THE SACRED AND THE COLONIAL AFTERMATH
To grasp the nature of Indian society reality, one has to understand the dominance of The Sacred in the socio-cultural tradition that goes back to the Vedas, some of the earliest available records of human civilization and culture. Besides the Vedas, the idea of The Sacred was elaborated in the Upanishads, the Brahmanas, the Sutras and the six systems of Indian philosophy and the Puranas. Whether The Sacred is still the centre of the Indian psyche may be questioned but what cannot be denied is its seminal and pervasive influence on it. Most of the translators of the term Dharma have identified it with the term 'religion' in English. However, P.V. Kane in his History of Dharma Shastra has rightly pointed out:

The writer of Dharmastras meant by Dharma not a creed or religion but a mode of life or code of conduct which regulates a man's work and activity as a member of society and as an individual and was intended to bring about the gradual development of man to enable him to reach what was to be whole of human existence. ¹

Dandekar has also expressed a similar opinion:

The concept of dharma is all comprehensive and may be, broadly speaking, said to comprise precepts which aim at securing the material and spiritual sustenance and growth of

In fact in Sanskrit there is no term for the word 'religion' as it is understood in the semantic tradition. The word Dharma is derived from the root Dhri which means to sustain, to uphold, to hold together. To put it in other words Dharma means the principle that holds society firm and is the immanent principle of order in nature. It implies the sustaining power of the ultimate Truth while adharma is the antipodal concept which makes for disquietude, instability and disintegration. The Hindu mind conceived the world as a theatre of strife between dharma and adharma and understood order and stability as the ascendancy of forces which make for dharma. Dharma is essentially the principle and frame which keeps the world from falling apart.

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It may be relevant to point out that according to Mahabharata "Dharma is created for the well being of all creation"; "all that is free from doing harm to any created being is certainly Dharma, for indeed, Dharma is created to keep all creation free from any harm"; "Dharma is so called because it protects all; Dharma preserves all that is created."

Mahabharata, Shantiparva, 109-111.

3. The Hindus allowed Dharma to stand for various things not because of a failure to define it but because of their efforts to name the all embracing principle which could cover all aspects of human life.

Dharma has two aspects, ontological and ethical. The first has to do with the eternal nature of reality, the second with conduct that is to be brought into accord with the nature of things. Unless we know the nature of fire, we remain unsure about how to conduct ourselves with regard to it. Similarly, unless we know the 'ens realissimum' we cannot say whether our resolves and actions have cosmic backing or do violence to the nature of things. The Sruti or Veda, particularly in the Upanisadic elaborations, concerns itself with the fundamental nature of things, while Smritis embody the code or codes of conduct which may be validly derived from our perception of reality or our grasp of the nature of things. The Smritis change from age to age as they have to do with the application of eternal principles (shruti) to temporal contingencies, while Shruti (or the Vedas) remains constant or invariable for the nature of the bedrock reality does not change.

It is significant to note that dharma could change with the changes in the context of time, place and social environment. The fact that dharma changes according to the conditions, demands and exigencies of time and place has been very clearly pointed out by Manu, Bhishma and Parashara. According to Manu:

anye krtayuge dharmastrathyam dvapare yuge. anye kalyyuge nranm yugarupanusratah. yugesvavartamanesu dharma 'pyavartate punah. dharmaesvavartamanesu loko 'pyavartate punah. srutisca saucamacarah pratikalam viviayate nana dharma pravartante manavanamayuge yuge."  

Manu Smriti I:85.
In spite of the all-embracing character of Dharma in its most common connotation, it was limited to a few cardinal precepts, namely the ordering of social life through organisation of four classes within which an individual's life is classified into four definite states — 'ashramas'. This is Varnashram Dharma, i.e., Dharma of the four classes and four stages of life. The institutions of Varna and ashrama, in fact give a concrete social context to the principle of Dharma. The very evolution of the idea of Dharma in a concrete form is charged with social

"One set of dharmas are prescribed for men in the Krita age, a different one in the Treta and in the Dvapara and (again) another (set) in the Kaliyuga according to respective yugas. With the change of times, Dharma also changes, with the change of Dharma people also change. In every age the norms and ways of living keep changing. Therefore there are different dharmas for human beings in different ages.

5"If Caturvarnya conceives society as an ordered system of interacting classes, Caturasramya conceives the life of the individual as an ordered succession of stages.... In Caturasramya the traditional conception of life is revealed in greater purity than in Caturvarnya and represents a formulation of perennial value. The austere ideal of studentship, the stress laid on the householder's life as essentially one of social service supporting other classes, stages and beings and forging a link between past and future generations, the ideal of voluntary retirement from that of social service, and finally the cultivation of complete detachment from material and egoistic social life and preparation for the final journey in old age, represent a necessary succession of attitudes if Pravritti (attachment) and Nivritti (detachment) are to be adequately woven together in the pattern of life."

The feature of Indian society that strikes an alien observer as distinctive of it is not the original ideal of caturvarnya and caturashramya as principles of social dynamics and cohesion but its perversions that have vitiated the system with the passage of time. As an ideal caturvarnya and caturashramya was believed to represent society as the division and correlation of functions which were assigned to individuals according to their aptitudes and training, and graded according to a hierarchy of values which ranged all the way from the cultivation of spiritual knowledge through the maintenance of social and legal order to the promotion of economic security and well-being. The fact of social change was recognised, as pointed out earlier, by distinguishing between shruti and smriti. This is well-expressed by a saying in Sanskrit: "smriti changes while shruti remains". The same insight into human social life was indicated by emphasising on the two aspects of Dharma, Snatana Dharma which is universal and eternal and Yuga Dharma which is valid only for a specific age. Radhakrishnan has repeatedly drawn attention in his various writings to the fact that commentaries on Dharma Shastras have continually incorporated a number of changes over the last two thousand years. According to him the social flexibility has been the chief characteristic of Hindu Dharma. This distinction between Snatana and Yuga Dharma has very interesting
consequences. For the Hindu, whatever changes that took place in society involved only the revision of Yuga Dharma without in any way changing the Snatana Dharma.

