SMRTI
A STUDY IN THE SACRALIZATION
OF SOCIAL PROCESSES

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate the advantages of adopting a sociological approach to the study of the smṛti literature of India. For this purpose a functional-sociological approach is outlined by extrapolating and combining classical, sociological principles taken from the writings of Emile Durkheim, Max Weber and Peter Berger. The approach is designed to illustrate the three principal phases in the sacralization of social processes--explanation, legitimation and perpetuation. In Chapter One these three phases are discussed and defined with the aid of Emile Durkheim's and Mircea Eliade's concepts of the sacred, Max Weber's concepts of rationalization, legitimacy, traditionalism and charisma, and Peter Berger's concepts of cosmization, 'world-construction', 'world-maintenance' and plausibility structure.

In Chapters Two and Three this approach is applied to three of the major smṛti texts--The Visnu Purāna, The Manu Smṛti and the Mahābhārata. Each of these texts admirably illustrates one phase of the sacralization process. In addition, the three aspects of the Indian concept, dharma--cosmic, social and individual--are discussed in terms of the sacralization process.

The advantages of this type of approach to smṛti literature lie in its ability to point to some of the reasons for Hinduism's historical emergence during the period of smṛti
literature, the fifth century B.C. to the fifth century A.D. Second, it demonstrates the relationship of the different genres of smrti to one another. Third, it provides a framework for the understanding of smrti which is familiar to non-Indians, and which harmonizes well with smrti as defined by the Indians themselves.
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Better one's own duty, (though) imperfect,
Than another's duty well performed.

"Bhagavadgītā" III, 34
CHAPTER I

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

Know then thyself, presume not God to scan;
The proper study of mankind is man.

"An Essay on Man"

The purpose of the study of religion is, presumably, the understanding of religious phenomena, or, in other words, the understanding of man's religious behavior. In accord with Pope's dictum the emphasis is on man. Yet the study of religion poses a unique problem: Is it possible to understand man's religions without becoming believing members of his various religious traditions. The answer which has been put forth by many writers on the subject of religion since the middle of the nineteenth century has been "Yes, it is". To understand religious phenomena by explanations other than those given by the religious adherents themselves has been one goal of the study of religion. By approaching religion in this fashion it has been possible to view the phenomenon from many different perspectives—psychological, sociological, anthropological, etc.

The major advantage of this type of "objective" approach to the study of religion is that it provides the observer with a framework by which he may compare many reli-
gious traditions in his attempt to understand the nature of religion in general. The main disadvantage of the approach lies in its inability to discover the religious aesthetic or the emotional attachment which the believing member of a religious tradition experiences. However, for most researchers this "subjective" understanding of religion is limited to the tradition into which they are born. Therefore, in order to gain access to a multiplicity of religious phenomena, it is necessary to adopt a more "objective" approach. Despite its limitations this method has provided many insights into man's religious behavior. Therefore, it is the purpose of this study to use the discoveries of certain scholars who have adopted a sociological approach to the study of religion and to apply their findings to a specific body of religious texts in order to increase our understanding of them. I propose to outline a functional-sociological approach by extrapolating and combining principles taken primarily from the writings of Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, Peter Berger and Mircea Eliade. I shall then employ the approach in the analysis of some of the major texts of the smrti tradition of India--the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, the Manu Smṛti and the Mahābhārata--my thesis being that this approach is one of the most illuminating to take with respect to the religious texts to be examined.

The reasons for adopting a functional-sociological approach to these texts are many. The most compelling is the
fact that all of these texts prescribe rules for social action. The central theme of the *Mahābhārata* is the catastrophic conflict between the Pandavas and the Kauravas caused by the decline of dharma. The *Bhagavadgītā*, the most beloved portion of the epic, teaches that the best path to salvation is the performance of social duties without regard for the fruits of action. The *Manu Smīrti* outlines the social duties for each of the four classes and for each of the four stages of life. The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* discusses the cosmic order and explains its relation to the terrestrial and social order. In all the texts the inter-relationship of the cosmos and society is a central theme.

Hinduism itself seems to encourage a sociological study. One unifying feature of the diverse religious practices which have been subsumed under the general rubric, Hinduism, is a consistent emphasis on the importance of dharma.¹ In order to qualify as an orthodox Hindu a man must conscientiously perform his dharma.

In contrast to the orthodox sects, the heresy of the theophratries consists in the fact that they tear the individual away from his ritualistic duties, hence from the duties of the caste of his birth, and thus ignore or destroy his dharma. When this occurs the Hindu loses caste. And since only through caste can one belong to the Hindu community, he is lost to it. Dharma, that is, ritualistic duty, is the central criterion of Hinduism.²

Hinduism offers us one of the most consistently rationalized and unified pictures of the place of the individual in relation to society ever devised by man. Its beliefs continually reinforce the traditional social ties between individuals, the traditional social structures and the traditional social values.

Hindu piety in particular, as we have already suggested, maintained the strongest possible power of tradition, since the presuppositions of Hinduism constituted the most consistent religious expression of the organic view of society.³

A functional-sociological approach of the type which is proposed in this paper has been criticized by Clifford Geertz for its inability to deal with social change. He maintains that the "tendency to emphasize the functional aspects of a people's social usages and customs rather than their disfunctional implications . . . has led to a some-what


over-conservative view of the role of ritual and belief in social life." Undoubtedly, Geertz's criticisms of the approach in general are well founded. However, I feel that his criticisms ironically, only help to support the validity of taking a functional-sociological approach in the specific case of the *smṛti* literature of India. This literature dates from approximately the fifth century B.C. to the fourth or fifth century A.D. The literature, therefore, developed during the formative period of Hinduism. And it is reasonable to assume that during the formative period of a religion the integrating or functional aspects of its beliefs would thus be adopted by the society in which it is emerging. The historical fact of Hinduism's emergence at this time is a strong indication that its beliefs were well suited to meet the particular needs of the society during that era. In addition, Hinduism, once established, continued to exert a profoundly conservative influence on the subsequent changes which took place in Indian society.

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5 I am at this point distinguishing between Hinduism and Indian society. As it will later become evident in the body of this text, this is an extremely difficult position to maintain. However, Hinduism is not as old as Indian society. The identification of Hinduism and Indian society is, in the main, the accomplishment of *smṛti* literature. Therefore, I feel it is permissible to make this distinction when discussing the 'developing Hinduism'.
Indeed, the major impetus for change came not from within the society, but rather from without, through the vehicle of invading armies. Max Weber argues:

For every religion we shall find that a change in the socially decisive strata has usually been of profound importance. On the other hand, the type of a religion, once stamped, has usually exerted a rather far-reaching influence upon the life of very heterogeneous strata.\(^6\)

And elsewhere he says:

Not ideas, but material and ideal interests, directly govern men's conduct. Yet very frequently the 'world images' that have been created by 'ideas' have, like switchmen, determined the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamic of interest. 'From what' and 'for what' one wished to be redeemed and, let us not forget, 'could be' redeemed, depended upon one's image of the world.\(^7\)

The preceding passages were taken from the writings of Max Weber—a man whose primary interest in religion lay in demonstrating the casual significance of religious beliefs and ideas in the dynamics of social change. In these passages he is speaking of religion in general but his specific conclusions with regard to Hinduism were that its religious beliefs tended to conserve and perpetuate


\(^7\)Ibid., p.280.
traditional social patterns rather than to serve as a dynamic factor in the area of social change. Thus his conclusions offer additional support for the adoption of a functional-sociological approach to the specific case of Hindu religious phenomena.

