with one, one could argue that an injustice is being done when each is provided a half library, for a library represents no good for the sūdra, but a great good for the brāhmana. On the other hand, dice or cards might represent a considerable good for the sūdra,

²³This basic equality of all persons as persons is the social implication of the metaphysical teaching in the Upaniṣads and the Gīta of the identity of ātman and brahman and the unity of brahman.

but no good for the brāhmana. If the ideal of justice is to provide an equal distribution of the goods at its disposal in order that each individual have an equal opportunity to realize the good life according to his or her capacity, then it would be an injustice to distribute the same goods in the same amounts to every person.

If it had not been thought that each person had an equal right to the means of life it would not have been necessary to work out a social arrangement whereby each individual had a place in the society, and occupied a position in society according to capacities and qualifications, consequently receiving the goods of society required for the good life in a measure proportionate to needs. According to this line of thinking there is no injustice in not giving books or an education to a sūdra, for the sūdra is, by definition, such that books or education make no contribution to the good life, so he is not being denied any of the goods society is able to provide when he is denied an education. On the other hand, an injustice is being done him when he is not provided shelter, food, dice, etc., which are goods that are required by him to enjoy the good life according to his capacity. But it would be no injustice to deny the brāhmana dice, or to provide him less in the way of food and shelter, for these goods, to the extent that they represent genuine goods at all for him, contribute proportionately less to the good life for the brāhmana than they do for the sūdra. The theory is that although each individual has an equal right to the good life, the good life will differ, in terms of the activities constituting the good life,

according to the capacities of the individual, and it is only by taking into account the different capacities within individuals that an approach to just distribution of the goods of society is made possible.

It would appear, therefore, that the question of justice was basic to the social organization of traditional India. The way in which a just distribution was achieved by means of the institutions of varna and āśrama can be seen by considering the distribution of the goods of society according to the theory of varna and āśrama.

Among the chief goods made available by social organization are those of education, more ample means of life (including means to biological, psychological, intellectual and spiritual life), security in these goods, and leisure. Society is properly concerned both with the production and distribution of these goods, and the varna and āśrama theories can be seen as forms of social organization directly aimed at securing adequate production and just distribution of these goods. The āśrama theory provides for the distribution of the good of education in terms of the student stage of life (brahmacharya āśrama), thereby ensuring that each qualified individual will receive an education commensurate with the individual's need of this good for the good life equivalent to that received by any other individual. The institution of varna provides for classifying the members of society according to their need for a certain kind and amount of education. By considering the characteristics of individuals it is possible to determine the extent to which a certain kind of education and a certain amount of education represents a

contribution to the well being of an individual. There would be no injustice in providing an opportunity for graduate training for one person who possessed all of the relevant qualifications and denying such education to another who lacked all or most of the relevant qualifications, for graduate training would not represent a good for the second person; it would represent a contribution to his ill being rather than to his well being. By the same logic, there is no injustice in not providing the same education for the sūdra as for the brāhmana, provided that being a sūdra entails being unqualified for the forms of education denied him. The education provided the brāhmana would represent no good to the sūdra; he is being denied no good in being denied the education provided for members of the other classes to whom the education represents a genuine good.

The same sorts of arguments lie behind the differences in distribution of economic goods in the second stage of life. To be provided with the means to wage war or administer government would represent no good to anyone but a kṣatriya. Hence, there is no injustice if other classes do not receive such goods, for they represent goods only to the kṣatriya. In the same way, wealth and material prosperity represent a good to the vaiśya, but not, to the same extent, to the brāhmana. Hence, there is no injustice in not providing wealth for the brāhmana. Cows represent a good to the vaiśya but not to the brāhmana.

The last of the three major goods listed above as being made possible by society, the good of leisure, is provided for by the last two stages in life wherein the individual is free from his social work and may, at his leisure, concentrate on achieving the highest good.

This discussion makes clear that both varna and āsrama are institutions designed to make possible a just distribution of the goods of society. The basic criterion for determining a just amount of the distributed good is that of the individual's need, measured by the goods requisite in order that each person have an opportunity equal to that of every other individual to enjoy the good life according to his capacity.