The postulates of Snatana Dharma have inspired the Indian Psyche to view the realm of the practical (Vyavharik) as distinct from and subordinate to the realm of the ultimate (Parmarthik). The Hindu tradition has constantly emphasised that it is only the universal, eternal and infinite spirit which is immortal and only that demands unconditional dedication. Thus to be attached or dedicated to the eternal is to be detached from the contingent or the temporal. What is supposed to guarantee the enduring character of the Hindu social order is its faith, explicit or implicit, in the basic principles embodied in the Shruti.

It is the authority of the Shruti that is absolute while that of Smriti is relative and contextual. It is for this reason that Smritis have changed from time to time and context to context and yet Hinduism continues to be identified with Snatana Dharma.

One of the most important concepts in Rigveda is the concept of Rta. According to Purani:

"In the RigVeda, rta is the right order of the universe. It stands for both the satya or the truth of things as well as the dharma or the law of evolution. Dharma formed from the root dhr, to hold, means that which holds a thing and maintains it in being. Every form of life, every group of men has its dharma, which is the law of its being. Dharma or virtue is conformity with
Hitam comes from the verb "ritum" to move", "to act". It means, therefore, "Truth of movement" or "Movement towards Truth" or "Truth of action". It is not merely a moral as some have interpreted it; it is the power of self-existent-Truth working out its purpose or end spontaneously. The significance of Hitam is seen in the word "Ritu", the inevitable but regular and spontaneous succession of Time. It has come to mean "Seasons". Ritam can therefore mean the omnipotence of the Divine working out its purpose in the cosmos; it is the dynamic aspect of the Truth. It is the action of a Supreme knowledge that determines the functions of things and beings, yathatathyaatobhan vyadachet, "which lays down -- determines -- purposes and ends as they should be" from years sempiternal.7

the truth of things; adharma or vice is opposition to it. Moral evil is disharmony with the true which encompasses and controls the world."  

Radhakrishnan, S; The Hindu View of Life, p. 56.  

7 Purani, a.s.; Studies In Vedic Interpretation, pp. 50-51.  

It would not be out of place here to refer to the original Vedic Suktes which endorse the interpretation stated above.

rtasya hi surudhah santi purvir
rtasya chitivrajinani hanti....
rtena dirghamisnanta prksa
rtena gava rtama vivesuh.  

(Rg. 4.23.6-9).

Eternal law hath varied food that strengthens, 
thought of eternal law removes transgressions.  

Firm seated are Eternal laws foundations; in its fair form are many splendid beauties.  

(Griffith's Translation).

rtam ca satyam caabhiadhattapaso chyajayata.  

(Rg. 10.190.1).

From Fervor kindled to its height 
Eternal law and Truth were born. 

(Griffith's Translation).
Thus *Rta* is seen as the sustaining law, the dynamic principle and the moral foundation of cosmic life; and stands both for order and harmony. The concepts of *Dharma* and *Karma* are rooted in the concept of *Rita*. While *Dharma* stands for the fundamental order in social and moral affairs, the concept of *Karma* implies that every action will inevitably lead to its own consequences.

The foremost peculiarity of *The Sacred* is that it covers the entire gamut of man's life in the context of the creation-principle operating in the cosmos. The process of creation is visualised as a perpetual interaction between the *Tamasik*, the *Rajsik* and *Sattvik* forces. The Indian mind was never oblivious of the fact that human nature is multi-dimensional, from the biological to the spiritual, seeking self-fulfilment at each level. Consequently the range of values extends from biological self-preservation to spiritual self-realisation which is possible only through a recognition of and being in harmony with the creation-principle. The Indian mind kept this fact in view that some realization are only accidental (*Upadhi*); they contain inherent urge for self-transcendence. Therefore a pure

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8 *Upadhi* is a Vedantic term approximately equivalent to accidental as distinguished from essential.
self-experience involves a dialectical process of rising above the realization of lower self in terms of finite accidents.

Self-realisation in the Hindu tradition means transcendence of the three Gunas, Sattva, Rajas and Tamas which in their unremitting interaction weave the fabric of life. These three *guna* embrace the totality of psychic functions and invest the world with the shape of a psychic matrix. But how to vouch for the authenticity of their action? All objective manifestations (and this is what the action of the *guna* is supposed to mean) implies a subject to whom the cosmic flux is a presentation. Without presupposing this subject who presides over the cosmic ongoings and bears witness to their derivative status, the immensities of time and space will collapse into nothing. It is this subject that is called self. This subject cannot be confused with the empirical self with a dated biography who is the son of so and so and who met with such and such experiences in life for this empirical self is part of the objective order and is thus a presentation to the real self who is to be realised as the spirit that is at the heart of the cosmic agitation and lends significance or value as well as being to it as its witness.

In order to grasp the spirit of Indian culture one will have to identify and understand the working
of ideal processes of human self-realization in the social context and the process of transformation of the self, of the development of attitudes and the cherishing of values which foster the integration of the individual and society and not merely his adaptation to it. Culture consists in value-seeking and value-affirming and self-transforming consciousness. Unity of a culture, in the Indian context, is not the unity of an objective system but the unity of self-consciousness.  