Finally, a sociological approach is recommended by the collective or social nature of religion itself. Religious phenomena are not identifiable until they become social phenomena; every religion must secure for itself a social base in order to ensure that its beliefs and rituals will survive. To affirm the social nature of religion is not to ignore the inspiration of individual men in their solitude. Nevertheless it is a fact that the founders of religion and the great mystics in each tradition have not kept their religious experiences to themselves but have sought to share them with others. Indeed, they have often felt compelled to do so.8

It must be emphasized, however, that to take a sociological approach to a certain body of religious texts is not to be guilty of a 'nothing but' approach to the phenomena. As William James points out, the purpose is

8To support this statement one need only to point to the obvious examples: Buddha, Jesus, Muhammed, Shankara, Rāmānuja, Saint Teresa, etc.
not to 'explain away' the material; rather, the purpose is to increase our understanding of it. It must also be stressed that the adoption of a sociological approach does not imply the endorsement of a Durkheimian theory of the origin of religion. Durkheim believes that religion depends upon the logical priority of society for its existence. Without society religion could not exist. This in itself is not a surprising statement, for without society it is doubtful if man could exist. However, Durkheim goes on to assert that religious symbols are, in reality, the disguised expression of the collective realities of the society in which these symbols originate; the gods are, therefore, only a symbolic representation of the societies in which they are found. "If it (the totem) is at once the symbol of the god and of the society, is that not because the god and the society are only one?" These statements are in line with one of Durkheim's fundamental rules of sociological method which states that: "The first origins of all social processes of any importance should be sought in the internal constitution of the social group." This latter position will


not be endorsed in this paper. No theory of the origin of religion, sociological or otherwise, will be put forward or implied in the following chapters.

The view of society and religion which shall be proposed for the purposes of this work is similar to the view of society and culture which Clifford Geertz proposes:

One of the more useful ways—but far from the only one (italics mine)—of distinguishing between culture and social system is to see the former as an ordered system of meaning and of symbols, in terms of which social interaction takes place; and to see the latter as the pattern of social interaction itself . . . . On the one level there is the framework of beliefs, expressive symbols and values in terms of which individuals define their world, express their feelings, and make their judgements; on the other level there is the ongoing process of interactive behavior, whose persistent form we call social structure. Culture is the fabric of meaning in terms of which human beings interpret their experience and guide their action; social structure is the form that action takes, the actually existing network of social relations.12

By substituting the word 'religion' for the word 'culture' in the preceding discussion it is possible to obtain a preview of the theoretical considerations which will be dealt with in the first chapter. For the purpose of this paper religion will be defined as 'the framework of beliefs, expressive symbols and values in terms of which individuals define their world, express their feelings, and

12"Ritual and Social Change", p.33.
make their judgements' and which these same individuals hold to be sacred. Society will be defined as 'the form that action takes, the actually existing network of social relations'. Religion and society will thus be regarded as separate realities which, nonetheless, converge and complement each other in a very significant way.

This type of approach is not unique to Geertz; it is definitely found in the work of Max Weber and it is implied in Branislaw Malinowski's statement that "the collective and the religious, though impinging on each other, are by no means co-extensive." It is the relationship of society and religion, as defined by Hinduism, that will be the central concern of this paper. This relationship is epitomized by the concept of dharma. The major portion of this work, then, will be devoted to the demonstration of the manner in which Indian social processes are explained, legitimated and perpetuated by the means of sacralization and to the demonstration of how dharma epitomizes this relationship.

Two final introductory comments on the approach that will be taken in this paper remain to be made. First, since

13 Durkheim divides religion into two main categories: beliefs and rites. However, the emphasis in this paper will be restricted to religious beliefs. Nevertheless it should be noted that dharma is not only a concept but also a ritual.

religion and society will each be accorded an independent status, the approach itself does not preclude the possibility of social change. Presumably a change in society or a change in religion would cause a corresponding change in the inter-relationship of the two. Yet, the emphasis will not be on change but rather upon the type of inter-relationship between society and religion as defined by smṛti during a specific period in Indian history. Even Durkheim, who has been accused by his critics of taking a static, ahistorical approach to his subject matter, recognizes that a change in society may be caused by religion. However, this recognition developed gradually. In Suicide he made the statement that "religious conceptions are the products of the social environment, rather than its producers, and if they react, once formed, upon their own original causes, the reaction cannot be very profound."^{15} However, a few years later he greatly modified his position in Primitive Classification—a work which he wrote in conjunction with Marcel Mauss and which contained the germinal ideas for The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life. In Primitive Classification the following statement appears:

What characterizes the latter (i.e., primitive classification systems) is that ideas are organized on a model which is furnished by society. But once this organization of the collective mind exists, it is capable of reacting against its cause and of contributing to its change.¹⁶

Second, although religion and society will be accorded an equal and independent status in the approach they will not be given an equal treatment in the following analysis. The central focus will be on religion--on the religious ideas, myths and beliefs found in the texts themselves. The purpose of the paper will be to show how these beliefs serve to explain, legitimate and perpetuate social processes by the means of sacralization; to show how religious beliefs influence the inter-relationship of religion and society. The emphasis will not be on society or the demonstration of how a society utilizes religion to further its own ends. This distinction is an important one for it places the type of study which will be undertaken in the following chapter within the limits of the discipline of Religious Studies and not exclusively within the limits of the discipline of Sociology.

CHAPTER II

OUTLINE OF THE APPROACH

Possibly the best way to get a clear perspective of the type of approach which is proposed here is to picture two overlapping circles. One circle represents society; the other, religion. The common sector which the two circles share represents the realm of their interaction. Imagine a red line tracing the circumference of the circle labelled religion. The area marked in red denotes the focus of the study. In other words, what the approach is designed to demonstrate is the manner in which religious beliefs, myths and ideas influence the social processes which are indicated by the sector which is common to both circles.

In consequence of the writings of Max Weber and Emile Durkheim a sociological approach to religion has

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1See Appendix A for diagram.

2Since the purpose of this paper is not to identify the type of social processes upon which religion has had the most influence, the nature of these processes will remain largely undefined in the paper. For practical purposes they may be assumed to consist of the normal social activities in which human beings engage—marriage, the raising of children, economic activity, political activity, etc.
become popular during the last seventy years. Much of the sociological research on religion which we now possess may be placed within the context of a Weberian or a Durkheimian tradition, or within the context of a tradition which utilizes the insights of both men. This last method has been adopted by Peter Berger and it is the type of approach which is taken in this paper.

The approach which is outlined in this chapter provides the general theoretical background upon which the study of how smrti explains, legitimates and perpetuates social processes by means of sacralization is based. Hence the first section of this chapter is devoted to the definition of sacralization. The source for this definition is the concept of the sacred as it is identified and defined in the writings of Emile Durkheim and Mircea Eliade.

The second section of the chapter discusses the explanation of social processes in terms of the cosmic order. Here it is shown how religious beliefs and myths play a central role in the relating of the cosmic and social worlds to one another and in the creation of meaning and value. Peter Berger's concept of 'cosmization' is utilized to demonstrate the process whereby the relation of the cosmic and social worlds is established; Max Weber's concept of 'rationalization' is employed to demonstrate how meaningful patterns for human behavior are established and values created.
The third section on legitimation describes the manner in which religious beliefs aid in the establishment of normative patterns which harmonize the temporal sphere with the divine sphere and which are expressed in religious laws or rules for social action. The problem of authority is dealt with here, primarily in the context of Weber's concept of legitimacy.