According to this concept of justice, a scheme of distribution which did not recognize that each person was equally deserving with any other person of the goods of society required for the good life would be unjust. Furthermore, in light of the obvious inequalities that exist between individuals, any scheme of distribution that provided the same goods in the same amount for every individual would be unjust, for because of the inequalities among persons this would represent an unequal distribution of the goods required for the good life. Therefore, the basic principle of justice in traditional India was to provide equal means to the good life for each individual. Because of differences among persons with respect to the kinds and amounts of goods required for the good life, the needs of the individual differ, and therefore the basic criterion of "to each according to his needs for the good life" required that individuals be classified according to their needs, and the needs of equals be provided for equally. It is, accordingly, plausible to suggest that varna and āsrama are answers to the question, "How can the goods of society be justly distributed?" And if this is

so, then it appears that the concept of justice embodies a basic principle of social organization in the social philosophy of traditional India.

Justice: Gandhi

Turning to the question of whether or not the principle of justice was also a basic principle of social organization in Gandhi's social philosophy, it appears that the question must be answered in the affirmative, for Gandhi says, "The political and economic organization of the state shall be based on principles of social justice and economic freedom."²⁴ It is, however, one thing to assert that social justice is to be a basic principle of social organization, and it might be quite another to actually base a theory of social organization on the principle of justice. In addition, the fact that Gandhi advocates social justice is in no way an argument that this concept of justice is similar to the concept of justice of traditional India. Consequently, it is necessary to turn to the social organization advocated in Gandhi's social philosophy in order to determine whether or not the concept of justice is a basic principle, and whether or not this concept is related to the concept of justice that operated as a principle of social organization in traditional India.

Operating with the simplified view of justice as distribution of goods such that each gets his due, the sources of arguments for the position that Gandhi did base his social organization on the principle of justice are found in his

²⁴ Harijan, April 20, 1940.

advocation of (1) equal rights for women, (2) the elimination of untouchability, (3) equal (or equitable) distribution of wealth, and (4) a classless society.²⁵

Gandhi's argument for the position that women should have rights equal to men reflects his view that sex is not a defensible principle of social inequality and that consequently, to distribute certain goods unequally to men and women in virtue of their sex is to violate justice. Both in the example furnished by the community at Sabarmati, where the women were granted rights equal to men, and in the statement that "women must have votes and equal legal status,"²⁶ there is evidence that Gandhi held that the equality of distribution of goods (and surely, various social rights, such as the right to vote, are goods) is a matter of justice, and that inequality of distribution of goods based on distinction between sexes would be a matter of injustice. Thus, Gandhi's position that women should have rights equal to men reflects the principle of justice.

That Gandhi's stand against untouchability is a stand based on the notion of justice is obvious in the light of his statement that "none can be born untouchable as all are sparks of one and the same fire. It is wrong to treat human beings as untouchable from birth."²⁷ Whatever significance be attached to this statement as a religious or metaphysical statement, it is obvious that on a social level it is an emphatic assertion of the basic equality of all humans.

²⁵See above, p. 138.

²⁶Gandhi's Ideas, p. 323.

²⁷Yeravda Mandir, p. 31.

As such it is clear that Gandhi objected to untouchability as a matter of injustice, for in light of the equality of persons unequal treatment of some could only be a violation of justice.

Gandhi leaves little room for doubt that his plans for organization of the economic forces of society are based on a concept of justice when he says, "To this end, to secure social justice, the state shall endeavor to promote small scale production carried on by the individual or cooperative effort for the benefit of all concerned."²⁸ The fact that the economic organization advocated by Gandhi was aimed at achieving equal distribution of goods argues for the fact that Gandhi's concept of justice involved the principle of "equal treatment for equals." Whether it be argued that Gandhi's schemes for organization of economic forces would result in equal wealth for all members of society, or that such organization would merely result in equal poverty for all, it is clear that Gandhi was striving for an equality of distribution, and that he regarded his organizational schemes as provisions for overcoming poverty and securing equal wealth for everyone. This is the force of his statement that in the ideal society there will be neither millionaires, not half-starved paupers.²⁹ All of Gandhi's attempts to effect decentralization presuppose his conviction that justice must be done, for he fears that centralization will lead to the injustices that follow exploitation.³⁰

²⁸Harijan, April 20, 1940.