Whether it is the life of an individual or that of a society, it is assumed that the course of cosmic evolution corresponds to the creation-principle. The dynamics of creation, which is initiated through the penetration of Purusa (pure-consciousness) into Prakriti (primordial matter), involves a movement from condition

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The true identity of a society must be sought in terms of its self-consciousness or culture at the heart of which lies a distinctive value-experience. This basic value-experience is nothing except a mode of human self-awareness, for value is nothing except the self, revealed or felt to be revealed as a content of experience. On this foundational experience is reared the underlying world-view of the culture with its multiform expressions in institutions, beliefs and symbols. The continued vitality of the culture, thus, depends on the continuity of its underlying communication of value which is the heart of tradition."

of Tamas to a state of Sattva. The process of creation inalienably involves the divine and the human. The sacrifice of the Adi Purusa (the primordial man) leads to the creation of the universe. It is in and through yajna and sacrifice that the divine manifests itself. Yajna as oblation and sacrifice to the gods permeates the entire gamut of a Hindu's existence, from birth to the last rites. Yajna involves tara and dana which are the stages in the process of creation in nature as well.

10 S.N. Dasgupta (in History of Indian Philosophy, Vol. 1, p. 242) translates Tamas as a mass stuff or the fact of obstruction, Rajas as energy stuff and Sattva as intelligence stuff. About the interaction of forces of Tamas, Rajas and Sattva he says:

"An infinite number of subtle substances which agree in certain characteristics of self, shining or plasticity are called the Sattva Gunas and those which behave as unity of activity are called the Rajogunna and those which behave as factors of obstruction, mass or materiality are called Tamogunna. These subtle gunna substances are united in different proportions and as a result of this different substances with different qualities come into being. Though attached to one another in different proportions they mutually act and react upon one another, and thus of their combined resultant produce new character, qualities and substances." Ibid. p. 242.

The above remarks of Dasgupta seem to be a fair account of sankhyakarika, 12, 13, which are quoted below:

prityapriti visadatmakah
prakasa pravritti niyamarthah
anonyachchavasraya janana mithuna
pravrtyasca gunah karika. 12.

Satvarn laghu prakasakam istam,
upastamohakam catam ca rajah,
guru varanakam eva tamah,
pradipavaccarthato vrtthih.

Karika, 13.
as in the life of man. The four *ashramas* and the four *varnas*, in fact, involve various forms of *tapa* and *dana*. No crucial ceremony from birth to death, initiation, marriage, renunciation and even the last rites, is complete without *yajna* which signifies that the divine presence is indispensable for human projects and purposes.

The Vedic hymns give us a glimpse of the earlier Vedic view regarding the ultimate purpose of human

\[ Yajno
danam
tapascaiva
davanani
tamisinam. \]

_Bhagvad Gita_ XVIII.5.

"*Yajna*, *tapa* and *dana* are purificatory for human beings."

\[ trayo
dharma
skandha
dsayno\'dhyanam
danam
ti. \]

_Chandogya_ 2-23-1.

"*Yajna*, *dhyana* and *dana* are three dimensions of _Dharma_."

In this context it may be pointed out that _yajna_ means _oblation, sacrifice or offering_ to the gods to sustain them in their task of maintaining the world and directing its manifold generative activities.

_Tapa_ means _ascetic practices_ in order to generate potential power. To the popular mind _tapa_ means a _spiritual power_ by which death can be overcome.

_Dana_ is not _charity_ but a _form of giving_ enjoined upon all human beings to participate in the sustenance of the universe.

_Dhyana_ (meditation) is a means of attaining spiritual power.
existence. The hymns point out that the world is governed by the gods who created it. They are the guardians of Rta and see to it that man leads a life of righteousness in accordance with it. The dominance of the Satvik over Rajisik and Tamsik is seen as riddled with conflicts and antagonisms. However these gunnas are not seen as counterposed against one another but are regarded as constitutive of the process of cosmic evolution itself. The creation manifests itself through Tapa, Yajna, Dana and so is the course of an individual existence. From the status of a mere biological organism, one becomes human through a process of Shuddhikaran (refinement) i.e. acquiring qualities of human beings — a movement from the Tamsik to the Satvik. Initially a biological organism, man is brought up in a family that belongs to a social group and imbibes its customs, rules and values, and is expected to develop into a human person who is rational and universalistic in outlook. The individual must develop not only as a citizen of the world but also realize his identity with the universe as a whole. This is the ultimate aim of Dharma.

Varnashram Dharma is so organized that an individual could be equipped to fulfill his intellectual, familial, and cosmic obligations which are known as Rishi Ash, Pittri Ash, and Dev Ash, respectively. The Rishi Ash
is the obligation one owes to the sages who built up the heritage. Hishi Rna is discharged by studying assimilating and advancing the knowledge accumulated through the ages. Pittri Rna is the obligation one owes to ones ancestors in order that the human race may survive and grow; Pittri Rna is discharged by marrying, bringing up children and to ensure that they are worthy of ancestral heritage. Finally there is the Dev Rna, the obligation one owes to the universe as a whole. This obligation is discharged in the last two stages of life namely the Vanaprastha and Sanyasa. Thus different stages of life provide the training for the individual to grow from a bare biological organism into a sage with his anchorage into the eternal, like the river which flows into the sea, loses its name and form to become one with it.

12 "The aim of the Sanyasin is not to free himself from the cares of outward life, but to attain a state of spiritual freedom when he is not tempted by riches or honour, and is not elated by success or depressed by failure. He develops a spirit of equanimity and so 'bears patiently improper words and does not insult anyone, he does not hate anyone for the sake of his physical body'. These free men are solitary souls who have not any personal attachments or private ambitions, but embody in their own spirit the freedom of the world. They take on the wideness of the whole earth, dwell in love and walk in righteousness."

Rachakrishnan, S.; The Hindu View of Life, pp. 64-65.
The Hindu tradition regards the upanayana samskara as the second birth of man; prior to it he is merely regarded as nature-born and as good as a Shudra. It is with upanayana that man steps into the realm of culture and becomes Dvij, the twice born, for with it he enters the realm of responsibilities, duties, aspirations and strivings. The four stages of individual life enunciated in four Ashramas and the division of society in four varnas mark the stages of the individual and social transition from Tamas to Sattva.