The fourth section shows how the beliefs and the normative patterns perpetuate social processes by supplying the motivation necessary to carry out the prescribed social action. In this context the idea of personal salvation or religious liberation and Berger's concept of 'world maintenance' are utilized. The final step in the construction of the theory is to demonstrate how religion's influence on the explanation, legitimation and perpetuation of social processes depends ultimately on sacralization.

I. DURKHEIM'S AND ELIADE'S CONCEPTS OF THE SACRED

The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life has become one of the classic works on the subject of religion. Durkheim's use of religion and the category of the sacred to explain not merely the binding character of the social bond, not merely the origins of human thought and culture, but the very constitution of the human mind, must surely rank as one of the boldest and most brilliant
contributions of modern sociology. 3

According to Durkheim all religious beliefs that we know of presuppose a classification of all things of existence into two realms or classes which may be designated by the terms 'sacred' and 'profane'.

In all the history of human thought there exists no other example of two categories of things so profoundly differentiated or so radically opposed to one another. The traditional opposition of good and bad is nothing beside this; for the good and the bad are only two opposed species of the same class, namely morals, just as sickness and health are two different aspects of the same order of facts, life, while the sacred and the profane have always and everywhere been conceived by the human mind as two distinct classes, as two worlds between which there is nothing in common. 4

After analyzing the nature of the different things which the totemic peoples of Australia classified as sacred Durkheim came to the conclusion that these different sorts of things inspired similar sentiments in the minds of the believers. The cause of these things being regarded by the Australians as sacred was thus the result of this similar response. If this were the case, then some common principle must permeate the class of sacred things. Thus:

in reality, it is to this common principle that the cult is addressed. In other words,

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4Elementary Forms, pp.53-54.
totemism is the religion, not of such and such animals or men or images, but of an anonymous and impersonal force, found in each of these beings but not to be confounded with any of them.\(^5\)

Durkheim called this common principle the 'totemic principle'. Having discovered the source of the religious sentiment in what, in his view, was the most primitive society known to man he concluded that at the origin and basis of all religious thought were these impersonal forces which were capable of imbuing men and objects with a sacred character. According to Durkheim these forces were characterized by a dual nature; they consisted of a physical or material nature as well as a moral one.\(^6\) Man has always felt:

that outside of him there are active causes from which he gets the characteristic attributes of his nature and which, as benevolent powers, assist him, protect him, and assure him of a privileged fate. And of course, he must attribute to these powers a dignity corresponding to the great value of good things he attributes to them.\(^7\)

Durkheim believed that these experiences were not illusions; they were in fact firmly grounded in reality.

\(^5\)Ibid., p.217.
\(^6\)See Chapter III, pp.79-80 for a more detailed exposition of the moral and physical aspects of sacred force.
\(^7\)Ibid., p.243.
However, this anonymous force experienced by the Australians was not the experience of the power of the totemic gods, as the Australians believed, but it was the experience of the force of society, personified and objectified in totemic emblems, and expressed through the group. Society gives men their language, their traditions, their instruments, their rights, their knowledge; it protects men but it also forces them to act in certain ways which they would not naturally be inclined to do. Thus society is characterized by all the attributes with which men have endowed their gods. Society is the origin of the sacred.

Durkheim's theory of the origin of the sacred is not endorsed in this paper. Many other writers have posited equally plausible explanations to account for it. What is important here is his description of the nature of the category of the sacred. The presence of the sacred is established only if a certain type of human response is evoked. The

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response is typified by the feeling of the presence of an exalting power. Virtually anything may become a vehicle or a vessel of the sacred; a rock, a city, a river, an event, a person, a sound—all may become sacralized.

Religious force is only the sentiment inspired by the group in its members, but projected outside of the consciousnesses, that experience them, and objectified. To be objectified, they are fixed upon some object which thus becomes sacred; .... Therefore, the sacred character assumed by an object is not implied in the intrinsic properties of this latter: it is added to them. The world of religious things is not one particular aspect of empirical nature; it is superimposed upon it.  

Mircea Eliade\(^9\) endorses Durkheim's description of the nature of the sacred in its entirety. He uses the term 'hierophany' to designate the act of the manifestation of the sacred; he maintains that sacred objects are not worshipped for their own intrinsic properties but are worshipped solely because they reveal the sacred; and he argues that "the sacred is equivalent to a power, and, in the last analy-


\(^{10}\)Eliade's concept of the sacred, in particular, his idea of sacred space and time, form the framework for his analysis of archaic myth, and hence his view of religion. In many of his works these categories are described, e.g. \textit{Patterns in Comparative Religion}; \textit{Myths, Dreams and Mysteries}; \textit{Cosmos and History}; \textit{Rites and Symbols of Initiation}; and \textit{The Sacred and the Profane}. However, his most comprehensive discussion of the sacred is found in \textit{The Sacred and the Profane}. Therefore, this work was used to summarize Eliade's description of the sacred.
sis to reality." However, at this point Eliade and Durkheim part company. Whereas Durkheim attempts to demonstrate that the reality of the sacred represents the force of society Eliade sees the reality of the sacred in ontological terms. For Eliade the power of the sacred comes from its saturation with being in the mind of religious man.

After making a comparative study of the images and symbols found in the myths of archaic peoples and discovering in them repeating patterns Eliade concluded that the sacred and the profane represent "two modes of being in the world." According to Eliade all primitive people, whether they be nomadic hunters or sedentary cultivators, "live in a sacralized cosmos, both share in a cosmic sacrality manifested equally in the animal world and in the vegetable world." For these archaic people sacred space and time are qualitatively different from profane space and time. Profane space and time exist in the temporal world of duration which is found in the world of men. Sacred space and time are sharply differentiated from profane space and time. They are infused with the sacred power of being which is believed to come directly from the realm of the gods. The realm of the gods

13 Ibid., p.17.
exhibits ultimate reality, ultimate being; it is eternal. The profane world, on the other hand, had a definite beginning; it was created by the gods. Since the profane world was the work of the gods it is sacred but its sacrality is derivative. Although the two realms are separate and distinct the sacred occasionally manifests itself in the world of men.

When the sacred manifests itself in any hierophany, there is not only a break in the homogeneity of space; there is also revelation of an absolute reality, opposed to the nonreality of the vast surrounding expanse (profane space). The manifestation of the sacred ontologically founds the world. In the homogeneous and infinite expanse, in which no point of reference is possible and hence no orientation can be established, the hierophany reveals an absolute fixed point, a center.  

This discovery of the center of the world is equivalent to creating the world. In the vast expanse of non-differentiated profane space a fixed point is established. By reference to this point orientation is achieved. By constructing a sacred space archaic man reproduces the work of the gods; he produces an ordered world out of the chaos of profane space; he creates a cosmos; and by so doing he imitates and repeats the original creative act. The creation of a center effects a break between the sacred realm and the profane realm; it permits communication between heaven and

\[14\text{Ibid., p.21.}\]
earth. For Eliade, every inhabited territory is a cosmos "precisely because it was first consecrated, because, in one way or another, it is the work of the gods or is in communication with the world of the gods."\(^{15}\)

In the same way that religious man divides space into sacred and profane he also divides time into two. The sacred time of festivals is sharply differentiated from the profane time of ordinary temporal duration. Whereas sacred time is reversible, profane time is not. Eliade says:

Every religious festival, any liturgical time represents the reactualization of a sacred event that took place in a mythical past, "in the beginning." Religious participation in a festival implies emerging from ordinary temporal duration and reintegration of the mythical time reactualized by the festival. Hence sacred time is indefinitely recoverable, indefinitely repeatable.\(^{16}\)

And again he states:

The participants in the festival meet in it the first appearance of sacred time, as it appeared ab origine, in illo tempore. . . . By creating the various realities that today constitute the world, the gods also founded sacred time, for the time contemporary with a creation was necessarily sanctified by the presence and activity of the gods.\(^{17}\)

This desire to become contemporary with the time of

\(^{15}\)Ibid., p. 30.