²⁹See above, p. 137.

³⁰See above, p. 153.

The concept of the classless society, as found in Gandhi's concept of the ideal society (sarvodaya) also has its source in the notion of the basic equality of all persons. It is because of the basic equality of all persons that the individuals of society are not to be divided into higher and lower classes. Since the well being of all is to be considered equally it would be a matter of injustice to regard some groups of persons as having special privileges, entitles to greater consideration of their well being than others. Gandhi's advocacy of a classless society is thus the effect of pushing to the extreme the notion that all persons are basically equal, and therefore deserving of equal consideration, and indicates the powerful influence of his concept of justice, in the sense of equal treatment for all, on his advocated social organization.

It would appear, in light of this evidence, that the principle of social justice was a basic principle of social organization in Gandhi's social philosophy. It is not, however, obvious that the concept of justice in Gandhi's social philosophy is the same as that in traditional Indian social philosophy. What is required is a comparison of Gandhi's concept of justice to the concept of justice in traditional India. In particular, it must be seen whether or not, according to Gandhi's conception of justice, the basic criterion for determining a just amount of the distributed good is that of the individual's need, measured by the goods requisite in order that each person have an opportunity equal to that of every other individual to enjoy the good life according to his capacity, as it was in traditional India.

In light of Gandhi's insistence on equal treatment for all, it would appear that the concept of justice employed is not the same as in traditional India, for according to the latter it would be unjust to distribute the goods of society equally to all persons. The reason for this is that the qualifications and capacities of individuals differ, and to distribute all the goods of society in equal amounts to every individual would involve unequal distribution of goods relative to the needs of the individuals. The crucial point is whether Gandhi was advocating a strict equality, according to which the individual would receive an equal amount of the goods of society, or whether he was advocating a proportional equality, according to which persons with equal qualifications and equal needs would receive equal amounts, but who would receive goods unequal to persons having different qualifications and needs.

The evidence presented in the preceding few pages in support of the claim that Gandhi did base his social organization on the principle of justice does not reveal whether his concept of justice involved a strict or a proportional equality. When, however, Gandhi goes on to suggest that "an ideal social order will be evolved only when the implications of this law (varna) are fully understood,"³¹ it appears that he is suggesting that the needs of the individual are to be considered equally, for according to strict equality distribution based on varna would represent an injustice. Since Gandhi is talking about varna in the traditional sense, as suggested above,³² it would appear that the basic criterion

³¹"An Interview with Mahatma Gandhi"

³²See above, p. 158.

of justice for Gandhi is one of proportional equality, according to which the distribution of goods is determined by the needs of the individual for those goods in order to have an equal opportunity to live the good life.

An objection might be raised to this interpretation in that proportional justice is inconsistent with Gandhi's demands for a classless society. The strength of this objection, which lies in the claim that Gandhi advocates both as a classified society (varna) and a classless society, thus providing for either a strict or a proportional concept of justice (or, because of the inconsistency, evidence for neither), is also its weakness, for Gandhi is talking about two different things when he advocates a classless society and when he advocates social classification in the sense of varna. The absence of class he is advocating is an absence of class in the sense of privileged classes, not the absence of classes in every sense. Gandhi is quite emphatic about the equality of the classes constituting varna, saying, "Arrogation of a superior status by any of the varna is a denial of the law."³³

The very meaning of the name Gandhi gives to his ideal society "sarvodaya," suggests that it is the well being of individuals that is to be considered equally. This, in addition to the fact that Gandhi recognizes broad differences among individuals that can be classified in various ways (constituting varna), makes it clear that his concept of justice requires an equality of distribution according

³³Harijan, July 18, 1936.

to the needs of the individual as measured by the goods requisite for the good life, a concept of justice quite like that of traditional India.