In order to recognize the essential nature of the reality one has to acquit oneself of Rishi Rna, Pittri Rna, Dev Rna and this involves attuning oneself to the Creation-principle. But for this recognition, human being qua individual (in the western sense of the term) cannot rise above the level of an acquisitive creature. In the Indian context, The Sacred enjoins upon the individual the obligations and the rights in terms of the roles one has to perform. Since the individual is always hung on to the collectivity and is defined in terms of his membership and obligations towards the family, the group, the society and the cosmos, the

\[13\] The Grihya Sutras provide a detailed description of the rituals to be performed at the upanayana ceremony and point out that prior to this ceremony one is no better than a Sudra.
self-realization is possible only in so far as one subordinates oneself to the role and position which one occupies in society. Looking upon the universe as a family and family as a universe is one of the highest Hindu ideal.

Thus it can be seen that The Sacred posits a theory of creation, according to which individual is a member, a constituent of the whole creation and evolution of the individual is the successive unfolding of the organic relationships of the individual with the cosmos. From a mere biological organism like that of an animal, it is an evolution into higher forms of consciousness—a process of becoming human in a social and cultural sense. Becoming human is an achievement. An individual achieves his integrity only in and through participating in the immediate familial and the ultimate cosmic obligations. So encompassing is the range of The Sacred that it expounds the unifying law of the personal, the social and the cosmic level of existence.

The Hindu world-view may seem to be anti-materialistic, anti-historical, anti-rational, anti-individualistic and anti-utilitarian to the western mind, but for an insider it means an integrated view of man, society and cosmos. The various levels of existence are seen not as opposed to or antithetical to each other but
as organically related in terms of their striving to evolve into higher levels of consciousness. The allegation that Hinduism is other-worldly and encourages mystical withdrawal from life, rests upon a misunderstanding of Hinduism, for in the Hindu society, every worldly activity is performed under the auspices of The Sacred. In this regard Nirad C. Chaudhary contends:

For the Hindus their religion was a means of living in the world and making their lives successful, happy and even sanctified, that is to say, living under the Hindu form of grace.¹⁴

He argues that,

In the ultimate analysis, Hindu spirituality is interwoven with the cosmos. It is the old Guard of the world, always held in reserve to be launched into action when a serious crisis arises which cannot be met with any mode of rational action open to man, or, to vary the metaphor, in his spiritual activities the Hindu is like the dynamo which generates electricity, and in his worldly life the motor which expends it. Hindu spirituality and Hindu phenomenal existence are inseparable. They stand together.¹⁵

The worldliness of Hindus did not make the Hindus irreligious in the modern sense, because at the same time they sanctified worldly prosperity in a very striking way.

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¹⁴ Chaudhury Nirad C. Hinduism a Religion to Live By, p. 186.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 315.
There are two very curious facts about this sanctification. In the first place, Hindus had no word for holiness. Yet the notion of the sacred or sanctified is present in every act of Hindu life. Conception, birth, eating, dressing, going on a journey, building a house, all have to be sanctified. In short it might be said that Hinduism, in spite of its worldliness has not merely seven sacraments like the Roman church but a whole series of them. Secondly, the gods through whose cults worldly life is sanctified have no sanctity by themselves. As seen in Hindu theogony and mythology they are all human beings on a heroic scale, with all the human failing in godly measure and also power, but no virtue. It is only when they are all brought into relationship with man through the cults which are meant to sanctify worldly life, that they acquire sanctity or holiness, that is, godliness in the religious sense.16

As Mirad C. Chaudhuri points out, the reciprocal dependence of the human and divine in The Sacred is deliberately underscored. The other-worldliness of Hinduism is also refuted by the very premise of Hinduism that the world is a manifestation of Brahman. When Sankara asserts that Brahman alone is real, what he is emphasising is the illusory character of the phenomenal world and the false perspectives of apprehending reality in its misleading countenances, not apprehending it in its true character/ i.e. / as a manifestation of Brahman. The Upanisadic sages held that world is Brahman.

16 Ibid., pp. 20-21.
The Vaisnavas consider the world as an emanation of Visnu the Shaktas as manifestation of Shakti /i.e./ The Goddess, and the Shaivites as Shivapind (the body of Shiva). The emphasis on unreality is only to characterise the limitations of opaque, fragmentary and object-ridden perception of the world not the world itself. That the world is Maya does not mean that the world is an illusion -- the illusion lies merely in one's point of view. We think that shapes and structures, things and events, are realities of nature rather than visualising them as shaped by concepts of our measuring and categorising minds. Maya is the illusion of taking these concepts for reality, of confusing the map with the territory. For a Hindu, all forms are relative, fluid and everchanging Maya. The world of Maya changes continuously because the divine lila is a rhythmic dynamic play. Karma is the active principle of that play -- the total universe in action.

The western mind fails to appreciate the meaning of Karma and Maya for the western world-view is marked by a split between fact and value, the sacred and the secular, and the alleged autonomy of the each realm. As long as one's view of the world is fragmented, as long as one thinks that one is separate from and is in confrontation with one's environment one is under
the spell of *Māya* and is bound by *Karma*. To be free from the spell of *Māya* is to break the bonds of *Karma*, to realise that all the phenomenon which we perceive with our senses *is* part of the same reality. It means to experience concretely and personally that everything including one's own-self in *Brahman*. This experience is *Moksha* or liberation. In the Indian tradition, Sacred is not characterised by the transcendental as opposed to the contingent but by the integration and mutual reinforcement of the both as constitutive elements. The metaphysics of the Sacred inextricably embraces the ultimate and immediate concerns and activities of every individual.