\(^{16}\)Ibid., pp. 68-69.

\(^{17}\)Ibid., p. 70.
origin is an essential characteristic of archaic man. However, Eliade maintains that it is not unique to him. The longing to return to a golden age in the far distant past is exemplified today; for example, it is definitely found in the writings of Rousseau, in his glorification of the state of nature and the noble savage. 18 This wish "to reintegrate the time of origin, . . . to return to the presence of the gods, to recover the strong, fresh pure world that existed in illo tempore" is "at once thirst for the sacred and nostalgia for being." 19

The events that took place in sacred time—in the beginning when the gods created the world out of chaos—are recorded in the myths of archaic people. For these people the reciting of a myth reveals a mystery. The myth is the history of what took place in illo tempore.

The myth reveals absolute sacrality because it relates the creative activity of the gods, unveils the sacredness of their works. In other words the myth describes the various and sometimes dynamic irruptions of the sacred into the world. 20

19 Sacred and Profane, p.94.
20 Ibid.
This quotation concludes the discussion of the nature of the sacred and introduces the second section of the chapter—the explanation of social processes in terms of the cosmic order—in which religious myth plays a central role. For myth not only records the creative actions of the gods at the commencement of the world, it is also an important instrument by the use of which men have related the cosmic and social worlds to one another and created their meanings and values.

II. THE EXPLANATION PHASE OF SACRALIZATION

Peter Berger's conception of religion as 'world-constructor' is extremely important for the demonstration of how religious beliefs help to explain the origin and significance of social processes. However, since Berger, like Durkheim locates the origin of religion in the collective or social activity of human beings, it is difficult to separate his views on religion from his views on society. Although Berger adopts a Durkheimian view of the origin of

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21Berger's most comprehensive discussion of the relationship of religion and society is found in The Sacred Canopy. Therefore, the following summary of his ideas on the subject was based on this work. For a more complete discussion of his views on the collective, world-constructing activity of man see The Social Construction of Reality, which he wrote in conjunction with Thomas Luckmann.
religion he envisages the relationship in a different way. For Durkheim society and religion, at the time of their origin, form two concentric circles of the same diameter. The relationship between society and religion does not, however, remain static. During the evolutionary course of their development the circumference of the circle which represents society continually expands while the circumference of the circle which represents religion gradually recedes. For Berger society and religion, at the time of their origin, also form two concentric circles but the diameter of the circle which represents society is greater than the diameter of the circle which represents religion.

Berger would, no doubt, be appalled at this description of his theory of the relationship between religion and society for he stresses that he is not implying "a sociologically deterministic theory of religion. It is not implied that any particular religious system is nothing but the effect or 'reflection' of social processes. Rather the point is that the same human activity that produces society also produces religion, with the relation between the two products always being a dialectical one." (The Sacred Canopy, p.45) I would argue that he does, in fact, construct a sociologically deterministic theory of religion. I would also quarrel with his view of the origin of religion for its failure to account for the origin of the idea of sacrality. For Durkheim, on the other hand, this problem is central to his whole discussion.

For a pictorial representation of Durkheim's theory of the origin of religion and society see Appendix B; for a pictorial representation of Berger's theory of the origin of religion and society see Appendix C.
According to Berger, the essential characteristic of the human being is his 'externalizing' activity. In the class of mammals man is unique. For "unlike other mammals, this world is not simply given, prefabricated for him. Man must make a world for himself." However, by producing a world man also produces himself. "More precisely, he produces himself in a world." This world-building activity is necessarily a collective enterprise. Men, in the production of their worlds, construct meanings; these meaningful patterns are then externalized and objectified, becoming part of the objective reality into which subsequent generations of human beings are born. "The 'stuff' out of which society and all its formations are made is human meanings externalized in human activity." Subsequent generations must adjust to the externalized meanings produced in the world-building activity of preceding generations and internalize them so that these externalized meanings become their meanings as well. However, because of the fundamental problem of the inherent instability of these 'reality-formations' and the 'cultural imperative of stability', and because of the

25 Ibid., p.6.
26 Ibid., p.8.
essential externalizing activity of human beings, new meanings are continually being created. Hence the fundamental dialectic process of society, which consists of three moments or steps—externalization, objectivation and internalization—is continually repeated. The world-building activity of the human being is a never-ending enterprise.

The socially constructed world, is, above all, an ordering of experience. A meaningful order, or nomos, is imposed upon the discrete experiences and meanings of individuals. To say that society is a world-building enterprise is to say that it is ordering, or nomizing activity. . . . to live in the social world is to live an ordered and meaningful life. Society is the guardian of order and meaning. . . . The socially established nomos may thus be understood . . . as a shield against terror. Put differently, the most important function of society is nominization.27

Society, in its quest for stability, is greatly aided if the individuals who comprise it regard the socially constructed world not only as "useful, desirable or right" but also "as inevitable, as part and parcel of the universal 'nature of things'".28 If the social world is taken for granted by the individuals in the society then the socialization process has been highly successful. Individuals who deviate from socially defined patterns will be regarded not only as 'fools' or 'knaves' but also as 'madmen'.

27 Ibid., pp.19-22.
28 Ibid., p.24.
In other words, institutional programs are endowed with an ontological status to the point where to deny them is to deny being itself--the being of the universal order of things and, consequently, one's own being in this order.  

According to Berger:

Whatever the historical variations, the tendency is for the meanings of the humanly constructed order to be projected into the universe as such. . . . The nomos is endowed with a stability deriving from more powerful sources than the historical efforts of human beings. It is at this point that religion enters significantly into our argument.

Berger sees religion as 'cosmization'. For him "cosmization implies the identification of the humanly meaningful world with the world as such, the former now being grounded in the latter, reflecting it or being derived from it in its fundamental structures." That is, the socially constructed world is seen to be in harmony with the universe. However, religion is not the only vehicle of cosmization which human beings possess; according to Berger, modern science fulfills the same function since it also provides man with a cosmos which serves as an ultimate ground and 

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29 Ibid., p. 25
31 Ibid., p. 28.
validation of human meaning. In the collective process of world-construction religion is that enterprise which establishes a sacred cosmos. Because this cosmos is given sacred status it is seen by man to be an immensely powerful reality over and above the social world; it is seen to be the source or creator of the human realm. Although this reality is believed not to be dependent on him, religious man believes that it speaks to him and locates him in an ultimately meaningful order. "The cosmos posited by religion thus both transcends and includes man." Berger describes religion as:

the farthest reach of man's self-externalization, of his infusion of reality with his meanings. Religion implies that the human order is projected into the totality of being. Put differently, religion is the audacious attempt to conceive of the entire universe as being humanly significant.

Berger devotes most of his discussion of religion

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32 Berger is on tenuous ground here. Science can not be seen in the context of Berger's definition of cosmization. Science does not imply nor indeed does it seek to identify the humanly meaningful world created by society with the 'world as such'. Its prime goal is to accurately describe the 'world as such'. It is not concerned with social meaning or value but rather it expects society to make meaning and value decisions using the findings of science where they are deemed to be applicable.