Justice: Aurobindo

Although Aurobindo emphasizes freedom as a basic principle of social organization, there can be no doubt that he also regards justice as a basic principle of social organization, for he says, with respect to the ideal society, that effort will be devoted to "removing every avoidable injustice, to secure for every individual a just and equal chance for self-development and satisfaction to the extent of his powers and in line of his nature."³⁴

This statement reveals that Aurobindo did not regard justice to be a matter of strict equality, but of proportional equality, for he calls attention to the fact that the equality of opportunity is to be determined by considering the powers and the nature of the individual.

But even apart from Aurobindo's explicit statements that the question of justice was basic to the distribution of goods in society, there could be no doubt that according to the social philosophy of Aurobindo justice is a basic principle of social organization for he considers it the function of society to provide for the fulfillment of the human being in every sphere of activity. Furthermore, though he recognizes that individuals can be and are classified according to

³⁴The Ideal of Human Unity, p. 396.

individual differences such that the individual belongs to a race type, class type, physical type, etc.,³⁵ he also recognizes that the individual is something more than his classified type. "The individual is not merely a social unity; . . . he is something in himself; . . ."³⁶ Consequently, since society is to provide for the satisfaction of all the basic needs of man in such a way that the well being of every individual is provided for, it is obvious that there is operating a principle of social justice according to which each individual is to receive an amount of the goods of society, proportionate to his needs, equal to that of every other individual. Aurobindo under scores this when he remarks that "social development and well-being mean the development and well-being of all the individuals in society and not merely a flourishing of the community in the mass which resolves itself really into the splendour and power of one or two classes."³⁷

Though this concept of social justice is similar to the concept of justice in traditional India and in Gandhi, it would appear that Aurobindo would not be satisfied with the distribution of goods according to classes of individuals. Because of individual differences, even within social classes, only injustice can result from the distribution of goods according to classes of individuals. The criterion of justice in Aurobindo is the same as in traditional India inasmuch as the goods distributed must be proportionate to the needs of the recipient in such

³⁵See above, pp. 233-234.

³⁶Human Cycle, p. 28.

³⁷Ibid., p. 28.

a way that there is an equality of need satisfaction among all the members of society, but because of his emphasis on individual differences, he insists that each individual is to be considered as a class unto himself if justice is to be done.

The Concept of Freedom

In addition to the principle of justice a principle of social organization common to the three social philosophies examined it was suggested that the concept of freedom embodies a basic principle of social organization common to these social philosophies. If this suggestion is correct, then it will turn out that significant features of the social organization provided for in these philosophies can plausibly be regarded as attempts to answer the question, "How can the freedom of the individual be achieved?"

The conceptual problem that arises when an attempt is made to argue that freedom is a basic social ideal must be tackled first, in order that it become clear just what is being claimed in the name of freedom. This is essentially a matter of indicating what the claimed freedoms consist in.

Even a minimal statement of what freedom is will have to take into account many aspects and dimensions of freedom. For example, one is not free to take a walk if secured in bonds; one is not free if the laws of his government require him to refrain from doing what he is inclined to do; one is not free to eat if there is no food available; one is not free to enjoy the symphony if beset

with a ragin appetite; one is not free to be charitable if he has well established habits of miserliness; one is not free to keep his money if threatened with a gun; etc. There is no need to expand this list of constraints of freedom which might become indefinitely long. The important task is to indicate the main concepts in the criterion (or set of criteria) used to select items for the list. Perusal of the above list will indicate that the concepts of other, constraint, and ability are the key concepts in the criterion used. One is free if one is able to do what he wishes; but one is not free if his ability is constrained. And the constraint of one's ability to do what he wishes involves the notion of another; the other responsible for the constraint. It goes without saying that the concepts of ability, constraint and other might vary from freedom to freedom, and that it is, therefore, important to indicate the concepts of ability, constraint and other involved in the freedom being discussed. Thus, in the first case given above, the ability is the ability to move one's appendages and the constraint is the physical constraint of the bonds. The person is bound by another; the other referring either to the person or persons responsible for placing one in bonds or the bonds themselves. In either case, the "other" represents a not-self which constrains the self.