The Hindu tradition holds that there are innumerable ways of achieving *Moksha*. The tradition does not expect its followers to approach *Brahman* in a singular way and therefore provides alternative conceptual frameworks, different rituals and exercises for people at different levels of awareness. The contradictory aspects or characteristics of these concepts and practices

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17 "All action takes place in time by the interwelling of the forces of nature but the man lost in selfish delusion thinks that he himself is the actor. But the man who knows the relationship between the forces of nature and action sees how some forces of nature work upon other forces of nature and becomes not their slave."

do not perturb a Hindu for he knows that Brahman, the ultimate reality is beyond concepts and images, it is this awareness which makes a Hindu recognise that any depiction of the socio-human reality in terms of biology, psychology, politics and sociology can be no more than a partial and fragmented description, lacking a comprehensive perception of the human reality. As contrasted against a fragmented view of human situation the symbolic imagination of the Hindu tradition is characterized by a comprehensive vision which does not relinquish one level of meaning for another. The spiritual does not supersede the earthly; the tangible and the intangible, the earthly and the spiritual are not separated but held tenaciously together.

So regular is the traffic between the contingent and the transcendental that one coalesces and overlaps into the other. Unlike the western tradition the particular and the universal, the relative and the absolute, the specific and the general, the accidental and the essential are not seen as antithetical and opposed to each other but as integrally related to each other.

18 "As a man when in the embrace of a beloved wife knows nothing within or without, so this person when in the embrace of the intelligent soul knows nothing within or without."

Brihad Aranyak Upanishad, 4.3.21.
For this integral superphenomenonal Hindu approach to reality, Nirad C. Chaudhuri finds evidence in the findings of modern physics:

"... (They) also formulated the corollary that phenomenon were only particular parts of a general and absolute reality. The idea, arrived at so early in the history of human civilization was akin to that which has been discovered by modern physics. By its adoption they avoided the setting up of an unresolvable antithesis and conflict between an absolute and eternal reality and transient cosmic phenomenon accessible to senses."19

In the platonic tradition, the phenomenon is merely a shadow, an appearance, a fantasy thrice removed from reality that belongs to the realm of essence. The materialist empiricist tradition treats the contingent, the phenomenal as the real and seeks to explain its genesis in terms of the cause-effect determination. In the context of the sacred, the contingent and the transcendental are so close to each other that transition from one to the other is not a leap, a break or a switch over from one order of reality to another but merely a recognition that a coin has more than one side. For the Indian mind, therefore, there is no opposition between the temporal and the eternal, the historical and the absolute, The Sacred and the secular, for the secular always operates

within the realm of The Sacred. It would be a fond hope to expect that the dualism between The Sacred and the secular that has been central to the post-renaissance tradition can ever help us as a category of analysis or value to understand the Indian ethos. This kind of split is alien to the Indian psyche. In the ancient Indian tradition the question of split, of dualism and of distinction between The Sacred and the secular could not have arisen for in spite of the supremacy of The Sacred on the entire realm of human activity, India did not have any such institution which could be considered as an exact counterpart of the organised church of the medieval Europe. In the west/religion has meant adherence to organised or institutionalized dogma and thus conformity to the group. Since there has been no institutional hegemony of religion in India as in the west, the split between the religion and the state, the sacred and the secular has remained a chimera. The kind of split that characterizes the history of western tradition after renaissance would involve knocking out of the Indian sensibility what has seeped into it. Even if there were popular movements against the Brahmanic supremacy in the Buddhism and Jainism before the arrival of Islamic culture in India, these revolts did not challenge the basic Hindu world-view. They were at best reformist campaigns of
socio cultural character. Even the modern reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Vidya Sagar, Vivekananda, Dayanand Sarasvati, Rabindranath Tagore, Gandhi and Aurobindo only highlighted different features of the tradition without in any way restructuring its basic framework. It may be true that the tradition which has been portrayed very briefly here does not seem to be alive and operative in the contemporary Indian socio political context. But the deep inbuilt structures of the tradition are so firm, in subtle and surreptitious ways, that at the level of collective subconscious it continues to inform the very thinking and feeling patterns of the Indian mind.

The ideas of western culture were transported to India along with the British imperialism and almost foisted on it through the colonial education system which was planted in the nineteenth century and continues to function and flourish even after the independence. It was but natural that the products of the new education system should have been alienated and uprooted from their tradition. As D.P. Mukerji has pointed out:

"One concrete result of the intimacy of British rule, however, has been the emergency of a spurious middle class - the 'bhadraloks' who do not play any truly historical part in the socio-economic evolution of the country, remains distant from the rest of the people in professional isolation or the rent receivers, and are divorced from the realities of social and economical life."
Their loyalties to India culture vary from rectitude to reform. Very few of them are social revolutionaries, even as the medieval mystics were. The strangeness of their reformism consists in their ideological progressiveness and their practical conformity. Their ignorance of the background of Indian culture is profound. The character of the Hindu revival or of anglo-Indian culture is conditioned by the unrootedness of this new elite, their increasing social distance from the rest of the community, and the consequent unreality of their position. Their pride in culture is in inverse proportion to its lack of social content. Rather did it consist in giving shape to the circumstances which were created by the blocking of the natural process by British pressure. Through his efforts the new middle class acquired self-confidence and a status within the ambit of the foreign rule. In other words, it converted necessity into a virtue.20

Not only that an alien cultural tradition was inducted through the colonial educational system, even the awareness of Indian tradition was also mediated through the western conceptual schemes.

