Chapter II

ETHICAL ASPECTS OF HINDUISM
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ETHICS

Ethics is a normative science which deals with the rational judgements on the 'ought to be'. Its function is to evaluate human actions to be right or wrong, good or bad. This type of evaluation implies certain standards to be judged. It is this characteristic of ethics that distinguishes it from the natural sciences which deals with judgement of fact. Human mind has the three faculties of knowing, feeling and willing. Ethics deals with the faculty of willing and the faculties of knowing and feeling are the task of logic and aesthetics respectively. Thus truth, beauty and goodness are the judgements of the three normative sciences. "The discovery of this common denominator of intellectual, of aesthetic and of moral judgements, and the construction of the system of principles which these judgements, when made coherent and self-consistent (constitute), is the task of the three normative sciences, Logic, aesthetic and ethics."¹

¹ James Seth, A Study of Ethical Principles (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1897), p. 27.
The search of ethics is for the organizing principle of morality, for a principle which shall explain and co-ordinate all the changing forms of its historical development. "Ethical Science is only a deeper, more strenuous and more systematic reflection upon life, a thinking of it out to greater cleanness and coherence, a more persistent effort to see life steadily and see it whole." Ethics is a systematic examination of human ideals, and seeks to correlate them with the true or absolute ideal of humanity. To Aristotle, ethics is the investigation of the final end or purpose in human life. The good is the end - that end to which all other so called ends are really means.

Ethics aims at teaching one's duty to oneself. The norm of ethics does not remain the same for ever. The very essence of ethics is its spontaneity and growth. The ultimate aim is to lead man to the final end. The normative sciences transcend the actual and judge its value in terms of the ideal. This brings the normative sciences nearer to metaphysics. According to Mr. Leslee Stephan, the science of ethics deals with the realities and metaphysical speculations do not help to ascertain the facts. But the metaphysicians argue that the controversy between agnosticism and metaphysics is not a controversy between realism

and idealism, between science and unscientific philosophy. It is a controversy between a narrower and wider view of reality. The distinction is not of a kind but only of degree. Hence they conclude that ethics cannot be separated from metaphysics. "It is not possible to develop a science of ethics, with definite teachings on the nature of right and wrong, and with the reasons for such teachings, without the assistance of metaphysics." The philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas presumes the rationalism of Greeks and also opens new area of vision, the supernatural. Thus according to St. Thomas the philosophy of man is not psychology in the modern sense, but a metaphysical analysis of being, potencies, habits and destiny of man. According to Kant real ethics cannot do without the postulates of truths like existence of God, the immortality of the human soul and the freedom of man.

HINDU ETHICS

Ethics has always occupied a privileged position in Hindu religion and philosophy. "Ethics is derived in Hinduism, from certain spiritual concepts; it forms the steel-frame foundation of the spiritual life." The goal of ethics and


religion comes to be to discover how to get release from the seemingly endless birth which involves the whole range of life. "Morality has been a part and parcel of the Hindu religion from the very earliest times." In Vedas, Brahmanas and the Upanisads, we find occasional praises of virtues such as gift, love, truth, righteousness, abstention from injury, purity, austerities and so on. In Gita the self-realisation is the supreme purpose of ethics. In the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata, emphasis is laid on value of ethics and moral virtues. Life of virtue is laid as the supreme religion irrespective of caste, creed or community.

The ethical doctrines of the Hindus are based upon the teachings of the Upanisads and certain secondary scriptures which derive their authority from the Vedas. Hinduism aims not at principles but at practice. Conduct is more than creed. It maintains morality as the means to its metaphysics. The ethical concepts follow from the metaphysics. "A Hindu will place metaphysics first and ethics afterwards." Thus ethics becomes an indispensible condition for spiritual realisation. Right thought, right deed and right speech are insisted upon by every school of


thought. The Vedic Aryans considered sacrifices as the highest duty of man. "The performance of sacrifices however was enjoined as indispensable to secure Swarga or a celestial abode which was considered the summum bonum of life by the Vedic people." Even though Upanisads aim at the self-realisation as the supreme end, it justifies ethics in the sense that it is necessary for the purification of mind. "Morality is desirable only because it is the gate way to religion." The supreme purpose of life in the Upanisads is the highest merit called shreyas which is reached through knowledge alone. But the purpose of ethics is preyas or mundane good which is reached through moral actions. According to Gita the final emancipation is achieved through knowledge and action. These two are complementary like theory and practice. Knowledge is inward while action is outward. It is the outward actions that lead to the inward knowledge and vice versa. The epics are considered as the Dharma Sastras of the Hindu religion. The Ramayana is a record of the highest moral ideas and it depicts virtues of an ideal king, an ideal husband, an ideal wife, an ideal son, and an ideal brother. Mahabharata is a didactic work full of dissertations with mythological anecdotes and praises on good conduct and moral virtues. Yudhistira observes dharma not


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because of any immediate results but of a conviction that virtue is to be followed for its own sake. The revered sage Manu teaches that Dharma (virtue) is the divine law which is laid down for the guidance of man.

All the schools of Indian thought give importance to the aspects of ethics. The Nyaya lays down that only virtuous activities enable one to discriminate the soul from the body and the senses. Samkhya belief is that ignorance causes bondage and knowledge releases purusha from bondage. Moral life is vested in the subtle body which accompanies purusha from one life to another. The ethical activity which releases purusha is obtained through knowledge. The knowledge is the result of practice of virtue, yoga etc. Observation of nitya karmas and naimitta karmas lead to salvation according to Purva Mimamsa. Sankara aims at transcendent purity of Atman. "Transcendental Eudeamonism or Transcendental Purism". Trancedental purity is attained by intuition, by renunciation of all actions and destruction of virtues and vices.

Hinduism is often charged with pessimism. Life is considered fundamentally evil and escape from it is the final goal. Hinduism believes that evil is not the ultimate and not the

essence of reality. In every evil there is goodness. Transcendence of this evil and attainment of good is the ultimate end. "The avoidance of misery and the acquisition of Santi is the supreme human end.""10 "The Indian outlook of life is far from being consistently pessimistic."11 Yet a shadow of pessimism falls on Hindu thought. Some seek the source of this gloom in race, others in climate. What may be the ultimate cause, no one knows. What is thought to be the proximate cause of this pessimism is cast by the doctrine of transmigration and karma. The several approaches to pessimism reveal that it is formed under the influence of karma. "Since all the world is under the dominion of karma, men could not but regard everything phenomenal as leading to rebirth, and therefore as evil."12 The fact that there is no means of escape from the retribution of karma also proves very galling. The feeling that karma is not governed by any divine being, but acted automatically, casts a shadow on the Hindu spirit.

According to W.S. Urguhart, pessimism arises from just a contrast between our desires and the hope of their fulfilment. "If one could be conceived ascending above all things the increase and ultimate victory of pain and evil, it would be

impossible for him to be a pessimist." Indian thinkers deny that Indian religious thought is pessimistic. To them pessimism is only initial and not final. "Man is deeply jerked by the fact that of pain and once he realises his miserable and unauthentic existence, he sets his feet on the right path." Morality has empirical validity as far as Hinduism is concerned. The metaphysical attitude separates Hindu ethics from other ethical systems. Morality is not the final goal. It merely leads to the goal.

There are two distinct theories regarding the ethical code in Hindu thought. One equates the moral ideal to a universal law. It is the law which operates in human behaviour as the moral law and also the supreme universal law of nature. This law is called Rta in Rig Veda. Rta means ordered course of things. Rta in Rig Veda stands for both physical and mental order. Gods are considered as the keepers of the moral order. Thus there


are "Rta jata, Rta-jnana, Rta pa and Rta syagopa." They are born within the moral law, knowing the moral law, protecting the moral law and guarding of rta respectively. God Varuna is considered the upholder of Rta. Gods themselves are subjected to moral law and they are there to see that man does not break the law. By the time of Brahmanas Rta came to be identified with the performance of ritual sacrifices. A ritual sacrifice is meant not only for worldly happiness but also for happiness and joy hereafter. Thus it is obligatory for a man to perform sacrifices. Each ritual has its own reward prescribed. Suffering results when the law is broken.

The second theory is that sanctions of morality rests in the will of god. Moral code is prescribed by the Vedas. So the authority of the moral code dependeds upon the authority of the Vedas. Thus along with the Vedas, the moral order is also eternal. This implies that there can be no progress in morals. Such a belief is not in accordance with the various phases of development of Hinduism. The development of Hinduism shows that the moral code has been changing. What is good for one man will not be good for another. So also what is good at certain times may not be good at other times. Morality changes with regard to person, place and circumstance. So we cannot believe that, just

because the sources of the moral ideal are eternal, the moral code itself has been static through the ages.

Saraswathi Chennakesavan differentiates between moral ideal and moral code. "The ideal is the perfect principle and the code is the imperfect approximation."\(^{16}\) The moral ideal in Indian thought is closely linked with its philosophy while the moral code has been changing with changing times to suit the changing conditions of the life of the people. Saints called such codes of life as Yugadharma. This does not mean that Hindu morals are opportunistic in nature. Hindu moral code has been changing from time to time but has not violated the fundamental principles of the continuity of the dharma as the highest ideal. Hindu moral code condemns lying, stealing, murder, injury, adultery, slander, gambling and drunkenness. There is an emphasis on self-control and moderation. "Hindu ethics is a compromise between the principle of humanity and the demands of aristocratic, privileged upper class groups."\(^ {17}\) Morality implies conscious responsibility on the part of the agent. Hence freedom is essential for morality. "But we do not experience such freedom to choose what we will."\(^ {18}\) This altogether contradicts the essence of morality.