In the second example, rules of law might render one unable to amass a fortune by gaining a monopoly over economic goods. The ability rendered ineffective is the ability to conduct a business in a certain way. The constraint is the legal restraint of law. The not-self is the other of the law maker or the law.

In the third case, one's ability to eat is constrained by the unavailability of food. The other involved is the lack of means.

In the fourth case one's ability to enjoy the symphony is constrained by the other of the individual's appetite; hunger furnishes a constraint that renders the individual's ability to enjoy the activity at hand ineffective.

In the fifth example one's ability to give away money is rendered ineffective by the fetters of his personality; his character represents the constraining other in this case.

In the sixth example one is unable to keep his money because of the constraint of the threat. The constraint is, in a way, psychological; the other is a threat of physical force.

These six examples support the position that freedom involves the notions of ability, constraint and other, and they also reveal differences in types of abilities, constraints and others. Since the source of constraint that restricts the individual's freedom lies in the other which is opposed to the self, the types of constraints can be classified according to the other involved; or, what is the same thing, the not-self that constrains the self. The not-self or other might be nature, in the sense of natural forces that render one unable to do certain things, or it might be represented by other persons (which would include groups of person, organized and unorganized, including government), or it might refer to certain aspects of the self considered in opposition to other aspects of the self.

Thus, in the above list of examples, the first and second cases of constriction of freedom involved the constraints of other persons. The persons might be acting as ministers of the government (law-makers and law-enforcers) or they might be acting in a private capacity. The latter would be the case if one were bound by a thief. The sixth example could also be classified under the head of constraint by persons because the source of the constraining fear is the threat of another person. The third example involves the constraint of the other of nature, the constraint having its source in nature's lack of means. The fourth and fifth cases are examples of the constraint of the other constituted by some aspects of the individual contrasted with other aspects of the individual.

With respect to the other of nature, one might wish to be free of the limitations imposed by nature. With respect to the other of persons one might wish to be free of various kinds of violence, in the sense of being secure in his well being (which might involve being free from the restrictions of various social rules). With respect to the other of one's own self, one might wish to be free from the so-called "lower self."

This analysis should indicate that a discussion of freedom need take into account the different kinds of constraints one is to be free from, the various kinds of others, and the things one is free to do in terms of abilities. Depending upon the kinds of abilities, constraints and others emphasized, one might emphasize metaphysical, moral, psychological, physical, political or economic freedom.

Freedom: Traditional India

With respect to the social organization advocated in traditional India, the question is that of which abilities of the individual in society were provided for, and which constraints eliminated by the institutions of varna and āsrāma. An answer to this question will reveal the freedoms that resulted, in theory, from the institutions that provided the basic forms of social organization in traditional India.

According to the varna arrangement each individual will work at the conquest of nature, freeing man from the fetters of nature, and the institution of āsrāma ensures that each individual will spend a portion of his life in such effort. The goods representing freedom from the constraints of nature, such as food, clothing, shelter, transportation, etc., are secured by the varnas working in cooperation with each other to conquer the forces of nature. The vaiśyas, with the assistance of the sūdras, protected by the ksatriyas, are in charge of the actual production of economic goods, but technological theories are contributed by the brāhmana class.

This cooperation between the classes results not only in the freedom that are secured in the conquest of natural forces, but contributes to a freedom from the constraints that might be imposed by unnecessary competition, for the varna arrangement assures that each will be working at that for which he is best suited, and not competing in other fields. Thus, the ksatriya does not compete with the vaiśya, nor the sūdra with the vaiśya, etc.

According to the theory, each does that for which he is best suited, which supposedly is that which he would choose to do, and thus one is free of the drudgery that comes of enforced labor. The argument is that to restrain one from doing that which he is not able to do (for physical and psychological reasons) is not to restrain him at all, and that therefore varna imposes no restraints at all over and above those of the physiological and psychological self. The commercial class, the vaiśyas, are doing what they would rather do when they work at securing freedom from economic wants of all society. The ksatriyas are also doing what they would rather do when they work to secure freedom from invasion and insecurity as they work to administer the government and protect the society from invasion. In similar fashion, the sūdra and brāhmaṇa classes are doing what they choose to do when they work at freeing the society from drudgery and from the constraints of the lower self, respectively. Thus all the classes are free in that they are not constrained to do that which they would not freely choose to do.