The British imperialism in India operated not only on a political and economic plane but also brought a set of values and a sensibility which were contrary to the Indian way of looking at nature and life. These values were a byproduct of (and related to) a life-style fostered in the Industrial societies of Europe that were

20Mukerji, Dhurjati Prasad; Sociology of Indian Culture, pp. 24-25.
being guided by the aim of controlling nature. It is needless to point out that before the European nations started enslaving the Afro-Asian and Latin-American countries, they had started the venture of mastering nature. For the European mind, controlling and harnessing nature was the ultimate aim of progress, civilisation and modernisation. The secularisation of nature and discovery of nature as conglomeration of mechanical forces, as object of exploitation, was contrary to the Indian view in which nature has always been regarded as sacred in such a way that the Indian would solicit from nature images and intimations of his real self and the ultimate reality. Thus, where modernisation in the West had an inner history and grew out of tradition through a process of discovery, criticism and adaptation to the new circumstance, it came to India as a readymade thing imposed by the West like many other things which were totally alien to the tradition and threatened to displace it. In such circumstances, it was natural that there was bound to be a conflict or tension between the Western outlook and the Indian sensibility.²¹ In the nineteenth

²¹"Under the British rule, the Indian society is no longer ideational in the true sense of the term. If it still retains a religious ideology, it is because of inertia or culture-lag. The reasons why political,
century, this possibility of conflict was recognised by some of the thinkers and, according to the label given by the Britishers, this era is known as the Bengal renaissance. It is surprising that this recognition did not lead to a resistance and/or combat against the Western sensibility by way of reformulation and reconsideration of the Indian tradition under the pressure of the Western challenge. 22

Economic and social movements still owe allegiance to religious ideas are: (i) the peculiar position of the middle class which feels a sense of denial and disillusionment... (ii) the insufficiency of any other indigenous substitute for the older culture except nationalism which therefore, must needs bear the strain of adjustment to new situations and fill the void. Our culture today is thus a mechanical mixture of two incompatible elements. Hence it is not stable. The large number of great men that it has thrown up is more like the series of explosions which an unstable chemical compound makes than the marked stages in the growth of an organism. The Indian mysticism of the twentieth century has not percolated through the outer rinds of the Indian society. Thus also is it that recent Indian contributions to philosophy are mainly historical and usually couched in Western terms, and that the Indian youth betrays stupendous ignorance of Indian culture and a very healthy aversion from the advertised virtues of the idealism of Indian philosophy."

Ibid., pp. 29-30.

22"What is most interesting to students of English literature is that while the Victorian writers of prose and verse floundered in England itself in the presence of 'pulverising' (the word is Vivekananda's) attacks of modern science, the Indians found the spirit of the new age was in complete consonance with the essential teaching of the Upanishads. What we need to appreciate is, that while the sages of the Upanishads had found it possible to experience the still-centre in
The problem before the nineteenth century intellectuals was whether they should mould themselves in the image of the Western historical man or reject this alternative and recast the culture and the life pattern of the tradition and confront the West at their own terms. However, the colonial masters formulated the problem in such a shrewd way that they posed it as an absolute choice between modernisation (i.e. westernisation) and revivalism (i.e. a blind adherence to the effete tradition).

The British imperialists could have imposed their life style on the Indians either through coercion or through subtly maneuvering their social and civil institutions. They chose the later path and brought into existence a new educated elite that constituted the new middle class which is a synthesis byproduct of the very midst of the raging storm, the West with its commitment to a life of 'action', came to identify action with the happenings of the external world, almost to the neglect, even exclusion, of that from which all action must issue forth and in which all action must find its supreme fulfilment. As though they perceived the dichotomy and were disturbed by it, the Indians sought to marry the two mentalities -- of the still-centre and the storm, the Apollonian and the Dionysian, the sattvik and the rajasik, the swan and the eagle, and produce a conflagration. Vivekananda says to his disciples: 'Now be lost in deep meditation, now go and till the land; now expound the intricacies of the sastras, now go and sell the produce in the market'.

the Indian and the Western traditions. As symptomatic of the colonial mentality, this elite seeks distinction in assiduously emulating the master-culture. In "The wretched of the Earth" Fanon has struck a penetrating analysis of the colonial consciousness in general and colonial intelligentsia in particular. As the imperialists masters are not content with exploitation of the riches of the colonies, they also destroy their traditional cultures. Consequently the colonial intelligentsia is bred on a borrowed self-image a borrowed world-view and borrowed aesthetic which is at best a poor imitation of the sensibility and culture of the colonial master. The colonial intelligentsia is alienated from the natives and at the same time

23 "The west has changed the axis of Indian culture as it has moved so far. This has been done, among other ways, by the creation of a new class, 'the middle class', who differ from the industrial bourgeoisie by being non-productive, and from the earlier Indian bourgeoisie by being 'non-commercial'. They belong to the limited number of liberal professions thrown open to the English educated Indians by the British government. The complaint of these gentlemen was chiefly centred in the limited opportunities for higher government services, and in trade and commerce."

Mukerji, D.P., 'Intellectuals in India' in Diversities, p. 244.

24 "Colonialism is not simply content to impose its rule upon the present and the future of a dominated country. Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it."

Fanon Frantz: The Wretched of The Earth, p. 169.
desperately aspires for a recognition from the Masters\textsuperscript{25} which is conceded only to those who become its collaborators and abettors. The movement for national independence in India did not take a militant direction as it happened in Africa,\textsuperscript{26} and many third-world countries... because it was dominated by a middle class which simply wanted to share the spoils through transfer of power. Consequently, the kind of possibilities of Guilt Combat and resistance Fanon speaks of in the Algerian and African context were not operative in India.\textsuperscript{27} Even though the struggle for

\textsuperscript{25}In the first phase, the native intellectual gives proof that he has assimilated the culture of the occupying power. His writings correspond point by point with those of his opposite numbers in the mother country. His inspiration is European and we can easily link up these works with definite trends in the literature of the mother country. This is the period of unqualified assimilation.\textsuperscript{\textit{Ibid.}, pp.178-79.}

\textsuperscript{26}"In under-developed countries the preceding generations have both resisted the work of erosion carried on by colonialism and also helped on the maturing of the struggles of today." \textsuperscript{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 166.}