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16. ibid., p. 104.


How can there be a will if the agent is not free? Hinduism tries to solve the problem through the doctrine of karma.

**THEORY OF KARMA**

The doctrine of Karma is one of the most distinctive features of Hinduism. All Indian faiths, both orthodox and heterodox systems accept the doctrine of Karma as one of their cardinal tenets. The doctrine has exercised a great influence on the beliefs and practices of Hindus. It is a theory of the life of soul and the standing rule for the elucidation of every calamity. Karma is an explanation of all the phenomena of the natural world, a justification of the caste system, and the reason why man obeys the laws of caste, family and religion. Thus the doctrine is offered as the answer to the great riddle of the origin of suffering and inequality of human conditions. Above all, Karma is the source of pessimism in Hinduism.

The inner elements that went to the creation of the doctrine may be made out as follows. The fundamental belief is that the world is just. That is, lives are subject to moral law and that both good and evil actions will receive perfectly just recompense. Thus the doctrine is that all good and all evil actions done in one life will be recompensed with an equivalent amount of happiness or misery in a later life. The original form of the belief was that each man received in the same life the
exactly measured recompense of his good and bad deeds. There are certain incidents in the literature which would fit well into the conjecture. The story of Dasaradha is an example. There it is brought out that when Dasaradha sent his son into exile, he was reaping the consequences of his own deed once he had done to a young lad who had been killed by his arrow.

"It was in the great intellectual activity provoked by the intercourse of the living Aryan mind with the many varied people of North India that the great theory was formed."19 Evidences are insufficient to show how the conceptions were built up and whence the various elements came. The theory of the doctrine of Karma first appeared in the Upanisads. Though the doctrine of transmigration is believed in many lands, the Hindu doctrine of Karma is unique. These evidences show that the doctrine was thought out by the Aryans. The old faith of a happy immortality spent with gods and fathers began to give place to chilling fears about the possibility to die over and over in the other world.

The doctrine of Karma is overshadowed in the concept of Rta in the mantras of the Rig Veda. In the Brahmanas, where rituals are given importance, Rta stands for Yajna or

sacrifice. Rta and Yajna anticipate the theory of Karma because they imply that each action carries its own reward. In the Upanisads the law of Karma is formulated as the deed as well as its result. The Karmic law applies the principle of cause and conservation of energy to the moral world. "Nothing is lost which has been earned by work, and nothing comes in which is not deserved."²⁰ The immutable, changeless law of cause and effect in the field of morality is named as karma. "Any deed, any thought that causes an effect is called a karma."²¹ Every action signifies karma and human life is a product of karma and karma is a continuous chain which makes man what he is. Karma in the Upanisads is used in three senses. (1) In the ordinary sense of the word as is done by the hand (2) In the sense of Vedic sacrifices and (3) in the sense of pāpa and punya.

Though Karma appears as a doctrine of life and death, it is essentially a theory of morality. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan considers Karma not as a mechanical principle, but as an ethical doctrine. According to him the diversity of human conditions are due to the doctrine of Karma. It is the phala of the karma that determines the birth and nature of man in the present life. So also the present deeds condition the future of man. Man is

²⁰ T. M. P. Mahadevan, op. cit., p. 59.

fettered by karma in the empirical world because world is the realm of karma. So karma is the determining factor of life. "The law of karma is assumed as valid, and our life, its character and length are all determined by it."\textsuperscript{22} An individual toils patiently, through the cycles of births and rebirths with his karmas, for the contemplation of the ideal of moksa or liberation. It is desire that leads to karma and karma leads to rebirth. "Desire, thought and action always go together. They are the three threads, as it were, that are twisted into the cord of karma."\textsuperscript{23} When Brahman is realised the effects of karma ceases. Thus karma has only empirical validity.

If the past determines the present, the question of fatalism arises. Moral actions imply freedom. If our actions are conditioned how can there be morality? Hinduism solves the problem through the doctrine itself. Common man identifies karma with fate and the doctrine of Karma with a counsel of despair. It is confused with pre-destination. Karma is not just fate. The life is not a single life span to an individual. There are a series of lives to attain perfection. So the past actions determine only the position of the individual in the next life.


\textsuperscript{23} Swami Sivananda, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 125.
It is the individual who is responsible for the next life. "You are the master of your own fate". 24

If the preceding life determines the present, then what about the first? Hinduism answers that the Samsara is anādi or beginningless. "Individuality itself is the product of antecedents." 25 The essential self unaffected by antecedents need not be liable to be born at all. If the individual himself is responsible for his present life, do the past deeds become extraneous factors so far as the present life is concerned? What control has he over the past deeds which govern his present life? Hindu thinkers objects to this view by postulating a two fold frutification of all actions. Every action produces its direct result called phala and indirect result called samskara which forms the innate tendencies. It is phala that determines the nature of our present body and conditions directly relating to and consequent upon our birth. In respect of phala we have no choice. We have to simply accept them as ordained to us. Samskaras prompt us to act one way or another. It affords ample scope for self-determination. One can control and direct samskaras. The individual's birth and initial environments are pre-determined by the phala of the past actions. As far as the rest of life is

24. ibid., p. 123.

concerned, he is able to master his samskaras. The present life is only a part of the individuals progress towards the goal. The doctrine of Karma is thus neither fate nor does it allow complete freedom. The ethical doctrine underlying karma is self-determination.

Karma works in three ways. The sahaja karma is the self-springing, spontaneous karma as a result of the vibration of prakriti. It is the cause of the creations of individuals and also of their ultimate freedom. The Aisha karma belongs to the Supreme Lord or occult world. It is unique in that it operates in helpful associations with either of the Sahaja karma or Jaiva karma. Aisha Karma manifests the Incarnation of the Divine. When Dharma becomes feeble, Lord manifests himself in incarnation. The Jaiva karma is of the individual soul. It gives rise to the world of action, the mortal world and the various high and low conditions of man together with the worlds of fruition. Jaiva karma is capable of taking the Jiva to the highest stage if he performs the karma in conformity with the Shastras. If one follows Aisha karma, he grows in power gradually reaching the highest sources of power. If one follows Sahaja karma, he enjoys the happiest and the most useful and the most powerful of all conditions, becoming a Jivan-Mukta.

Karmas can be grouped into three. They are the samchita karma, prarabdha karma and Agama karma. Sanchita karma
is all the accumulated karma of the past. Part of it is seen in
the nature of the individual. Prarabdha is that portion of the
past karma which is responsible for the present body. It is this
karma which influences his present life. It cannot be avoided or
changed. With regard to the prarabdha karma we have no control.
Agama or Kriyamana is that karma which is now being made for the
future. It is also called 'vartamana.' In Vedas these karmas are
compared to the arrows in the quiver of a bowman. The whole
bundle of arrows in the quiver is compared to the Samcita. The
arrows he has already shot are prarabdha. The arrow which he is
about to shoot is the agama. The whole samcitha karma is destroyed
when one attains the knowledge of Brahman.

From the essential nature of Karma doctrine follows
the concepts of transmigration of souls and rebirth. It is the
fundamental tenet of Hinduism and forms a corollary to the law of
karma. Transmigration has been held high during ancient times
since it gives explanation to the appalling differences in human
life. "Transmigration of souls is a metaphysical hypothesis to
account for the inequalities of fortunes among the people in the
world." 26 Though rebirth or transmigration is not confined to
India, it has had most thorough going development in India. The
transmigration of souls was believed by Greek philosophers like
Plato, Empedocles, and Pythagorous. Transmigration of souls has

been part and parcel of most of the schools of Indian thought. However, it can be found only in a nascent state in the Vedas, but they are developed later in the Upanisads and thereafter in Epics, Smritis and Darsanas.

Man is born because God has sent him to enjoy the fruits of his own deeds done in the previous life. All the actions of an individual could not fruitify within the short span of a single life. Since no actions are barren, it becomes necessary to postulate another life in which he reaps what he sowed in the previous life. Hence it is karma which is responsible for the innumerable rounds of births and deaths. High moral life as enjoined in the Vedas, Dharma Shastras or Codes of Manu and the spiritual awakening by the knowledge of the Upanisads and Vedanta lead one to Moksa. Moksa is freedom from the rounds of births and deaths.

Transmigration of souls is related to the science of eschatology which deals with the fate of the soul after death. According to Indian Philosophy, there are only two states of the soul. They are the state of transmigration and rebirth and the state of emancipation. Certain Western philosophers do not accept the doctrine of immortality of the souls and they offer two theories about the state of the soul after death. There is a total annihilation of the soul after death. Then there is the eternal retribution which is meted out once for all to all souls.
on the day of resurrection as believed by Christians, Zorastrians and the Mohemedan religions. Prof. Paul Deussen answers these theories like this. Annihilation is in conflict with man's love for self and his innate faculty for desire for certainty. The second theory cannot be supported on rational grounds. The existence of the soul in the world is so brief and that it is liable to errors and accidents. Eternal retribution is impossible with in a short period of time.