The āśrama scheme is also designed to provide for the freedom of the individual in that the states are designed to facilitate achievement of the higher self from the lower self, a psychological-religious freedom. This is done in terms of freeing one from economic wants through the grhastha āśrama, by freeing one from ignorance in the brāhmacharya āśrama, and in the last two stages by freeing one from all social duties whatsoever, in order that the individual be able to concentrate fully on freeing the higher from the lower self. Here

one is free to pursue the highest good. None of the ordinary rules of society, moral or political, apply to one in the last stage; he is entirely free from such social constraints. The reason for this is simply that having perfected himself morally the samnyāsin chooses to do only that which he ought to do, and therefore requires no external rules and perceives no restraints of his freedom.

It appears, therefore, that the institutions of varna and āsrama provide for freedom from nature, freedom from persons, and freedom of the higher from the lower self. Consequently, it is plausible to suggest that freedom of the individual was a basic principle of social organization in traditional India.

Freedom: Gandhi

The question of whether or not freedom was a basic principle of social organization in the social philosophy of Gandhi turns on whether or not basic features of the social organization advocated by him can plausibly be regarded as answers to the question, "How can the freedom of the individual be achieved in society?" In light of the distinctions made concerning freedom from nature, freedom from other persons, and freedom from the lower self, the question is one of whether or not, and to what extent, Gandhi provided for any or all of these freedoms.

To the extent that Gandhi's concern with the organization of the economic forces of society reflects his concern that there should be freedom from want of economic goods there is evidence that freedom from nature was a basic

consideration in shaping his ideal of social organization. And there can be little doubt that the justification of the social organization advocated in the area of production of economic goods lies in the elimination of poverty, which is tantamount to the elimination of economic wants.³⁸

Gandhi explicitly affirms freedom from nature as a goal of society when he asserts that political and economic organization shall conduce to the satisfaction of the material requirements of every member of society,³⁹ for this would have the effect of freeing everyone from economic wants. This would indicate that all of Gandhi's arguments for his economic principles and the features of his advocated social organization concerned with production and distribution of economic goods reflects his concern for the individual's freedom from nature. Gandhi's concern for equitable distribution of economic goods is based on the supposition that in this way conditions will be created such that every individual will be free from nature in the sense of being free from economic wants.

Gandhi's concern for freedom from the constraints of other persons is seen in his efforts to secure equal rights for women, the removal of untouchability, and his suggestion to remove class privileges, for all of these phenomena represent forms of oppression (constraint) by other persons (class oppression). He also urges freedom from the restraints of others when he puts forth the principle of religious toleration.

³⁸See above, pp. 152-154.

³⁹See above, p. 143.

He was no less concerned with the constraints of others when this "other" represented organized social forces such as government and governmental laws, claiming that in the ideal society everyone will be his own ruler, free from the rule of other persons, free from all constraining laws. Realistically, in recognition of the fact that the ideal society is not now attainable, Gandhi recognizes that certain rules of law, externally imposed, are required. But these laws are required not because freedom is unimportant, but because freedom is valued and rules of law are required to protect individual freedom.

Looking not at the function of individual features of Gandhi's social organization now, but at the function of society as a whole, it is obvious that individual freedom is a basic principle of social organization, for the function of society is to assist man in the full realization of his own nature, which realization requires that one be free to act in accord with his true nature. According to Gandhi, this required freedom is of three types, corresponding to the three aspects of society, the economic, the moral and the religious. The goal of economics is economic freedom, freedom from nature. The goal of morality is social freedom or freedom from the constraints of other persons. The goal of religion is psycho-physical freedom or freedom of the higher self from the lower.