\textsuperscript{27}"What are the relations between the struggle - whether political or military - and culture? Is there a suspension of culture during the conflict? Is the national struggle an expression of a culture? Finally, ought one to say that the battle for freedom however fertile a posteriori with regard to culture, is in itself a negation of culture? In short is the struggle for liberation a cultural phenomenon or not? \textsuperscript{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 197.}
Independence in India derived its inspiration, to an extent, from Hindu tradition for mobilising the consciousness of the people and it did succeed in stirring the people to participate in the independence struggle yet it did not forge any lasting link between the political struggle and the cultural consciousness. On the other hand the make-believe of a synthetic culture which was generated by the British system of education in India continues to have its hold, in fact has been fortified after independence. Since there was never an organised mass movement at the national level in the struggle for independence, the issue of aligning with the masses for the Indian intelligentsia never acquired any urgency, for the Indian leadership took recourse to the sacred tradition and concepts like Swarajya, Ramrajya, Satyagraha were invoked to justify the demand for independence.

28 "The Congress movement treated the mass as an addendum and succeeded in converting it into a crowd, and through the crowd it wanted to reach out to the people. This approach was inevitable, but it has left its legacy in certain cultural distempers. Thus it is that the patriotic literature of this period is loud with the rhetoric of hustings. It is not firmly grounded upon the interests of the people which alone can give content and stability to the national movement." (emphasis added).

Mukerji, D.P., 'Notes On Indian Culture' in Diversities, pp. 187-88.
Despite the cultural invocations in the struggle for independence, the process of emasculation of the Indian culture continued unabated. The imperialists succeeded, nevertheless, in creating in the Indian mind a sense of inferiority, ignorance and belief that western culture was more advanced and enlightened and thus it was in the fitness of things to be ruled by the west. The natives could not suspect that the ways (they still do not) in which the imperialists discovered invented and 'patronised' the culture of the colonised in order to falsify it. The British penetration into the Indian society was so thorough and subtle that it was not easy for the Indians to perceive the gradual erosion of their cultural identity. The complete cultural takeover, a total surrender of the native to the master culture/is all the more glaring in view of the fact that India had a tradition which was

29 "Every colonized people -- in other words, every people in whose soul an inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality-finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes whiter as he renounces his blackness, his jungle."

was more comprehensive and no less tenable than the one to which they surrendered.30

The introduction of British education made deep inroads into the Indian psyche exposing it to an altogether different mode of thinking, feeling and living. Instilling a sense of inferiority in the Indian mind about their culture, their past and their race was an insidious tactic of undermining the confidence of the colonized in themselves.31 It is a fact of Indian history that its exposure to the Western culture with its tradition of science, secularism, utilitarianism, and individualism was occasioned by the colonial domination. The projection of the Western culture as an advanced culture was a subtle strategy on the part of the colonialist to subvert the

30"The African writer was faced with a more formidable task; there were no Vedas and upanisads, neither the great epics nor the bright epochs of history which he could invoke."


31"On the unconscious plane, colonialism therefore did not seek to be considered by the native as a gentle, loving mother who protects her child from a hostile environment, but rather as a mother who unceasingly restrains her fundamentally perverse offspring from managing to commit suicide and from giving free rein to its evil instincts. The colonial mother protects her child from itself, from its ego, and from its physiology, its biology and its own unhappiness which is its every essence."

Fanon, Frantz; The Wretched of The Earth, pp. 169-70.
Indian culture and tradition. The most interesting aspect of this cultural invasion is that even the awareness of the Indian cultural tradition for a contemporary Indian is filtered through the scholarship that has been expounded and fabricated by the master-culture. Consequently, we do not have a sense of our tradition apart from how it has been discovered, invented and projected by the Western scholarship. The Indian intelligentsia trained in the western tradition have been more keen to see it in contrast to the western tradition rather than define and explicate it in its own terms. There is an unwitting superimposition of the western conceptual categories in the interpretation and exposition of the Hindu tradition. The confusions and distortions generated as a result of such an exercise are rampant in the contemporary Indian thinking. Indo-Anglian writers being no exception to it. The state of confusion is so extensive that Indian intellectual is hardly in a

32. The European scholars assert that India had never possessed any sense of history, not even 'history'. The Indian conception of history, however, was not linear, positivistic, and progressive. It was not to be 'recorded', but to be stamped on the heart of the people so that their daily conduct bore the mark of ideals as represented by the heroes and heroines of legends and epics."

Mukerji, D.P., 'Western Influence On Indian Culture', in Diversities, p. 173.
position to identify much less to break through the state of contemporary cultural stalemate in India.

It would have been expected that during the struggle for Independence, some attempts should have been made towards articulating and visualizing alternative social structures and cultural values relevant to the Indian condition. Except for Mahatma Gandhi, one does not find any serious attempt in this direction. Even in case of the Mahatma, the tendency was to revive and glorify the past rather than come to terms with the contemporary socio-political and economic realities. In much of the Indian thinking, one discerns either an orthodox dogmatic attitude towards the Indian tradition and a rejection of the west or a complete rejection of the Indian tradition and a blind acceptance of the liberal or Marxist ideology, which have come from the west. The rigid orthodoxy and dogma betrays itself in uncritical and sometimes even seemingly critical affirmation of the tradition. It is relevant to mention here that exposition of a tradition which has been attempted above should not be seen as an acceptance of it. To speak of a tradition is not to deny the plurality of perspectives but only to point out the chief elements which are constitutive of the dominant tradition and to distangle it from others which are merely peripheral to it.
In the contemporary context, there are alternative ways in which one may attempt to come to terms with one's situation and one's place in it. The search for a cultural identity may involve either a critical appraisal of the two conflicting traditions and transcendence from both, or an uncritical rejection of one and the equally uncritical acceptance of the other.