The Sanskrit word 'Samsara' stands for the innumerable rounds of births and deaths. It is derived from the roots 'Sr' which means passing and 'Sam' which means intensely. Samsara is eternal. Every occurrence is the effect of forgoing actions and every action is followed by its retributive expression. In the Kaustiki Upanisad it is said that according to his deeds and knowledge, will a man be born as a worm, insect, fish, bird, serpent, tiger, a man or something else. Chandogya Upanisad states that those whose conduct has been good, will quickly attain some good birth. Both good and bad actions bind tight the Jiva in their chain. Only when these karmas are exhausted can Moksa be attained. Man must undergo a long course of purification to achieve his end and this implies a series of lives. "Avidya is the cause of birth of an individual and karma is the cause of rebirths." 27

27. Swami Sivananda op. cit., p. 130.
In this context there arises a question as to how can one escape from the consequences of an action? Once the highest enlightenment is attained all the rest will be consumed by the fire of knowledge. The action of a Jeevanmukta is neutral and does not bind him any more. To the question how karma produces its results, Vatsyayana points out that in reaping the fruits of action one is dependant on God. Vacaspati observes that God is all merciful. He has not the power to disturb the course of natural phenomena in ordaining the individual to pleasure and pain. Jayamker says that God can arrest the activities of the karma for a time and this is what leads to dissolution.

How can karma be reconciled with Moksa? Is karma the very antithesis of Moksa? Gita bridges the gap between karma and moksa. According to Gita, the actions result in phala and samskara only when they are done with the intension of gaining results. When a man acts according to the law of karma, in a spirit of detachment from results, his soul is progressing towards Moksa. Desire produces karma. Gita thus teaches that Nishkama karma is the means to Moksa.

Karma has got a commanding position in Hinduism. There is no aspect of life of the people that has not felt its influence. It is karma that has given Hinduism its peculiar flavour. The doctrine includes a moral standard as well as a theory of retribution and of soul progress. The doctrine of karma and transmigration forms the basis of Hindu doctrine of morality.
GUNAS IN HINDU ETHICS

The principle of gunas is a fundamental principle of the Hindu ethics. The conception of gunas arose in the minds of philosophers as a result of their analysis of the phenomenal consciousness and its objects. All objects of the world have in them pure being or existence or sattva as their ultimate basis and essential stuff. Only an existent object can be related to knowledge and become intelligible to us. This capacity lies in the very existence of objects and can be identified with the being or sattva of the object.

Indian Rishis say that all created things have three gunas, the principles of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. Translation of the word guna is impossible. Though it is applied in the moral life as qualities, tendencies or states of active consciousness, the distinction of these three gunas are not absolute, but only relative. Sattva is goodness, light, happiness, purity etc., rajas is activity and tamas is evil, darkness, ignorance and inactivity.

Matter consists of these three primal qualities or substantive entities. "These ultimate entities were thus called gunas probably to suggest that they are the entities which by
their various modifications manifest themselves as gunas or qualities."28 These three gunas alone are regarded as composing all phenomena, mental and physical. Gunas are also called bhavas which means different states of feeling. According to Vacaspati these primal qualities have two forms namely the determiner or perceiver and the perceived or determined. In the aspect of the perceiver or determiner the gunas form the modification of the ego together with the senses. And in the aspect of the perceived or determined it evolves themselves in the five infra-atomic potentials, the five gross elements and their compounds. Gunas thus represent themselves as the mental and physical orders of modification. "The gunas are psycho-physical constituents." One is not in any form superior to the other. They are capable of being modified by mutual influence on one another by their proximity. They never lose their distinct powers into those of the others. When any one of them plays the role of the principal factor in any phenomenon the others also show their presence in close contact because in every phenomenon all the three gunas are present. "These three gunas or strands are found inseparately together."29 Their existence is inferred by their distinct and


29. Yakub Mashib, op. cit., p. 117.
independent functioning, eventhough they remain as subsiding qualities.

Each guna has an individual existence, but is always in co-operation with the others. All that exists excepting the purusha are but the entities in different kinds of combination of the gunas. The difference in combinations consists in that in some combinations there are more of sattva entities than rajas or tamas, and in others, more of rajas or more of tamas. What ever may be the nature of any particular combination, the sattva entities participating in it will retain their intellectual function, rajas their energy function and tamas the obstructing nature. In a particular combination it is the special feature of those entities which predominate and manifest themselves. Of the three gunas none of them can be considered as the goal of others. All of them are equally important. "The three gunas serve conjointly one common purpose namely the experience and the liberation of the purusha or spirit..."30

These entities are continually uniting and separating. That is, they are evolving and have the characteristic

of conjunction and separation. Yoga-bhashya states that gunas are always in a state of flux. Their varying permutations and combinations give rise to all sorts of collections which are manifested in the world of objects. "Gunas are the unconscious everchanging dynamic energy of the universe." The changes take place in two ways. They are known as sarupa parinama and virupa parinama. Sarupa parinama exists in the state of equilibrium. This is however the one and the only one state in which the gunas are not compounded in varying proportions. In this state each of the guna substances is opposed by each of the other guna substances and thus by their equal mutual opposition create an equilibrium in which none of the characters of gunas manifest itself. This state is absolutely indeterminate, undifferentiated and indefinite. It is a qualityless simple homogeneity. "It is a state of being which is as it were non-being." This state of the mutual equilibrium of the gunas is called prakriti. It is a state which cannot be considered existing or non-existing, because it serves no purpose. However it is not a passive state. But it is one of utmost tension, there is intense activity. The


32. Surendranath Das Gupta, Yoga As Philosophy and Religion, op. cit., p. 245.
difference is that there is no generation of new things and qualities. This stage of evolution is called pralaya.

When there is a disturbance in the prakriti sakti due to the purushothama samyoga, the raja guna becomes excessive and the result of which is that there are excessive modifications in sattva, rajas and tama. This results in the production of new categories. This virupa parinama is the production of un-equal aggregation of the gunas through their excessive interaction and interdependence. "Prakriti which contains within itself the possibilities of all things develops into the apparatus of thought as well as the objects of thought." Thus phenomenal objects come into being from prakriti only at the presence of purusha.

Gita calls prakriti as Mahad Brahman. It is the female part for the creation of the universe. Prakriti is not a homogeneous substance but a composite of three gunas. Prakriti is like a rope twisted by three strands namely sattva, rajas and tama. Apart from the gunas there is no prakriti. The gunas are like ropes by which the soul is tied down to thought and matter. There is no human being on the earth or gods in the heaven, who

are not pervaded by the three gunas of prakriti. The sattva associates the self with the attachments of pleasure and knowledge, rajas to action and desire and tamas to errors.

"The three gunas reciprocally involve one another and form a unity in trinity." 34 They are inseparably interdependant on one another. Gunas not only co-exist but also cohere. They do not counter balance, but co-operate with each other. Though contradictory to one another they work for the single cause. It is compared to a lamp. Though the wick and the oil are opposed to the activity of the fire, they can co-operate even when in contact with fire for the single purpose of illumination. Conjunction of the gunas is not an end in itself but it serves as the only means for the attainment of the purusha's end. "Enjoyment and liberation are the purusharthas and the guna stuff creates this ceaseless flow of modification and complexities for his enjoyment and liberation." 35

Indian theory of human personality is based on the concept of the gunas. The entire system of animate and inanimate


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nature is woven out of these three gunas. Gita describes gunas from an ethical standpoint. Gunas cannot be seen but can only be inferred from their effects. Yukti-dipika states that even the revered sage Kapila could experience only the effects of the gunas and the potential form remained imperceptible. Hence the nature of a person can be determined from the nature of the guna predominant in a single phenomenon. Only one of the gunas develops in its highest degree while the others become latent or sub latent. Thus we have the three personality types sattvic, rajasic and tamasic.

In sattvic personality, the sattva predominates and the others are recessive. Goodness prevails over all other qualities. In him intelligence dominates. The different elements in him are integrated and well-knit round dharma. Dharma is the principle of his life and meaning of his existence. He is full of earnestness, non-attachment to the fruits and leads the entire might of his soul to his work. He is highly disciplined in all that he does, and exhibits perfect restraint in action, words and feelings. The ideal sattvic personality is described in Gita as sttitaprajna, yogarudha, bhakta and gunatila.

The rajasic temper is ever active, restless and passionate. His desires are centered upon actions, emotions, joy
and grief. He is highly strong and sentimental and has a craving for continuous vigorous action. Power is the dominant factor in his life. Inaction is hell to him.

The tamasic temper is the worst of all gunas and is dominant in many. They are unintegrated, gross, inert, crafty, dilatory, sullen and deeply revengeful. Their intellect is clouded and confused. They have violent habits and sink back to the levels of stocks and stones.

PURUSHARTHAS IN HINDUISM

Hinduism prescribes four objects in the growth of human life. They are the four ends of man called purusharthas. Man possesses a complex personality which seeks expression mainly through four channels. They are the instincts and natural desires, craving for power and property, social aims, and the spiritual urge. The four channels are related with the four ends of man. They are respectively kama, artha, dharma and moksa. The first three purusharthas have relevance so far as man's empirical life is concerned, while the last refers to his spiritual life. Though of different realms they do not oppose one another. Kama and artha together promote dharma. Dharma in turn leads to moksa. An essentially full life is realised only through a life which is
aesthetically beautiful (kama), materially rich (artha), ethically sound (dharma) and spiritually free (moksa).