That the concept of freedom constituting a basic principle of social organization in Gandhi's social philosophy involves all three types of freedom

can be seen by noting that as argued above,⁴⁰ he assumes that in order to have any significant social freedom man must be free from economic needs. The individual must have social freedom, the freedom to express himself in society, to form associations, to worship, to live his life as he chooses, doing and saying the things he needs to say and do in order to give expression to his true self, for the sake of the freedom of the higher self. And this implies freedom as a basic principle of social organization.

Freedom: Aurobindo

The freedom of the individual is the most basic goal of social organization according to Aurobindo. This freedom is, in the first place, the freedom of the higher self from the lower self. But this freedom is thought to depend upon freedom from the constraints of persons and upon freedom from nature as well. Thus, in Aurobindo's ideal society social organization must eliminate, so far as possible, all three types of constraints discussed above.

Aurobindo is explicit about the ideal at which society is to aim, claiming that when the higher self is freed from the lower, man will exceed his present condition to a greater extent than his present condition exceeds the conditions of the other animals.⁴¹ The social significance of this ideal lies in the fact that Aurobindo regarded the position that it is the function of society to provide the

⁴⁰p. 188.

⁴¹See above, p. 200.

conditions that would make possible this freedom (or "divine perfection") as an implication of this ideal.⁴² It is an implication of the ideal of freedom of the higher self that "the perfect social state must be one in which governmental compulsion is abolished and man is able to live with his fellow men by free agreement and cooperation."⁴³

The subjectivism that Aurobindo advocates as a mode of social living reflects his concern for freedom from nature and from other persons, as he says, with respect to the subjective ideal, that such a society would be "without physical constraint or imposition of irrational authority."⁴⁴

Since the whole of Aurobindo's social philosophy is so obviously based on the principle of freedom it would be foolish to try to prove that this is the case. It is not, however, nearly so obvious that the concepts of freedom involved are similar to the concepts of freedom in Gandhi or traditional India, and it might not be out of place to indicate the kinds of freedom stressed as principles of social organization in Aurobindo's social philosophy.

With respect to freedom from nature, it would appear that Aurobindo emphasized the freedoms that result from the conquest of nature. Despite his overall condemnation of the rational society, he praises its achievements inasmuch as poverty is eliminated, diseases cured, longevity is extended, education secured, and in general, the constraints of brute nature are eliminated,

⁴²See above, p. 201.

⁴³Human Cycle, p. 292.

⁴⁴Human Cycle, p. 103.

saying, "science has thus prepared us for an age of wider and deeper culture."⁴⁵ That he considered economic freedom to be not merely a conditional stepping stone to the ideal society, to be abandoned at a later date, but as an essential condition within the ideal society, is apparent from his statement that only in the ideal society does the "full and well-appointed life," a life including a sufficiency of economic goods, become possible.⁴⁶

In view of the fact that Aurobindo supposed that satisfactory freedom from nature would be achieved only in the ideal society, and that he conceived the ideal society to be impossible so long as there existed governmental compulsion, it would appear that Aurobindo held the freedom from the constraints of other persons to be an even more basic freedom than the freedom from nature. Aurobindo rejected the notion that constraints imposed by government are compatible with ideal social organization. He says, "And the perfect social state must be one in which governmental compulsion must be abolished and man is able to live with his fellow men by free agreement and cooperation."⁴⁷ The emphasis on free agreement and cooperation and a lack of constraint in the form of governmental restrictions leaves no room for doubt that Aurobindo regarded freedom from the constraints of other persons as a basic freedom. His plea for freedom of thought, action and life is a plea for some of the basic freedoms enshrined in modern "rights of man" documents.⁴⁸

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 102.

⁴⁶Human Cycle, p. 104.

⁴⁷Human Cycle, p. 292.

⁴⁸See above, p. 243.