34 Ibid.
35 Ibid., p.28.
to an analysis of religion as legitimator. He claims that in the past religion has provided society with its most widespread and effective instrument of legitimation. He defines legitimation as:

socially objectivated knowledge that serves to explain and justify the social order. . . . All legitimation maintains socially defined reality. Religion legitimates so effectively because it relates the precarious reality construction of empirical societies with ultimate reality.\[^{36}\]

Berger defines legitimation in terms of explanation. Therefore, it is permissible to rephrase the above quotation so that it reads: religion explains the social world so effectively because it relates the precarious reality constructions of empirical societies with ultimate reality. This rephrasing summarizes the insights of Berger which are important to our theoretical demonstration of religion's role in the explanation of social processes.

Berger discusses the world constructing activity of human beings but he does so in his discussion of society. The major portion of The Sacred Canopy is devoted to the discussion of religion's role in the world-maintaining activity of human beings. His emphasis is on the cosmization function of religion. In order to get another perspective and a fuller understanding of the way in which religious beliefs

\[^{36}\text{Ibid.}, \text{pp.}29-32.\]
and myths create ordered systems of meaning and value, in terms of which individuals define their world, express their feelings and make their judgments, we now turn to Max Weber.

In the Protestant Ethic, Weber raised a set of theoretical problems in the field of human social action of the very first order of importance. The central problem was whether men's conceptions of the cosmic universe including those of Divinity and men's religious interests within such a conceptual framework could influence or shape their concrete actions and social relationships, particularly in the very mundane field of economic action.37

All of Weber's subsequent writing on the subject of religion was devoted to the demonstration that men's religious beliefs do indeed influence their concrete actions and social relationships. That he should approach religious phenomena in this way is consistent with his definition of sociology. For Weber sociology "is a science which attempts the interpretive understanding of social action in order thereby to arrive at a causal understanding of its course and effects."38

In all his work on religion he attempted to show how:

externally similar forms of economic organization may agree with very different economic ethics and, according to the unique character of


their economic ethics how such forms of economic organization may produce very different historical results. 

Although Weber was aware of the importance of social factors, in particular the interests of ruling social strata, for the formulation of religious ethics his main concern was the demonstration of the continuing influence these religious ideas could have over very heterogeneous strata once they had become firmly established.

It is not our thesis that the specific nature of a religion is a simple 'function' of the social situation of the stratum which appears as its characteristic bearer, or that it represents the stratum's 'ideology' or that it is a 'reflection' of a stratum's material or ideal interest-situation. On the contrary, a more basic misunderstanding of the standpoint of these discussions would hardly be possible.  

Weber, like all men, shared the common presuppositions of the age and culture into which he was born. Thus it is not surprising that in The Sociology of Religion he endorsed the theories of the origin of religion that were current at the time he wrote. He accepted, uncritically, the evolutionary theory of religion which asserted that religion had evolved, in the same manner as biological organisms, from the simpler forms to the more complex; he believed that all religions must pass through a pre-animistic

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40 Ibid., p.269.
or naturist phase, an animistic phase and a polytheistic phase before they can culminate in monotheism or monism. However, he saw this development in terms of a progressive 'rationalization' of religious beliefs and ideas. The emergence of the primacy of universal gods was occasioned when the rationalization process had achieved a high degree of sophistication. This trend toward rationalization was caused by the natural, rational need of men to conceive the world as a meaningful cosmos.

Weber was acutely conscious of the complexity of social relationships and much of his discussion of religion is informed by his understanding of the inter-relationship of the prophet, the priest and the laity. Weber distinguished two types of prophet—the exemplary type of Eastern religions and the ethical type of Western religions. Yet these two types of prophets were united by a common element: their revelations involved, for the prophet himself and for his followers:

- a unified view of the world derived from a consciously integrated and meaningful attitude toward life. To the prophet, both the life of man and the world, both social and cosmic events, have a certain systematic and coherent meaning. To this meaning the conduct of mankind must be oriented if it is to bring salvation, for only in relation to this meaning does life obtain a unified and significant pattern. Now the structure of this meaning may take varied form, and it may weld together into a unity motives that are logically quite heterogeneous. The whole conception is dominated, not by logical consistency, but by practical valuations. Yet it
always denotes, regardless of any variations in scope and measure of success, an effort to systematize all the manifestations of life; that is, to organize practical behavior into a direction of life, regardless of the form it may assume in any individual case. Moreover it always contains the important religious conception of the world as a cosmos which is challenged to produce somehow a 'meaningful', ordered totality, the particular requirements of which are to be measured and evaluated according to this requirement.  

For Weber a major source of religious ideas and beliefs were to be found in prophetic revelation that had been 'routinized'.

Primarily a religious community arises in connection with a prophetic movement as a result of routinization . . ., i.e., as a result of the process whereby either the prophet himself or his disciples secure the permanence of his preaching and the congregation's distribution of grace, hence ensuring the economic existence of the enterprise and those who man it, and thereby monopolizing as well the privileges reserved for those charged with religious functions.  

Prophets reveal a pattern found in the social and universal events to which man must adjust his self and his actions in order to be in harmony with the cosmic pattern. By doing this he gives his life meaning and purpose. People, actions and institutions which facilitate the achievement of the goals given in the revelations, that is, in the religious beliefs and ideas which the prophets express, will be valued

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42 Ibid., pp. 60-61.
by the community which adheres to these ideas as 'good'; while those people, actions or institutions which hamper the achievement of religious goals will be valued as 'evil'. Thus all religions attempt to organize practical behavior into a specific direction.

The rational religious pragmatism of salvation, flowing from the nature of the images of God and of the world, have under certain conditions had far-reaching results for the fashioning of a practical way of life. These comments pre-suppose that the nature of the desired sacred values has been strongly influenced by the nature of the external interest-situation and the corresponding way of life of the ruling strata and thus by the social stratification itself. But the reverse also holds: wherever the direction of the whole way of life has been methodically rationalized, it has been profoundly determined by the ultimate values toward which this rationalization has been directed. These values and positions were thus religiously determined.43

III. THE LEGITIMATION PHASE OF SACRALIZATION

As evidenced by the discussion in the preceding section, both Weber and Berger see the inter-relationship of religion and society as one of mutual influence. Berger stresses the 'cosmization' function of religion whereby existing social values and meanings are given a cosmic significance while Weber stresses the importance of religion in the

43 From Max Weber, p.286.
creation of social meanings and values. Both men are aware of the existence of the reverse influence. However, since our approach is designed to demonstrate the influence of religious beliefs and ideas on social processes the perspective which is taken here concurs more closely with Weber's.

Religious ideas and beliefs provide men with goals which give meaning and value to their lives. In order to facilitate the achievement of these goals it is desirable that the human realm be harmonized with the divine realm. Thus religion takes an active role in the fashioning of a practical way of life. In order to achieve this harmonization laws and rules governing social action must be established and given the status of legitimacy. The process of establishing a normative order therefore parallels Berger's description of cosmization if this description is reversed. Hence much of the following discussion of the role of religious beliefs and ideas in legitimizing social processes presupposes what has been discussed in the preceding section.

Once a pattern of religious meaning and value has been constructed it must then be externalized and objectified. A normative order consisting of laws or rules governing social action and the institutions which permit or facilitate the prescribed action must be established. However, in order to ensure that these prescriptions will be translated into the
appropriate action, the individuals who are required to perform such actions must believe in the legitimacy of the normative order. Legitimacy implies that the individual recognize that the actions that he is called upon to perform are binding upon him or that they constitute "a desirable model for him to imitate." The normative order "enjoys the prestige of being considered binding, or as it may be expressed, of 'legitimacy'". Thus the legitimacy of an order is dependent upon the authoritative status which individuals accord it.

For Weber there are three pure types of legitimate authority. The validity of their claims to legitimacy may be based on:

1. Rational grounds—resting on a belief in the 'legality' of patterns of normative rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands (legal authority).