Moksa is the ideal towards which man has to move. All men are equal in that they are born of God and are to rise to the same divine destiny. But men differ with regard to their actual equipment for the ideal. There are varying amounts of darkness and evil to eliminate, and to have to put forth varying efforts to illumine their life with light and love. The education of the individual spirit is arranged through the scheme of asramas and varnas. It takes into account the different sides of human nature.

The life of man is rooted in kama or desire. Kama is translated generally as desire and love. It is rendered as enjoyment and also it represents the pleasure in life. Kama is not allowed to usurp the place of dharma and artha. Kama has ethical value. In the broad sense kama includes sex, love, the fine arts, literature and history of objects of human life etc. In these directions it has reference to qualities to be cultivated and acts to be performed and those to be rejected. An individual ought to have performed these obligations either in this life or in the previous lives before passing into the life of renunciation. Man is a bundle of desires. Manu says that it is
not good that the soul is to be enslaved by desire. But nowhere can we find desirelessness. So the activities impelled by our desires must be regulated by dharma. Thus kama becomes a valid pursuit. It is not a mere satisfaction of animal impulse, but the expression of freedom of the self. The desires of men are to be directed through the channels of family life and public duty.

The artistic or emotional life of man cannot flourish in an atmosphere of asceticism. It needs artha or wealth. Artha includes the duties and benefits of social organization and of material civilization. Insistence on artha is important for the ethics of the Hindus, for Hindu ethics has frequently been charged with ignoring social obligation. Artha involves all the benefits and duties of organized social life - agriculture, commerce, medicine, sciences, good political government etc. and it implies the cultivation of particular ethical qualities and the eradication of certain forms of conduct and the disapproval of others. Rules are laid down regarding the interests of the community in the matter of wealth earned by individual. Dharma controls both pleasure and profit of kama and artha. Those in whom dharma predominates are of sattvic nature and those who are mere seekers of kama and artha are tamasic.
The purusharthaś have been divided into two broad divisions. They are pravrthi, those of pursuit and nivrthi, those of renunciation. To the life of pursuit belongs dharma, artha and kama. To the life of renunciation is moksa. The term dharma has a great variety of meanings. It ought not to be interpreted as religion, for, it includes moksa also. Dharma implies a religious attitude of life, with the cultivation of particular virtues and performance of certain functions. These include the divisions of dharma namely the asrama dharma and varna dharma.

The word dharma is derived from the root 'dhr' means to hold. The etymological meaning of dharma is 'that which holds'. To Maha Rishi Jaimuni, dharma means that which is enjoined by the Vedas and is not ultimately productive of suffering. Dharma is that which leads one to the path of perfection and glory. Dharma makes one divine and helps to have direct communion with God. Dr. Radhakrishnan defines dharma as that which stands "for all those ideals and purposes, influences, and institutions that shape the character of man both as an individual and as a member of society."36 According to

R. N. Dandakhar dharma seeks to resolve the conflict between the real and the temporal. Thus Dharma "is a joint product of the speculations and practical wisdom of the Hindus."37 It is the double object of happiness on the earth and salvation. Dharma is the combined form of ethics and religion. "Dharma includes all external actions as well as thoughts and other mental practices which elevate the character of man."38

Dharma has occupied a central part in the literature of the Vedas. It is understood either as cosmic rule giving things their essence or in the human context, as the most important goal of life to be pursued. Dharma implies moral concepts. Hindu dharma involves a complicated set of rules and regulations which are designed to set on to the "eventual course leading to the liberation through rigidly controlled life style and social role."39 To follow one's set duties is the right thing because of the emphasis placed on the discipline, self-control and

37. R. N. Dandakhar, op. cit., p. 69.
fellow-feeling. Such a scheme with proper guidance and right examples, is conducive to virtuous life and consequent liberation.

Dharma is the primary purushartha. It is given the foremost rank in the scriptures. Among the four purusharthas, dharma occupies the first place since the successful fulfilment of the other purposes is dependent on the fulfilment of religious duties. Dharma is the principle of righteousness and also the principle of unity. In Mahabharata Bhishma says whatever creates conflict is adharma and that brings about unity is dharma. Dharma is the regulation of daily life. By practising dharma alone one can achieve the glory of moksa. The four Vedas, the Smriti texts, the behaviour of those who have entered into their spirit and act according to their injunctions, the conduct of holy men and satisfaction of one's own self are the bases of Dharma.

The only authority of dharma is the Vedas. The truth about dharma cannot be known through any other means other than the Vedas. So that which is dharma is verily the truth and whatever is truth is dharma. To Prabhakara dharma is not a subjective category or a quality of the self, but an objective category. A person who executes a moral law or an imperative is virtuous. Dharma is the super sensuous moral imperative. It is an impersonal law which has intrinsic validity. It is of the nature of ought. That is, moral imperative is an accomplished fact and cannot be brought into being by an act of will. It ought
to be performed for its own sake. Prabhakara resembles Kant in this respect.

The revered sage and law giver Manu has laid down in the Law Code that good conduct is transcendental religion. The law given from the earliest times have framed minute rules and regulations as to conduct concerning both individuals and society, on various subjects and matters relating to domestic, legal and other spheres of man's life. The rules framed by the law givers in the Dharma Shastras are meant for the preservation of racial purity, morals, culture and civilization of the Aryans. The observances of rites and rituals, rules relating to the four castes, and four stages of life and rules relating to moral conduct mark out the distinction between the Aryan and the un-Aryans.

Dharma can be classified under two heads. They are the general or universal dharma and the specific or personal dharma. Contentment, forgiveness, self restraint, unstealing, purity, control of senses, discrimination between right and wrong, and real and unreal, spiritual knowledge, truthfulness and absence of anger come under the general dharma. These are the ten fold dharma of Manu. Performance of Sraddha or the offering oblations to the forefathers, religious austerity, truth, restraining anger, satisfaction with one's own wife, purity, learning, absence of envy, knowledge of the self and forbearance are the
fundamentals of dharma enumerated in Mahabharata. In Padma Purana dharma proceeds from continence, truthfulness, austerity, charity, self-control, forbearance, purity, non-violence, serenity and non-thievery. Padma Purana also describes the characteristics of dharma. They are bestowing of gifts on deserving persons, fixing one’s thoughts on Lord Krishna, adoration of one’s parents, offering a portion of the daily meal to all creatures, and giving a morsel of food to a cow. Matsya-Purana prescribes freedom from malice, absence of covetousness, control of the senses, austerity, celibacy, compassion, truthfulness, forbearance, and fortitude as the fundamentals of Dharma. All religions stress on dharma and each religion lays greater stress on certain aspects of dharma.

Just as different persons need different medicines for different diseases dharma is different for different persons. The rules for women are different from those for men. But there are certain common duties like non-violence, non-stealing cleanliness and control of the senses. Dharma depends upon time, circumstances, age, degree of evolution and community.

The general dharma or Samanya dharma is the law for all men. Samanya dharma must be practised by all irrespective of caste or ashrama. Goodness is a virtue to be observed by everyone. Patanjali Maha Rishi prescribes Yama and Niyama, the ten virtues to be practised by all men. Yama consists of Ahimsa,
Satya, Brahmacarya, Asteyam, Aparigraha and Niyama consists of Saucha, Santhosa, Tapas, Swadhyaya and Iswara Pranidhana. All these are manifestations of the five fundamental virtues namely non-violence, truth, purity, detachment and self-control. These are termed as the cardinal virtues. The noble eight fold paths of Buddhism and the virtues prescribed in the 'Sutras on the Mount' came under these fundamental virtues.

Ahimsa is the most important virtue. Practice of ahimsa must be in thought, word and deed. Practice needs immense patience, forbearance, and endurance, infinite inner spiritual strength and gigantic will power. According to Gandhiji ahimsa is not merely the negative approach to non injuring the sentiments of another being but a positive and aggressive attitude of doing good through service. Ahimsa is a modification of Truth. Satyam and Ahimsa always go together. Only a man who practises ahimsa develops cosmic love to the maximum degree and attains self-realisation.

Like ahimsa, truth must be practised in thought, word and deed. Practice of truth and ahimsa constitute the crown and glory of ethical life. The world and all religions are rooted in truth. Truth is the law of our being. It is the centripetal and cohesive force immanent in all of us and the world. According
to Gandhiji Truth is the highest ontological reality. He said Truth is God and God is Truth. "To me religion means truth and ahimsa or rather truth alone, because truth includes ahimsa, ahimsa, being the necessary and indispensible means for its discovery."40

Purity consists both external purity as well as internal purity, that is, of both body and mind. Purity of body is only preliminary to the purity of mind. Restriction of diet makes the mind pure. Sattvic food leads to a pure mind. Since the body is the temple of God, it should be kept clean by daily bathing and clean dress. Cleanliness is part of godliness. One must be pure in thought, word and deed.

Self-control is another fundamental virtue. It means control of both mind and body. Self-control prescribes a well regulated and disciplined life. The senses must be under control.