It might appear that in rejecting governmental compulsion Aurobindo is rejecting rules of law, and is advocating a lawless society. This is far from being the case, however, for Aurobindo, rather than denying the need for rules in the ideal society, argues that rules are required to protect and secure man's essential freedoms.⁴⁹ He suggests that society is to be reformed to allow greater individual freedom and asserts that the free individual is a sine qua non of the progressive free society.⁵⁰ The individual is to be free in order to pursue his self-development. But the self-development of any one individual is dependent upon the development of other individuals. Consequently, rules are required to protect the means to self-development, including man's essential freedoms. The reasons that Aurobindo can argue against governmental compulsion in the form of restraining rules of law and at the same time recognize the need for rules to protect the rights of individuals in society is that he recognizes that rules which protect the rights of others restrict and constrain one only to the extent that he would choose to interfere with the rights of others. In a society (ideal) where no one would choose to interfere with the rights of others no one would feel the least constrained by the rules that protect the rights of others. This is the point of Aurobindo's insistence on self-imposed rules.

That other-imposed rules restrict freedom whereas the same rules, self-imposed, do not restrict freedom suggests that the concept of freedom

⁴⁹ See above, pp. 248ff.

⁵⁰ See above, p. 247.

involved is one of self-determination rather than on-determination. That is, Aurobindo does not claim, in the name of freedom, that actions be undetermined, but only that they be self-determined. With respect to the fact of determination of actions there is little to distinguish between the advocate of other-determination and the advocate of self-determination. But with respect to the source of determination there is all the difference in the world. And it is with respect to the source of determination that Aurobindo is arguing for the complete freedom of man.

It appears, therefore, that the concept of freedom embodying a basic principle of social organization in the philosophy of Aurobindo is similar to the principle of freedom in Gandhi and traditional India. In each case it is held that society is to be organized so as to provide for freedom from nature, persons and the lower self. In each case the freedom involves a self-determination rather than an other-determination. And in each case the freedom is found within rules--self-imposed--rather than without rules.

Justice, Freedom and the Basic Ideal

The foregoing analysis would indicate that the forms of social organization advocated in the social philosophies of traditional India, Gandhi and Aurobindo can plausibly be regarded as answers to the questions, "How can justice be secured in society?" and "How can the freedom of the individual be achieved?" Consequently, it is plausible to suggest that justice and freedom were basic

social ideals common to the three philosophies examined. The continuity within these social philosophies is thus seen to extend beyond the basic ideal of self-perfection or self-realization to the ideals of justice and freedom, which operate as basic principles of social organization.

The studies undertaken in chapters II, III, and IV revealed numerous differences within the social philosophies examined so far as specific features of social organization are concerned. No attempt is being made to deny these differences. Their existence is admitted, but the suspicion is entertained that the specific differences are not as philosophically interesting as are the basic similarities which have been discussed in terms of the principle of a basic ideal and social ideals of justice and freedom.

No attempt has been made to point out the difficulties involved in attempting to apply the principles of justice and freedom as they constitute principles of social organization in these philosophies. If application of the principles is to be discussed, then tasks of the first order would include establishing satisfactory means for determining the qualifications of individuals for the goods of society and achieving administrative arrangements that would be constraint-free.

The task undertaken, however, has been to analyze the main concepts basic to the social thought of traditional India, Gandhi and Aurobindo, rather than to point out the differences and similarities of details of social organization, or to consider the applicability of the theories of social organization discussed.

The completion of the task undertaken has revealed basic conceptual similarities within these social philosophies in that the ideals of self-realization or self-perfection, justice and individual freedom are common ideals.

The similarities are greater than might be thought, for in each case the relation between the social ideals of justice and freedom and the basic ideal of self-perfection is similar. In each case not only is the concept of justice approximately the same, but the ideal of justice is seen to be required by the ideal of freedom, for the equity of distribution aimed at is for the sake of the freedom of the individual; freedom from nature and also from other person. And the freedom from nature and from other persons is for the sake of achieving freedom from the lower self, or for attaining self-perfection. To attain the goal embodied in the basic ideal it is held, in each of these philosophies, that the individual must be free to determine himself by utilizing the basic powers that lie within. It is the function of society to assist the individual in realizing these basic powers. But by the same requirement, society must leave the individual free to determine himself according to these deepest powers. Thus, society, according to the social philosophies of traditional India, Gandhi and Aurobindo, must assist man in achieving this highest good by providing the goods required and distributing them justly and by protecting the individual's freedom.

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