2. Traditional grounds—resting on an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of those exercising authority under them (traditional authority).

3. Charismatic grounds—resting on devotion to the special and exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him (charismatic authority).

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45 Ibid.
46 Ibid., p.328.
Weber applies the term 'charisma':

to a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These are such as are not accessible to the ordinary person, but are regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader.47

However, once a charismatic movement has become routinized the normative patterns which it endorses no longer derive their legitimacy from the personal qualities of the leader; when the leader dies they must derive their legitimacy from the authority of tradition. The charismatic movement become routinized or traditionalized. Weber uses the term 'traditionalism' to refer to the:

psychic attitude set for the habitual workaday and to the belief in the every-day routine as an inviolable norm of conduct. . . . It is characteristic of patriarchical and of patrimonial authority, which represents a variety of the former, that the system of inviolable norms is considered sacred; an infraction of them would result in magical or religious evils.48

Weber used the type of rational-legal authority to describe the authority that is found in the modern bureaucratic state, which is designed for the efficient achievement of economic goals. According to Weber this type of authority is a recent phenomenon. In the past authority "depended on

47 Ibid., pp.358-359.
48 From Max Weber, p.296.
charisma, traditionalism and the routinization of charisma. " Yet traditional authority and charismatic authority, as Weber has defined them, were in turn largely dependent upon religious beliefs and ideas.

A societal order which has achieved the status of legitimacy has also won for itself a high degree of stability. The rules for social action which the individuals in the society regard as binding may then be translated into laws. Thus societies which are based on traditional or charismatic authority win the additional support of legal authority. Weber distinguishes a law from a convention in the following way:

A system of order will be called convention so far as its validity is externally guaranteed by the probability that deviation from it within a given social group will result in a relatively general and practically significant reaction of disapproval. Such an order will be called law when conformity with it is upheld by the probability that deviant action will be met by physical or psychic sanctions aimed to compel conformity or to punish disobedience, and applied by a group of men especially empowered to carry out this function.50

Once the religiously dictated rules for social action have won the status of legitimacy the probability that social action within the society will follow the prescribed pattern is high. This is what Weber terms the 'validity' of a societal order.

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49 Ibid., p.295.
50 Social and Economic Organization, p.127.
Action, especially social action which involves social relationships, may be oriented by the actors to a belief (Vorstellung) in the existence of a 'legitimate order.' The probability that action will actually empirically be so oriented will be called the 'validity' (Geltung) of the order in question.51

Weber's concept of the 'validity' of a societal order corresponds to Berger's concept of the 'plausibility structure' of the social world. According to Berger worlds are socially constructed and socially maintained. The reality of the social world is present objectively, in a society's world view (that is, its view of space, time, meaning, value, etc. as well as its institutional structures) and subjectively, in the acceptance of the facticity of this objective order by the individuals who live in the society. The objective and subjective reality of the social world is dependent upon the continuance of those social processes which reinforce the society's definition of reality.

Thus each world requires a social 'base' for its continuing existence as a world that is real to actual human beings. This 'base' may be called its plausibility structure. . . . When an entire society serves as the plausibility structure for a religiously legitimated world, all the important social processes within it serve to confirm and reconfirm the reality of this world.52

This completes the theoretical discussion of religion's role in the fashioning of a practical way of life through

51 Ibid., p.124.
52 Sacred Canopy, p.45.
the discriminating use of its legitimating powers. The final phase in the theoretical discussion of the influence of religion upon society is the demonstration of the role religion plays in perpetuating social processes. It is now necessary to show how religion supplies individuals with the necessary incentive to carry out the rules for social action which it prescribes and legitimates, to show how religion promotes the continuance of those social processes which reinforce a society's definition of reality in so far as this definition is determined by religious beliefs and ideas.

IV. THE PERPETUATION PHASE OF SACRALIZATION

All of the commentators that have been discussed--Durkheim, Eliade, Berger and Weber--agree that one of the fundamental features of religious belief is its proclamation that there is an ultimately meaningful pattern for human life. Yet this very insistence "that the world order in its totality is, could, and should somehow be a meaningful 'cosmos'" implies the prevalence of the opposite human experience, the experience of the meaninglessness of life. As Weber points out, behind the different varieties of religious belief there "always lies a stand towards something in the actual world

which is experienced as specifically 'senseless'". There is the feeling that all is not as it should be and hence the desire arises to put this situation right. Religion offers man a reason why things are not as they should be and teaches him how to rectify this situation. It offers him the chance of salvation or liberation.

Man is not born with the knowledge of his place in a meaningful order. He subsequently learns of it through the teaching of others or through his personal revelation. However, having once learned of his meaningful position in the universe man must actively seek to realize this position. He must 'save' or 'liberate' himself. It is not necessary here to outline a theoretical typology of the different types of salvation or liberation which have been advanced by the different world religions as Weber and Berger do. This is best accomplished by reference to concrete examples. It is sufficient here to state what is common to all the types of religious liberation. Each religious 'rationalization' states that the unliberated condition of the human being is undesirable. When it is compared with the liberated or 'saved' state which it is possible for man to win, his normal or profane condition in the world is seen as futile. The

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54 Ibid.
55 See Chapter Four, pp.104-116.
individual who fails to heed the teachings of the religion which addresses him must be prepared to accept the inevitable consequences of his choice. In all religious 'rationalizations' there is a description of an evil state and a good state. In addition a path is outlined by following which a man can change his ontological status and achieve liberation, passing out of the profane world into the sacred realm.

Because of religion's urge to harmonize the temporal sphere with the divine sphere in order to facilitate the achievement of liberation, a religion's prescriptions for social action are generally in accord with its prescriptions for the achievement of liberation. In this way religion provides individuals with a motivation for performing those social actions which it has explained and legitimated.

"When roles, and the institutions to which they belong, are endowed with cosmic significance, the individual's self-identification with them attains a further dimension."^56

"When the socially defined reality has come to be identified with the ultimate reality of the universe, then its denial takes on the quality of evil as well as madness."^57

According to Berger, religion is a particularly effective tool for world-maintenance in the face of situations

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^56 *Sacred Canopy*, p.37.

which threaten to destroy the stability of the collectively constructed world. These 'marginal situations' are especially evident when individuals come face to face with death. The placing of these 'marginal situations' within the context of an all encompassing sacred reality:

permits the individual who goes through these situations to continue to exist in the world of his society—not 'as if nothing had happened', which is psychologically difficult in the more extreme marginal situations, but in the 'knowledge' that even these events or experiences have a place within a universe that makes sense. It is thus even possible to have a 'good death', that is, to die while retaining to the end a meaningful relationship with the nomos of one's society—subjectively meaningful to oneself and objectively meaningful in the minds of others.58

Once a religiously created world has won for itself legitimate status it has achieved a high degree of stability. Once it is based upon charismatic, traditional and legal authority the members of the society are likely to conform to the social laws knowing that these laws are in accord with the universal pattern of things, that their ancestors have acted in a similar fashion and that deviant behavior will be punished. Once established, a religiously defined and legitimated world tends to perpetuate itself. However, religion contributes a positive incentive to the process of world-maintenance through its assurance that those who conform will be rewarded and that those who deviate will be punished.