"The life of a Hindu is regulated to a very detailed extent by the laws of dharma. His fasts and feasts, his social and family ties, his personal habits and tastes are all

conditioned by it." The spiritual freedom of the Atman is the basis of Hindu Dharma. To be a Hindu or not, depends not on whether one believes this or that view of God, but on whether one accepts or rejects the dharma. Thus discipline is more important than principle.

VARNA DHARMA

The Hindu social structure is known as the Varnasramadharma. The caste system in India represents the ethical organization of the social life of Hindus just as the four stages of life represent the ethical organization of the personal life of the individual. It is one of the peculiar characteristic features of Hinduism. It can be "regarded as the ethical organization of the social life of the Hindus." Varnasrama dharma can be dealt with separately as Varna dharma and asrama dharma. The caste system seems to have developed out of the multi-racial nature of Indian society. Even in the pre-vedic times, the people of India were divided into three varnas or castes. According to the researches of Dr.Hang and Prof.Kenn, these distinctions existed at a time when the Aryans had not

42. R. N. Dandakhar, op. cit., p. 83.
separated from their Indo-Iranian brethren. The caste system as we now see originated as a result of the anxiety of Indo-Aryans to preserve their purity. It originated from racial pride and colour prejudice.

"The term 'caste' is not Hindu, nor Indian. It comes to the Portuguese misnomer casta."43 "The word is derived from the Portuguese, and is used in Europe to designate the different tribes or classes into which the people of India are divided."44 The Sanskrit equivalent for caste is 'Jati' meaning race. The caste system takes into account the needs of the society as well as the interests of the individual. It sustains personality and helps "the individual to transcend himself by giving his devotion to something beyond himself."45 It is a reconciliation of two opposites, the individual and the society. It is a higher good which aims at the good not only of the self alone but of the society also. Self renewal and social service are the means and hence form the governing principle of caste

system. On account of the diversity of human nature, the ways laid down are also different for the attainment of self expression.

The earlier references to the division of society into four classes is found in the hymns of Purusha-sukta of Rig Veda. Division of society into classes or groups is a common feature all over the world. Later in the period of the Upanisads the four castes were firmly established. Krishna says in Gita that the four castes were created by god and that god has created caste by giving birth to each man in such family in society as accords with his deeds in previous life. The hymns of the Purusha-sukta describe the four classes as having come out of the different parts of the body of the creator. It is mentioned that Brahmns, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras came out from the mouth, the arms, the thighs and the legs of the Cosmic Being respectively. Caste system is thus an organization to regulate society with a view to keep up the actual difference and ideal unity. Human society is an organic whole, the parts of which are naturally dependent, in such a way that each part is fulfilling its distinctive function and the conditions for the fulfilment of the function are provided by the rest. In this sense the whole is present in each part while each part is indispensible to the whole "...there was an organic synthesis and co-ordination among the four castes as members of a living organism which could not be separated from one another as totally independent units but they
were complements of one another without whose mutual co-operation, the social order could not thrive and prosper.\textsuperscript{46} As the different groups work for a common end they are bound by a sense of unity and social brotherhood. "People with different social heritage can live together in unity and fellowship only on the basis of caste."\textsuperscript{47}

In ancient India the caste system was based on the varna or the dominating quality in an individuals. Varna is not the colour of the skin, but the colour of one’s character or quality. "Varna is far from being the something as a caste.\textsuperscript{48} So a man in whom the sattva guna dominates becomes the priest. Thus caste is determined by the predominance of reason, emotion or will in an individual. They correspond the sattva, rajas and tamas. Manu says that these three gunas are the principles governing the caste of a man. Moreover the tapas or individual effort, srutam or cultural environment and heredity also determine the caste of an individual. Though birth is the only available test, spiritual character is the real basis of division of society. Manu says that if an individual practises the ways of

\textsuperscript{46} M. C. Pandya, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 264.

\textsuperscript{47} S. Radhakrishnan, \textit{The Heart of Hinduism}, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 47.

the good and leads a pure life, he overcomes the effect of heredity. According to Mahabharata the test of regeneracy is not birth, not learning but only conduct. The governing principle of caste must be sila or conduct, not heredity. The first Manu has declared that there is no point in distinction of caste, if character is not considered.

The caste system originated from the four varnas. The varnas represent the four fold divisions of society into the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras. Varna and Jati are distinct and essentially independent. But the two institutions became fused together later on. The Aryans first used the word 'varna' to denote the distinction between the Aryans and non-Aryans. The Jati system is a later Brahmin interpretation of the term varna. "It is clear that in the initial stages of its development it was based on function only but as the time passed it degenerated and became close to the tyranny of one class over other."49 It is believed that the karma determines the caste of an individual. All life is guided by the same principles of rebirth and karma. "The Hindu believes that his caste is determined by his past life."50


50. J. N. Farguhan, op. cit., p. 140.
The caste system in India had been quite flawless. Slowly defect came in from elsewhere. Test of ability and character slowly vanished. Birth became the chief consideration in determining caste. The hereditary mode of caste distinction was accepted in order to preserve the privileges enjoyed by the higher classes. Brahmins claimed superiority by mere birth. Many of the modern castes have become mere occupational divisions. Every man is not fit for all things. The greed and pride of man has created discord and disharmony. The Hindu social edifice which is built on the law of spiritual economics, will fall if there is quarrel among the different races. Even though Hindus have survived many a foreign conquest, on account of the caste systems, they have developed class jealousies and hatred in the name of caste system. Only when this sectarian spirit dies can it withstand the attacks of other religions. Varnadharma has to be rebuilt by raising all the castes to their original lofty level. Peace and order will prevail in society only if and when all people do their respective duties efficiently. Thus division of caste was purely based on professions of the individual which now in turn is hereditary.

The cultural and spiritual, the military and political, the economic classes and the unskilled workers, constitute the four fold caste organization. Each caste has its social purpose and function, its own code and tradition. The functions of each of the different castes are regarded as equally important to the well being of the whole. The serenity of the
teachers, the heroism of the warrior, the honesty of the businessman and the patience and energy of the worker all contribute to the social growth. Each has its own perfection. Those who are strongly endowed with the power of thought and reflection are the Brahmins. Those who are gifted with heroism and love are the kshatriyas. Those inclined towards practical business of life are Vaisyas. Those in whom no quality of intellect, emotion or will is found form the fourth group or Sudras. All the four castes serve God by their own capacities like spirituality, heroism, skill and service. “When the different classes fulfil their respective functions, the society is considered to be just or in accordance with dharma.”51

Manu holds that out of the four castes Brahmins are the highest, being an embodiment of purity, virtue and learning. It is not with an intention to create a sense of superiority over the other castes, but to show a high sense of duty and responsibility, cast upon the Brahmins, which entails a life of high discipline and self sacrifice. By virtue of their origin from the mouth of Brahman this class is considered the highest among the castes. The birth of a Brahmin is a constant incarnation of dharma. Worship and sacrifice are their important duty. They perform the holy rites and present the clarified

butter to the gods. The life of a Brahmin is one of duty towards society, the gods and himself. He is enjoined to impose strict self-discipline on himself. "He is to live a frugal and contented life, be hospitable and selfless." The Brahmins who know the Vedas by heart and are well versed in the sacred lore are deemed the spiritual guides of the people. The duties assigned to them by Manu are teaching and studying the Vedas, sacrifices for their own benefit and for others, and giving and accepting alms. Parasara adds that a Brahmin who daily performs the religious duties and eats the residue of his homa after having gratified the gods and guests never suffers any bad luck in life. So also there are certain prohibited acts like sale of oil, selling condiments, cooked food, seasaman, stones, cattles, etc. for the Brahmins.

This sublimation of a caste was a necessary background for the social structure of Hindus. "By creating a class of men devoted to the pursuit of knowledge and the study of the law, the ancient Hindus hoped to build their social structure on unshakable foundation". Brahmins gradually began to take advantage of their superior position and duties. They were proud of their occupation and jealous of their knowledge. Gradually they began to instruct the public in theories of their divine

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53. ibid.
office and origin. The ignorant masses were made to accept their lofty pretentions. In all the various ceremonies from birth till death a Hindu has to depend on a Brahmin. For this he has to be fed and given presents. Thus they amassed great wealth and stored them in temples. Their supremacy in India has been such that they have occupied a position next to God. In certain books the Brahmin’s body is said to be a centre of pilgrimage. The holy ganges is in the Brahmins right ear, the sacred fire in his right hand, and all the holy places of the world in his right foot. The Brahmin’s mouth is the most exalted of the gods and anything put in it is sure to bring prosperity to the world. But the coming of the Muslims and the British into India deprived the Brahmins of many of the extraordinary privileged positions they had enjoyed.

The Kshatriyas are the defenders of society from external aggression and internal disorder. The military organization of the state is entrusted to them. They are in charge of political arrangements. They must get necessary training and possess proper aptitude for waging wars and resisting hostile elements and forces internal as well as external. They cannot alter the dharma but only administer it. The changes in dharma are introduced by the Brahmins. The proud kshatriyas who did not meekly submit to the Brahmins waged many wars with them. But in all cases the successful were the priests.
There is a wide gap between the actual nature of man and the ideal to be achieved. This great distance does not tempt him to divert from the ideal. But he attempts to develop a precious ideal from the life. The process is very slow. Many strivings and sacrifices are needed to generate a holy character. Most men reach this stage only rung by rung. The asrama dharma is a device for gradual improvement of human nature.