These trends can be seen in the Indian cultural scene. In the contemporary cultural trends, what one finds sometimes is an open and a critical attitude either towards the western tradition or the Indian tradition. A critical openness towards both is missing, however. This lack of critical outlook towards both, the western and the Indian tradition is the hallmark of the partial and fragmentary perspective. One can also discern Marxist influences in the attempts to understand the Indian social reality, attempts which do not show adequate regard for the peculiar characteristic of the Indian ethos which has been and continues to be the predominance of the sacred in the Indian psyche. Whether the sacred

33 Since the emergence of national consciousness in the Indian context has been moulded and crystallised by the imagery and the ideology of The Sacred Indian nationalism did not take to the kind of militancy referred to in Fanon's writings. The spirit of nationalism, as it emerged in Europe, is alien to the Indian temper since The Sacred posits not a politico-imperialist concept of nation but a universalistic ideal of community of people
tradition still plays a crucial or only a marginal role in the configuration and apprehension of the contemporary social reality is a question that deserves serious contemplation and analysis. And before an adequate answer is found to this question, to ignore it (the Indian tradition) is simply being blind to an important dimension of Indian social reality. There are suggestions that the western tradition should be evaluated and accepted to the extent that it conforms to the Indian socio-economic needs and cultural temper. But it may be questioned whether the Indian and the western social conditions can be applied as yardsticks for judging one cultural tradition in terms of the other. It is equally problematic whether they can be treated as alternative perspectives and whether there is a possibility of evolving a new perspective the world over on the basis of moral, social and trans-social fraternity. Tagore, who understood the Indian tradition, pointed out:

"India has never had a sense of nationalism... and it is my conviction that my countrymen will truly gain their India by fighting against the education which teaches them that a country is greater than the ideals of humanity.... The East, in fact, is attempting to take unto itself a history which is not an outcome of its own living.... we in India must make up our mind that we cannot borrow other people's history, and that if we stifle our own we are committing suicide."

Tagore, Rabindra Nath; 'Nationalism In India' in Soares, Anthony (Ed.) Lectures and Address by Rabindra Nath Tagore, pp. 105-106.
transcending both of them. It is such a culture-universe that any Indian reflecting on the present cultural conditions has to come to terms with. The response of the Indo-Anglian novelists to this situation has been diverse and varied ranging from a complete lack of awareness of the core of Indian sensibility to an ambivalent and biased perception of it. These responses, however, are restricted by the choice of language of the novelist for this choice imposed serious constraints on perception and cognition of Indian social reality and its rendering in the form of the novel.

34 "Indo-Anglian literature may have begun as a colonial venture vaguely aspiring to continue the great English tradition, but where the Indo-Anglian novel was concerned, more was needed than great models. Whatever be the language in which it is written, a novel by an Indian writer demands direct involvement in values and experiences which are valid in the Indian context. There was a certain lack of such direct involvement in the early generations of English-educated Indians who hoped to create literature in English: those in whom the involvement was direct and decisive took either to creative activity in their own language, or to constructive work in other areas like social reform and political organisation."

Mukherjee, Meenakshi; The Twice Born Fiction, p. 19.

35 "To speak means to be in a position to use certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilisation."

Fanon, Frantz; Black Skins White Masks, p. 13.
"Since English has developed in a 'non-Hindu' cultural complex certain details, stereotypes and even words and phrases when skilfully employed can trigger into existence a non-English culture. For instance, Narayan's bare descriptions of a middle-class south Indian household, Raja Rao's use of Sanskrit words and phrases and direct translations of Kanada idioms, and Nagarjan's descriptions of the temple... do much more for their novels than they can for the novels of one writing in an Indian language. I don't think anyone would get excited when he comes across the word 'Ganga' or a Sanskrit sloka in a novel in one of our language. But when we come across these in Raja Rao or when he uses the phrase 'little Mother' something seems to happen to an Indian reader. An uncomfortable question - do we respond to these words and phrases the way we do because of 'the shock of recognition' or because we are, in subtle ways, so alienated from our own culture, that like Henry James, we recognize the value of a native culture, only when it is distanced from us."36

A similar point has been made by Ananthamurthi, a reputed Kannada novelist who happens to be teaching English Literature:

"English with most Indians, is still a language of official public affairs, of intellectual and academic debate. They do not use English for their most intimate purposes, to think and feel, bless and curse, quarrel and kiss."37

It is interesting to note that this complaint comes not only from Indians but also from the Western


readers of Indo-Anglian fiction:

"Indian English, being a lingua franca, lacks the fineness of the nuance that makes literature possible.... It is not a question of 'writing English like a native', because many Indians are native English speakers or nearly so. If English is not the language in which they lisp their first words, it is still acquired very early. The question is, a native of where?" 5

The restrictions are not only that of the language and its conceptual framework but also of the audience the Indo-Anglian novelist seeks to address himself to. "A frequent mistake", Fanon incisively points out, "and one which is moreover hardly justifiable is to try to find cultural expressions for and to give new values to native culture within the framework of colonial domination. 39

One cannot but discern that Indo-Anglian fiction is a pandering to the Western reader's predilections about the orient which may or may not seem so overt to him. The hybrid character of the Indo-Anglian fiction creates a severe handicap for an Indian reader regarding the framework within which to judge it, for the Indo-Anglian novel can neither be evaluated in the tradition


39 Fanon Frantz, The Wretched of the Earth, p. 196.
of the western novel nor can it be evaluated within the
tradition of the fiction being written in the Indian
languages. An attempt will, therefore, be made in
the remaining chapters to examine the responses of
Rajaj Rao, Mulk Raj Anand and R.K. Narayan as novelists
to the Indian cultural situation. They are not being
considered in a chronological order simply for the
reason that it is their attitude towards the Indian
and the western tradition which is the focus of the
study rather than the period of their writing.