58 Ibid., p.44.
By practicing the sacred it promises that men will win the sacred.

V. THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE THREE PHASES

As stated at the beginning of this chapter the final step in the outline of the approach is to demonstrate how the explanation, legitimation and perpetuation of social processes by religion depends ultimately upon sacralization. Myth is one major source of the explanation of the meaningful relationship between the universe, the social world and human beings, which religion offers. The myth is the record of the sacred events that took place in sacred time—*in illo tempore*—when the gods created the world and everything that it contains. These mythical explanations thus include the description of the origin of human institutions and social processes. Through the process of cosmization these institutions and processes become sacralized, thereby winning for themselves an authority which they could not otherwise possess. The record of these events is carefully preserved by the various religious traditions.

Religious revelation is the second type of religious explanation which effects the sacralization of human institutions and social processes. These revelations contain the des-
cription of a unified view of the world which is ultimately meaningful. In addition they contain prescriptions for the achievement of this meaningful relationship. Those actions or processes which accord with the prescriptions and those institutions which facilitate the achievement of the revealed goals also become sacralized.

Anything which reveals the sacred or anything which reflects the work of the gods may become sacralized. Religious myths and beliefs preserve the memory of the various irruptions of the sacred into the world. They serve to explain the world and its components by revealing their sacred purpose and origin—either *in illo tempore*, that is, chronologically, through the preservation of tradition or through the direct intervention of the sacred into the already existing world, that is, through revelation.

By conferring sacred status upon selected social processes and institutions religion has been able to influence the practical way of life and accomplish its purpose of harmonizing the temporal realm with the divine realm. By demonstrating on traditional or charismatic grounds the divine origin of those social processes which it deems desirable religion plays a prominent role in world-construction and world maintenance.
Religion also ensures that the social processes which it has explained and legitimated will be perpetuated. It does this by offering salvation or liberation to those individuals whose behavior is consistent with the dictates found in religious beliefs. All those who conscientiously do this will win liberation; they will change the level of their being; they will pass from the profane realm to the sacred realm; they will themselves become sacralized.
I. THE DEFINITION OF SMRTI LITERATURE

It is now time to apply the approach outlined in Chapter One to the Visnu Purana, the Manavadharmaśāstra and the Mahābhārata, to determine whether or not this socio-logical approach is a valid one to adopt in the attempt to understand the smṛti literature of India. Smṛti literature is given a position of authority second only to the Vedas by orthodox Hindus. According to the tradition the Vedas are eternal. They are created anew by Brahma at the beginning of each universal emanation. The universe is then brought into being according to the eternal dictates found in the Vedas in exactly the same order as in the previous emanation of the universe. The Vedas are termed śruti which means 'that which is heard'. Śruti is the collective term which refers to the entire corpus of Vedic literature. There are four Vedas—-the Rig-Veda, the Veda of hymns; the Sāma-Veda, the Veda of chants; the Yajur-Veda, the Veda of sacrifice; and the Atharva-Veda, the Veda of Atharvan, which is primarily comprised of magical charms and formulas.
Each Veda again is divided into three strata—\textit{samhita}, 'collections' of hymns, chants and sacrificial formulas as the case may be; \textit{brahmana}, expository texts dealing with the minutiae of the sacrifice; and \textit{upanishad}, speculative treatises which began to turn their back on ritual and to speculate on the nature of the universe, on the nature of the inner 'self' of man, and the relationship between the two.\footnote{1}{R.C. Zaehner, ed. and trans., \textit{Hindu Scriptures}, (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1966), p.vi.}

According to the Indian tradition\footnote{2}{J. Gonda, \textit{Change and Continuity in Indian Religion}, (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1965), pp.7-8.} the Vedas were revealed to the ancient \textit{rsis} through their own intuitive powers at the beginning of time. Having 'heard' or understood the sacred scriptures these \textit{rsis} carefully preserved the Vedas in their entirety by an oral tradition. \textit{Smrti} literature was taught to the fathers of mankind by the gods. Hence they did not intuit or understand the teaching but rather depended upon their normal senses. This teaching was remembered and carefully passed on to successive generations. The currency of this myth is attested to by the use of the term \textit{smrti} which means 'that which is remembered'. Since the Vedas were believed to have been directly revealed to their authors they were accorded greater sanctity than \textit{smrti} literature. However, in practice \textit{smrti} is far more influential than the Vedas, which are only taught to select members of the 'twice-born' classes, while the knowledge of
smṛti is available to all the members of Indian society. By the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries most apologetic literature cites smṛti as their main authority since it is assumed that śruti is contained in smṛti.

The historical limits of the composition of śruti literature have not been determined with any precision. Farquhar dates the composition of the Rig-Veda samhitā from the middle of the second millenium B.C. to approximately 900 B.C. and he dates the composition of the remaining samhitās, brāhmanas and upanisads from approximately 1,000 B.C. to the middle of the fifth century B.C. when the composition of most of the latest upanisads was completed.³

With the passage of time the sacrificial instruction of the Brāhmanas became obscure, and a new group of texts was composed to elucidate them. These were Śrauta Sūtras: the term sūtra literally means 'thread', but was used with the secondary meaning of a manual of instruction in the form of brief aphorisms; the whole title may be translated 'Manuals Explaining the Scriptures'. A little later Grhya Sūtras were composed on domestic religious ceremonies and finally manuals of human conduct, the Dharma Sūtras. A set of three sūtras, one on each of these topics, and attributed to the same legendary sage, was called a Kalpa Sūtra.⁴

These sūtras were written in prose form. However,


they were subsequently rewritten and expanded in verse form. The versified sūtras are called Dharma Śāstras, which Basham translates as 'instructions in the Sacred Law'. The śrauta, grhya, dharma and kalpa sūtras and the dharma śāstras form the main corpus of smṛti literature. The word smṛti is used in two senses: in its widest connotation it is used to refer to the whole corpus of smṛti literature and in its narrowest connotation it is used to refer only to the dharma śāstras. Hence the lawbook of Manu is referred to both as the Mānava-dharmaśāstra and the Manu Smṛti. Since the epics and the purāṇas also discuss many of the same topics and since they contain large sections devoted to the elucidation of the sacred laws, they were also regarded as belonging properly to smṛti. According to Dandekar "the major period of Smṛti (the Lawbooks and the epics) covers roughly a thousand years (c.500 B.C. to c.500 A.D.)." 

The entire corpus of smṛti literature encompasses thousands of volumes and it would be impossible for a single researcher to familiarize himself with it in the short space of one life time. Judicious selection is, therefore, essential.

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5 Ibid.

Hence for the purposes of this paper a selection of one major text from each of the three major branches of *smṛti* literature has been made. The *Mānavadharmaśāstra* has been selected as being representative of the *dharma śāstra* literature; the *Mahābhārata*, as representative of the epics; and the *Visnu Purāṇa*, as representative of the *purānic* literature. (The term 'purāṇa' is defined in section two of this chapter.)

The period of the composition of the *smṛti* texts and their acceptance by the Indian tradition as authoritative (from approximately 500 B.C. to the end of the classical Gupta Age, 500 A.D.) coincides with the historical emergence of Hinduism. These texts were written during the formative period of the Hindu religion and were designed to meet the demand of Indian society during that period. Once they had been recognized as authoritative for the tradition they continued to exert a profoundly conservative influence upon subsequent changes in Indian society.