Man is born for a divine purpose. He is born because of the unextinguished passions. It is through suffering that ignorance is converted to enlightenment. Without suffering there is no progress, without death no resurrection. "The more we die to ourselves, the more do we live to god." Life becomes perfect when the death and life is completed. It is to attain this state of perfection, that the four stages are prescribed to a Hindu. "Each stage in life is in tune with the highest and is preparatory for it."

The four asramas, or the stages in the life of the individual, are important in Hindu ethics. It helps the evolution of man through successive stages. The word 'asrama' comes from the root which means 'to suffer'. Asramadharma in Hindu religion is an ethical organization of an individual's personal life with a view to facilitate a fruitful synthesis of the way of action (pravṛthi) and the way of renunciation and also to the realisation of the four ends of man (purushartha). The outlook of the life of the Aryans, as represented in Rig Veda is essentially characterised by an exuberence of attachment for an interest in living. Thus Vedas do not show any trace of renunciation or attitude of resignation on the part of the Aryans. On the other hand, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that among the indigenous people of India there existed several religious, physical and spiritual discipline. Thus the asrama dharma gradually evolved as a result of merging of pravrthi of the Aryans and Nivrthi of the un-Aryans.

Another factor that has helped the formation and consolidation of the asrama dharma is the great ethical concept of the three debts (mātrya). Every individual is born with the debt that he owes to god (deva-ma) - the debt to seers (rśi-ma) and the debt to his ancestors (pitr-ma). "The asrama dharma organizes the life of an individual in such a manner that he
remains ever mindful of his sacred obligation and is also given adequate opportunities for their redemption."\textsuperscript{56}

Asrama means exertion or the place where such exertions are performed. The four stages may appear in the life of a single individual or, one or two stages may occur in later transmigration. It regulates the life from its beginning to the end. The first two stages pertain to the pravrthi marga and the last two to the nivrthi marga. Due occupations and training are assigned to each period of life. One cannot enter any other stage prematurely. He can enter next stage only when each stage has been completed because evolution is gradual not revolutionary. "In rare and exceptional cases a student is allowed to become a Sannyasi, his debts to the world having been fully paid in a previous birth."\textsuperscript{57} Sri Sankara is the one who had entered the last stage straight from the stage of a student.

The first stage is entered at the age of twelve and is that of the student or Brahmacarya. It commences after the

\textsuperscript{56} R. N. Dandakhar, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 73.

\textsuperscript{57} Swami Sivananda, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 115.
rite of initiation (upanayana). It involves a command of the sacred knowledge, mastery of the self and the preparation for shouldering the responsibilities he has to fulfil in later life. The student has to live at the house of the teacher and is expected to live begging. The stay in the house of guru has many advantages. There will not arise any conflict between the teacher and the parents as regards the method and content of learning. Another benefit is that there will be a constant personal contact between the teacher and the student which helps in the moulding up of the student's mind and character. The practice of begging implies that it is mainly the responsibility of the community to maintain the student. Moreover it engenders the habit of simple and self-reliant life and develops a sense of equality among all the students. It also helps the student to realise that wealth is not an essential condition for good life. Bramacharya is intended to build up the psycho-physical constitution of man. Building up of the body and training of the mind are the main aims of this stage. Loyalty to truth and respect for tradition are also insisted on. These he has to observe through all stages with some modifications to prepare himself for emancipation.

The second stage is that of the house holder or grahastasrama. It is described as the sacred field for all
achievements and it offers the greatest scope for the realisation of the first three ends of man namely dharma, artha and kama. It is the foundation and support of all other asramas. It is in this stage that one can perform the duties enjoined by the Vedas. This state is also called the social stage because of the emergence of the social self. Family life and social duty help to attain the householder’s goal. Marriage is a religious duty of a Hindu and it forms the stepping stone to grahastasrama. It marks the beginning of a more responsible and purposeful life to come. He has to look upon the home as a trust, which has come down to him from his forefathers and to carry forward to prosperity without any diminution. This helps to maintain a spiritual continuity. The panchamahayajnas namely Brahmayajna, pitryajna, devayajna, bhutayajna and nryajna are obligatory on the part of a householder. He should also be regular in the performance of religious duties like Shraddhas, ceremonials for departed ancestors etc. The spirit of service and sacrifice underlying all these actions elevates the grahastasrama to a higher level. Life willing co-operation from his wife is received in all the religious practices. A woman is not qualified for full observance of asramadharma. She depends on her husband for all spiritual matters. Household duties constitute her proper ritual and her husband is the perceptor or guru. But without the active
participation of a wife, a man's religious life is deficient. A woman is responsible for the solidarity and stability of the family. A woman's roll as a mother is more divine than even divinity.

The third stage is the stage of renunciation. Grahastasrami, having paid his debts to society and his ancestors is free to seek his own salvation. For this he learns all things and goes to forest to lead the life of renunciation. The stage is known as vanaprastha. The Aranyaka part of the Vedas instructs the householder about the stage of vanaprastha. It is a life of strict discipline and austerity. A vanaprastha neglects his health and grows hair, nails and beard and he never washes. He lives by begging and reading and reciting the sacred books. He mediates on the Absolute. He impresses upon the community the rich experiences he has gathered during a long and busy life. Knowledge and self expression are sought through contemplation and austerities.

The fourth stage, that of the Sannyasa, represents the highest type of Indian manhood. It is the quest for union with Brahman. Knowledge and self repression come to fruition. The last stage is forbidden unless the other three are successfully completed. "All the duties prescribed for the
different stages of life should be duly performed and only when all these duties have been discharged stage by stage, should one aspire for emancipation.\footnote{Sumita Das Gupta, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 92-93.} The individual attains self annihilation through the extinction of all prejudices, hatred and ambition. His services are devoted to society. In him the impersonal predominates over the personal. He has overcome evil by love and cannot sin. Soul of the man at its highest stretch is in a sannyasi. It is the highest of all stages since it brings the fruit of realisation which is the ultimate aim of a Hindu. Liberation from karma and transmigration is attained at this stage. A sannyasi is a "Ativarnashram" that is above varna and asrama. He is quite a free man. He is the living god on the earth. Though all the four stages are meant for all the people of all castes, the last two are attempted by only a small percentage of persons, those from priestly group.

The concept of sannyasa in Hinduism has been very much misunderstood. It is suggested that sannyasa is a negative virtue and it is not a social value, and sannyasins have no social personality. The practice of sannyasa in Hinduism saves sufficient ground for such characterisation. Bhagavat Gita lays down the concept of a true sannyasin. A sannyasin is one who practises renunciation in action and not of action.
The aim of the religion of the Hindus is the attainment of mukti or liberation from bandha or bondage for the individual soul. It is the master word in Indian philosophy and is the perennial word in Indian religious vocabulary. The religious ideal of moksa is "the highest value recognized in Indian culture"\textsuperscript{59} and the ultimate goal of life for Hindus. It opens up new horizons beyond life and death. Moksa marks the consummation of the process of moral development and it is the end of spiritual culture. Every religion is intended to help the growth of spiritual culture. Moksa is a way of life that "gives a sense of destiny divine to man and helps him to discover life's deeper meanings and its true purpose."\textsuperscript{60} It inspires him to explore what lies beyond the frontiers of matter, mind and their existence.

The Sanskrit terms moksa and mukti are derived from the linguistic etymon 'muc' meaning 'release'. These words


denote release from the tedious and painful cycle of transmigration or samsara. The word samsara means to wander or pass through a series of states or conditions. "The embodied soul who has no spiritual enlightenment has to whirl round innumerable turns of births called samsara, to get a requital and recompense for the deeds done by him in a former life until he achieves final emancipation."61 Samsara or bondage is the process of birth and rebirth and the consequent miseries to which the individual is subjected. It is the beginningless cycle of birth, death and rebirth, a process compelled by karma. Since karma is the cause of samsara, mukti is the release from karma and its results. The term samsara is used by Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism.

Philosophically moksa is recognized as the most important of purusharthsas, for it expresses the supreme object of human beings, his return to the primary cause - the ultimate. It is spoken of as the parama purushartha. Moksa which forms the last of the purusharthsas is the most important and the culmination of the other three. Moksa has priority over the other objects. "Moksa is, generally speaking, to transcend Karma, Artha and

Dharma and to attain the ultimate liberation Nirvana, Salvation, Mukti.  

The other three goals help the individual to destroy the bondage of Samsara. "To adhere to any aim in life requires a strong sense of purpose and plan. Nothing could be more inspiring than Moksa - the ultimate of man's aspirations."  

"It is the divinisation of man that takes place in the state of moksa."  

"The enlightened state is called release or moksa. It is attaining one's true selfhood in Brahman."  

The Hindu concept of moksa is not a vague aspiration to make one believe, but it enlivens man's spirits and brightens him with the joy of living. Moksa forms a promising future even for the down trodden and the oppressed. It enables him to be free from the morbid fear of being doomed to utter annihilation. The perfection of human existence is to realise the ultimate identity of personal existence with the primordial creative energy from which all existence originates. Hence moksa is not any development from a less perfect to a more perfect state. It is a mere realisation of the real nature of the

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soul. "The state of moksa is not something essentially different from the real nature of the self."66 Moksa which is the purest state of the self is neither a merit nor a demerit.

The ideal of moksa is central to all Indian philosophical doctrines except Charvaka. Charvakas deny the possibility of moksa as there is no liberation from the inevitable sufferings of life. All the systems agree that the experience in this life is on the whole miserable and deliverance from it or cessation of it is to be sought. Philosophy in India originated under the pressure of moral and physical evil in life. The problem of how to remove evil has been overcome with moksa. "Philosophic endeavour was directed primarily to find a remedy for the ills of life." 67 "The aim of both philosophy and religion of the Hindus, is generally speaking, the attainment of mukti or liberation from bandha or bondage, for the individual soul jiva."68 There is the belief that there must be an end and it is not to be attained at some distant kingdom, but to be sought with


in us. This destination marks an escape from life, a migration from somewhere where there is suffering to somewhere where there is no suffering. "Moksa consists in throwing off the shackles of individuality and there by passing into the mystic state of spiritual union with the Supreme Being."69

The notion of moksa is a much later development in the history of Indian thought than the notion of dharma. It comes as one of the Hindu fourths that was added to the Vedic triads. In the Vedas, Samhitas and Brahmanas, the term moksa or mukti is not found. It is only a later development. The Vedic conception of emancipation is to secure an eternal abode in the heaven and enjoy celestial happiness in the company of gods. Life in heaven is believed to be immortal. Hence the Vedas insist on the different kinds of pleasures and comforts through the performance of rituals and good actions. These are essential for a superior life and a civilized society. The Vedas being the sacred books of Hindus, give full significance to spiritual life also. The main purpose of the Vedas is to lead man to salvation and ultimate attainment of Brahman. So to say that the Vedas aim only at the

69. R. N. Dandakhar, op. cit., p. 60.
attainment of worldly pleasures and comforts as final aim of life is false. The Vedas speak of the divine state which can be obtained only by enjoying the comforts and pleasures in a spirit of resignation and renunciation. If the Vedas do not elaborate the art of obtaining man's highest ideal, it will be wrong to consider them as a form of divine knowledge. According to Swami Dayananda, views on salvation have their foundations in the Vedas and Upanisads. The Brahmans prescribe sacrifices with a view to assure the fellowship with gods in paradise.

The term moksha first appeared in the late Upaniṣads and also in early Buddhism. In the early Upaniṣads, the term used is mukti. In Chandogya Upaniṣad which predates Gita by three centuries, the term appears only as Vimoksa or unvimoksa. In many scriptures words like amrto meaning immortality is used instead of moksha. It was only in the sixth century B.C. that texts began to give evidence about the release from the cycle of rebirth or samsara. In the upaniṣadic period the conception of heaven changed. Heaven is not eternal and it does not conduce a true spiritual freedom and immortality. Upaniṣads show that life in heaven is only a prolongation of life on the earth and the soul is again born into the world. The idea is expressed in Chandogya Upaniṣad. "And as here on earth whatever has been acquired by exertion perishes, so perishes what ever is acquired for the next
world by sacrifices and other good actions performed on earth. Those who depart from hence without having discovered the self and those true desires, for them there is no freedom in all the worlds.” The Upanisads reveal the identity of Brahman and Atman. It is this identity that man has to seek, which is given in real knowledge. Realisation of Atman or the true self is considered the only goal and summum bonnum of human life, which secures true spiritual freedom and happiness. This identity of Brahman and Atman is the state of moksa in Upanisads. The Upanishadic concept of emancipation is not deliverance from reaped births and the sufferings of the empiric world, but it is rather the consequence of the doctrine of Idealism and the philosophy of non-dual monism. The original motive of emancipation is in the sphere of intellect. Therefore true philosophical knowledge alone constitute the direct means of emancipation and deliverance from death. “As anything done in the sphere of cause and effect was caught up in the same chain, action was no remedy, knowledge of the truth alone could help one to rise above the transmigratory cycle of the world of cause and effect.” Behind the world of cause and effect, there is one

70. Chandogya Upanisad, 8-1-6.

permanent, real existence (sat) changeless and consequently sorrowless and of which knowledge is not quality but its very form. "The highest and the truest conception of the self as Brahman arises only when we can conceive the self in itself apart from its false identification with other things." \(^{72}\) "Only he who knows him (the purusha) escapes from the kingdom of death; by no other road it is possible to go." \(^{73}\) It is said in the Chandogya Upanishad that "who knows the self overcomes grief" \(^{74}\) and the Mandukya Upanishad that "He who knows Brahman attains the highest." \(^{75}\) Emancipation is the enlightenment and intuitive vision of the eternal unity of the thinker's self with Brahman. The principal aim of seers was to get away from the unreal to the real, darkness to light and from mortality to immortality. "Lead me from the unreal to the real, from darkness to light and to deathlessness from death." \(^{76}\)  

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72. Surama Das Gupta, Development Of Moral Philosophy In India \textit{op. cit.}, p. 12.


74. \textit{Chandogya Upanisad}, 7-1-3.

75. \textit{Mandukhya Upanisad}, 3-1-9.

The failure to attain the direct experience of truth, and consequently of freedom, is due to man's spiritual ignorance, which is all but universal and which forms the chief course of sin and suffering. It can be dispelled by direct knowledge of ultimate truth ordained through purification of heart, and through a constant striving for detachment of the soul from worldly desires. Since emancipation is an actual realization of the unity in our experience, it needs a long course of training. The state of sravana helps the aspirant to acquire the truth from a proper perceptor or guru. Manana is the next stage in which one reflects upon what is got from sravana. It helps in gaining intellectual conviction. Dhyana is the next stage in which one constantly dwells upon the truth of which one has intellectually convinced. It helps in gaining direct experience. Direct experience of moksa is possible only through detachment. Hence Sanyasa is the stage prescribed by the Upanisads to attain moksa. The perfect ideal of our life is bound only in the Eternal Reality. "It is the imperative sensible undertaking of a great quest in which alone there is peace." 77

There are passages in the Upanisads which show that emancipation also consists in uniting with god and acquiring a

77. Chandogya Upanisad, 8-23-1.
state of equality and likeness with God. This is however on a lower plane and is meant for those who cannot rise to the heights of transcedental idealism. "When ignorance which is the cause of bondage is dispelled by wisdom, the soul realises its non-difference from Brahman, and this is release which therefore, need not wait till the decease of the body." 78 Jivanmukti is the state of release while one is still living. When a person is dissociated from his physical accompaniments, he attains videha-mukti which is the final release. If an individual fails to attain the supreme goal in this life, he can attain it in some other lives, for he will be given unlimited opportunities by rebirths to reach the goal of perfection.

In Gita the word moksa is not used, instead the word 'mukta' is used. One who is released is referred to as mukta. Moksa in Gita, means a perfect peace, an endless and absolute pleasure attained by coming in contact with the Absolute. Liberation is the fruit of the whole process of spiritual integration around the self. Liberation is release from the bondage of works, from old age and death, and from material nature itself to which contingent beings are subjected. It is the way by

which one approaches Brahman and becomes Brahman itself, the highest way home from which there is no return. Liberation means never to be born again. Once a man reaches this state he draws near to God Himself, participates in His mode of being and enters into Him. "A liberated man has passed from the sphere of karma into the sphere of action. Liberation means release from bondage of works." Liberation is achieved by the integration of matter by achieving that original oneness which is characteristic of the self in itself as it is of Brahman.

Different means are laid down in Gita to attain moksa. Gita, throughout, lays special stress on the value of knowledge as a very important means which directly leads to emancipation. "He could declare the most mysterious knowledge (jnana) together with intuitive knowledge (vijnana), a knowledge of which leads to release from evil." Devotion to God is another means of emancipation. The self is a part of God. Its nature is pure wisdom in its embodied state. The devotion may be either to the personal God or to the impersonal Supreme Self. Lord Krishna recommends the method of devotion to himself as a

80. ibid., 9-1.
personal Lord. Sri Krishna further teaches Arjuna that by undivided devotion to his universal form, he could be known, seen and entered into. Karma or action is another means of emancipation prescribed by Gita. Action implies right action without desire for the fruit and accompanied with devotion. The term used by Krishna is Nishkama Karma. Krishna teaches the doctrine of duty without desire and for the sake of duty. By the practice of discipline, one controls the movements of his body, mind and sense objects. A true karmayogi takes all external objects with complete indifference. By practice of control he views success and failure which are the fruits of work alike. This was a great improvement on the vedic religion. It frees a man’s mind from the state of indecision and delusion created by the various sacrificial action and the varying fruits thereof as taught in the Vedas. Karma is not an end in itself but only a means to the end. All actions are done by our lower nature and not our true self. It was Gita for the first time taught the doctrine of right action without desire. It was a modification of the existing views of total renunciation and abandon of all actions. Yoga is the general term used in Gita for the attainment of perfection. Yoga means union. Krishna gives two definitions to yoga. Yoga is defined as control or balance of mind by which one views success and failure as alike. All the three functions of the mind namely reason, will and emotion can be controlled. The second definition of Yoga is skill in work or practice of discernment without desire.
The conception of mokśa in Gita is positive. The highest conception of the soul in the Upaniṣads and the Gita is to become one with the Brahman. But the Gita differs from the Upaniṣads first and foremost in its teachings about the goal of human life. According to the Upaniṣads the phenomenal world and human existence are in some sense unreal. Man should renounce this worldly life and aim at realising the essential identity of his soul with the Upaniṣadic self. The Upaniṣadic attitude towards life and society is fundamentally individualistic. The Gita on the other hand teaches that man has a duty to promote Lokasangraha or stability, solidarity and progress of society. Society can progress only on the principle of the ethical interdependence of its various constituents. As an essential constituent of society, man must have an active awareness of his social obligations. The sva-dharma or the specific social obligations of different types of men are best embodied in the doctrine of the four castes. The Gita, emphasises the metaphysical significance, in which all classes are equal and essential and also insists mainly on man's active recognition of sva-dharma or his own specific social obligations. The Upaniṣadic ideal of spiritual emancipation through knowledge involves the acceptance of the unreal character of the phenomenal world. Through his actions, consciously or unconsciously man becomes involved in the tentacles of this fictitious world. The ideal of social integrity through sva-dharma enjoined by the Gita, implies an active way of life. The activism inculcated by the Gita is not
of the common variety. It is tinged with an element of renunciation. It is only one's attachment to the fruits of action that keeps one eternally involved in the cycles of birth and death. In contrast to the ritual sacrifices the Gita offers a concept of sacrifice embracing all actions done for the fulfilment of one's sva-dharma and without attachment to their fruits. A true practitioner of the yoga of action (karma yogin) also becomes a true devotee. By following his own duty, the karma yogin is doing the will of god and participating in the divine project.

Although liberation commonly means the cessation of the process of birth and rebirth, there is difference of opinion among the schools of Indian philosophy and the religion with regard to the exact nature of the state of liberation and the time when it is actually attained. The diversity of the views encountered in the discussions of moksa stems directly from the metaphysical position held by the respective schools. "There are sharp differences among the Indians as to the nature of moksa." 81 There are two diametrically opposed views on moksa. One is the positive state of bliss and the other a completely negative notion. The latter view holds that since the soul is eternally free, moksa consists not in the realisation of something positive, but only in the removal of all those extraneous and accidental

features that have caused its bondage. What remains after the removal of these negative conditions is realised as something positive by the self. "The avoidance of misery and acquisition of santi is the supreme human end."82

The Samkhya of Sage Kapila, whose doctrines have echoes of the Upanisads, considers release from the misery of all life here and in the heaven is attainable by the knowledge of the truth concerning self or souls on the one hand, and the material universe on the other. According to Samkhya yoga self is not a substance with the quality of consciousness distinct from body, mind, intellect and ego. The self is a transcendent subject whose very essence is pure consciousness, freedom, eternity and immortality. The union of purusa with the subtle body is the cause of samsara. The conceptual and imputed contact of purusa and prakriti is bondage. Purusa is entirely free from the opposition of merit and demerit. The cause of bondage is wrong identification of the self with the mind, body and the ego. Salvation is attained through breaking the union by means of the knowledge of the distinction between purusa and prakriti. "Salvation in the Samkhya system is only phenomenal since bondage does not belong to purusa."83 Bondage and release refer to the

conjunction and the disjunction of purusa and prakriti resulting from non-discrimination and discrimination. So long as there are objects concealing the real nature of the soul, liberation cannot be attained. The yoga of Sage Patanjali sets forth the process of psychological discipline by which one can attain this release or isolation of the soul from involvement with matter and its doings. Yoga which is complementary to Samkhya forms the practical side of it. The yoga system works out a sadhana for the purusa which will enable one's liberation. The instrument that entangles the purusa into the bondage of prakriti is citta. Control of citta is the definition of yoga. The citta of man generally flows out and takes on the form of things and experiences them. The outflowing of Citta has to be checked and stilled. It is called citta vrithi nirodha. The control of the mind is most difficult for man. As long as the play of citta is there, man is condemned to experience the sorrow of life. There are two methods to arrest the modifications of citta. They are practice of yoga and cultivation of non-attachment. The practice of yoga involves a necessary and sound ethical life.

Hiranyagarbha is the founder of the yoga system. It is a method which imposes restrictions on diet, sleep, company, behaviour, speech and thought. Yoga should be practised under the careful supervision of an expert and illumined yogi. It is the method to control mind and attain perfection. It removes the restlessness of body and mind. Yoga is effected by controlling
the vrittis or thoughts of the mind. Patanjali prescribes the Ashtanga yoga without the observance of which moksa is unattainable. Samkhya uses the term 'kaivalya' meaning one's regaining of primitive unity where as yoga uses apavarga meaning escape from the cycle of rebirths.

The Nyaya concept of moksa is called 'apavarga' which is defined negatively as the cessation of pain and not as the enjoyment of positive pleasure. "Release is freedom from pain. .84 It is a state beyond pain and pleasure, it is a condition of perfect gloom from which there will be no reawakening. All the souls are released from all bonds of their connection with body and senses, and exist as pure unconscious substances. Only the soul which is no longer associated with body, sense organs, and intellect is freed from pain. This will come to pass when one sees that all pleasures of the world are tinged with pain and that the body, senses and intellect are the vehicles of pain. When the mind is awakened to the true nature of things by right knowledge pain will fade away as the darkness of the night gives way to light at dawn. The faults will have disappeared and there will be no longer any incentive to action, which in turn, will free the soul from future rebirths. In a state of liberation the self is neither subject to pain and misery

nor capable of experiencing pleasure and happiness. It is not a state of blissful existence. It is a state of mere substantial existence for the individual soul apart from any connection with the body and the sense organs. Liberation is attained only through a gradual process of spiritual evolution.

Spiritual evolution is achieved by pursuing true and right knowledge with the proper instruments. Logic and reasoning are the proper instruments of knowledge. Moksa is a revelation not a construction. "The human mind is like a search light, it reveals the objects and does not construct them." Liberation is a spiritual experience which dispels all doubts and tensions and secures perfect bliss. This spiritual experience is attainable only by studying the scriptures under a competent teacher and reflecting on the truth. To transform this mediate knowledge into a form of immediate experience, one has to mediate till one attains the experience. Final liberation is possible only after death.

The earlier Mimamsa view is that the highest human goal is heaven, which can be attained by performing Vedic rites. But later Mimamsakas accept moksa, from the bondage of the body,

as the highest good. They know that the performance of actions leads to repeated birth. Those who control passions and give up the desire for the fruits of actions do not tend to cause rebirth. The Mimamsakas stood for the performance of ordained duties and sacrificial and meritorious acts. Actions, of course, cannot be eliminated so long as man lives. Through the disinterested performance of obligatory duties and knowledge of the self one gradually exhausts the karmas accumulated. Such a man who is free from all karma ties is never born again and he is liberated. There is difference of opinion as to the nature of liberated soul. Some Mimamsakas hold that liberation is a state of total cessation of painful experience and it is not a state of bliss. According to Prabhakara liberation consists in the total disappearance of dharma and adharma, whose operation is the cause of rebirth. But some Mimamsakas go further and hold that liberation is not only cessation of pain, but also a manifestation of eternal bliss. According to Kumarila, moksa is the state of atman itself, free from all pain. Moksa is a positive state which can be attained through karma combined with jnana.

The Advaita concept of moksa is the same as the Upanisadic concept. Sankara is of the view that self is identical with Brahman and it is ignorance that conceals the true nature of the self. The study of vedanta and ardent desire for liberation
helps in the process. Sankara believes in the state of jivan mukti and after the death of the body, one enters the state of videhamukti. To the Advaidist, nirvikalpaka samadhi is the ultimate state of ecstatic trance in which Brahman in its true undifferentiated and unconditioned nature is realised. But with regard to the time, when liberation is attained, the form of manifestation and the way of attainment there are difference of opinion among the vedantians. To Ramanuja moksa is the true realisation of the self and its right relationship with the Lord. He holds that liberation does not consist in the realisation of his identity with God, but in his loving cognition of God as the Lord of all and in his blessed communion with the divine. The bondage of soul to the body is due to its karma. Hence liberation from bondage must be sought through work and knowledge. The performance of religious rites without any desire for reward purifies the mind, and a critical study of Vedanta enables the individual to attain moksa. The way to moksa is through bhakti and prapti. Bhakti is affection for the perfect Lord based on a clear knowledge and deep conviction of His majesty and His tender love. Bhakti involves a course of training in three stages, karma-yoga, bhaktiyoga and jnanayoga. Karmayoga stands for doing the duties of one’s station of life in the spirit of renunciation. Jnana yoga is to help the disciple to realise the true nature of one’s self in relation to God. Prapti is the unreserved, complete
and conscious surrender of our entire self to the Lord in order to be sacred. It is throwing ourselves into the Lord, and holding back nothing from Him. "The doctrine of self-surrender or prapti is organic to Sri Ramanuja's metaphysics which holds that the relation of the soul to the Lord is one of irrevocable dependence."\textsuperscript{86} The individual learns that God is the Lord of all and that he is not identical with the body but is a part of God. Liberation can be attained only through God's grace which is bestowed on one who is sincerely devoted to God. Such devout meditation leads to direct experience of realisation of God. They emphasize love and adoration rather than works and knowledge. The liberated soul becomes similar to God, free from ignorance and bondage, enjoys perfect love and wisdom. This state can be attained only after death and hence Ramajuja does not recognize jivan mukta.

\textsuperscript{86} ibid., p. 149.