The *smṛti* literature of India is united by a common concern—the explanation, legitimation and perpetuation of the social order. Although this literature abounds with tales of *ṛṣis* achieving world-conquering powers and the highest states of being through the fervour of their *tapasvya*, this type of liberation, while greatly respected by mortals
and gods alike, is not generally condoned. The description of these feats is consistently couched in images of fire, burning, heat, chaos and destruction; the gods are continually pleading with Brahmā or Viṣṇu to intercede on behalf of the worlds to dissuade the rsis from their disrupting asceticism. When the rsis desist from their penances gods and mortals alike breathe a sigh of relief, for the proper order of things can then return to normal. Everyone can get back to the business at hand—dharma, artha, kāma, birth, marriage, etc. This type of tale aptly illustrates the smṛti literature's concern with the ongoing social processes. A typical example of these stories is the grisly tale of Jaratkāru, which is repeated twice at the beginning of the Mahābhārata.8

Jaratkāru, a yātrasāyamgrha rṣi, roamed all over the world, living on air and freeing himself from worldly longings. In his thin and emaciated condition he saw the spirits of his ancestors. They were suspended head downwards in a hole by a rope of virana roots. All the roots except one were frayed and a large rat living in the hole was nibbling at the last unfrayed root. Moved to compassion for their plight, Jaratkāru offered half of his ascetic powers to help

them. They replied that nothing could help them, for they had also been ascetics. Yet because they had no offspring they must hang in this hell. Their only hope was Jaratkāru; he was the last root by which they were hanging. However, he too was a rsi devoted to asceticism and it seemed that they were inevitably to be devoured by the rat, Time. They pleaded with Jaratkāru to give their sinful relative a message if he should chance upon him in his travels: "'To have a son', said Brahmā, 'is great dharma.' Asceticism, sacrifices, and other holy acts are inferior, O child, to having a son. You have seen all this. Explain it to the rsi. Be our saviour, O Brāhmin, be kind to us, tell him all. Persuade him to marry, to have a son."9 Upon hearing this Jaratkāru revealed his identity and pledged himself to do as they asked to ensure that his ancestors would attain heaven.

The etymology of the name, Jaratkāru, which means 'huge wasting', subtly reinforces the point of the story. On one level it has a favourable connotation, indicating the fervour of Jaratkāru's asceticism, and on another level, it expresses the unfavourable results of such penances.

9Ibid., Vol.X, p.11.
These stories suggest why smṛti places a high value on the duties entailed in the āśrama of the householder, since it is in this stage of life that individuals are primarily concerned with the problems of day to day existence in the social order. This point is emphasized a number of times at the beginning of the Mahābhārata. "It shall be a poem no poet in this world will equal, just as the householder's dharma is not equalled by the three other āśramas." "Even as the householder's duties are not surpassed by others, no poet surpasses the Bhārata."\(^\text{10}\) The first duty incumbent on the householder after he has left the student stage of life is to secure a wife and marry. And the purpose of marriage as the symbolism of the marriage ceremony illustrates, is to obtain progeny, preferably sons. Thus it is not surprising that marriage, sexual union and offspring furnish a main interest in the Mahābhārata. Without children the social order would soon collapse.

It might seem strange that the Indians have gone to such extensive lengths in this literature to place a high value on the natural process of procreation and the fulfillment of one's duties in the social world. However, it is important to realize that this literature supplied a necessary reaction

\(^{10}\) Ibid., Vol.II, p.33.
to the high value placed on the renunciation of this world by students of the *Upanisads*, adherents of the *Sāmkhya-Yoga* philosophy and the religions of Buddhism and Jainism, which were popular at that time. When this literature was written there was a very real danger that the majority of the elite would feel that their highest good lay in the renunciation of the world, and all the social responsibilities that this entailed, in their quest for *mokṣa* by the means of ascetic practices. The *smṛti* literature counterbalances the trend to asceticism.

*Smṛti* gave India an integrated philosophy of life and social organization which stood the test, on the one hand, of foreign invasions and rule over several centuries (second century B.C. to A.D. c.300) and on the other of the heterodox religions, furnishing a pattern for the integration and absorption of both. The same period of foreign invasions and rule saw the rapid spread of theistic devotional cults, which after early opposition came to accept the authority of the Sacred Law and the Vedic scriptures, and in return gained the support of orthodox Brahmanism. The alliance soon grew into the single, dynamic movement—though divided into several schools and sects—known as Hinduism. In contrast to Brahmanism, Hinduism was a mass movement, which brought together into a single culture and polity, presided over by the Sacred Law of the brahmins, various peoples, classes and religious traditions.\(^\text{11}\)

II. THE DEFINITION OF PURĀNA

The purāṇas provide the best example of the explanation of the social world in terms of the cosmic pattern. The word purāṇa means 'old' or 'ancient'. It is descriptive of the contents of these texts, which are largely concerned with accounts of the creation of the world and the preservation of ancient traditions, rather than descriptive of the age of the texts themselves. The redaction of the purānic texts continued until approximately the eighth century A.D. However, much of the material contained within the texts suggests that many of the myths and teachings they contain originated near the middle of the first millennium B.C. and possibly earlier.¹² There is an early purānic tradition which claims that "there was an original Purāṇa which came into existence earlier than even the Vedas".¹³ This legend is likely an exaggeration on the part of some who wished to impress the sanctity of purānic teaching upon their listeners.

In the middle of the first century B.C. Amara Simha, a Sanskrit writer who composed a lexicon, cited the term pañcha-lakshana as a synonym of the word, purāṇa. Pañcha-

¹³ Ibid., p.a.
lakshana may be translated as 'that which has five characteristic topics'. These five topics are:

1. Primary creation, or cosmogony; 2. Secondary creation; 3. Genealogy of gods and patriarchs; 4. Reigns of the Manus; or periods called Manvantaras; and 5. History, or such particulars as have been preserved of the princes of the solar and lunar races, and of their descendants to modern times.\(^\text{14}\)

However, due to the subsequent changes which these works were subject to, this description of the purānas is only partially accurate. Indeed, as a description of some of the eighteen purānas it is wholly inapplicable. Yet, as Wilson points out, "there is not one to which it (the term 'pañchalakshana') belongs so entirely as to the Vishnu Purāna, and it is one of the circumstances which gives to this work a more authentic character than most of its fellows can pretend to".\(^\text{15}\)

### III. SUMMARY OF THE CONTENTS OF THE VISHNU PURĀNA

The purāṇa opens with the following prayer to Viṣṇu:

OM! GLORY TO VĀSUDEVA--Victory be to thee. 
Pūndarikāksha; adoration be to thee, Viśvabhāvana; 
glory be to thee, Hṛshikeśa, Mahāpurusha, and Purvajā. 
May that Viṣṇu, who is the existent, imperishable, 
Brahma, who is Iśwara, who is spirit; who with the

\(^{14}\text{Ibid.}, \text{p.iv-v.}\)
\(^{15}\text{Ibid.}, \text{p.v.}\)
three qualities is the cause of creation, preservation, and destruction; who is the parent of nature, intellect, and the other ingredients of the universe; be to us the bestower of understanding, wealth and final emancipation.16

This type of introductory invocation and the use of the sacred syllable 'Om' indicates that the text which is to follow is considered sacred. Having adored Viśṇu and having saluted his spiritual preceptor, Parāśara announces that he "will narrate a Purāṇa equal in sanctity to the Vedas".17

The literary form which a purāṇa inevitably takes is that of a dialogue in which the five topics are elucidated by a knowledgeable teacher in response to the questions of a worthy pupil. In the Viśṇu Purāṇa the teacher is Parāśara and the pupil, Maitreya. Maitreya immediately poses the five topics in the form of questions:

I am now desirous ... to hear from thee how this world was, and how in future it will be? what is its substance, O Brahman; and whence proceeded animate and inanimate things? into what has it been resolved; and into what will its dissolution again occur? how were the elements manifested? whence proceeded the gods and other beings? what are the situation and extent of the oceans and the mountains, the earth, the sun, and the planets? what are the families of the gods and others, the Manus, the periods called Manvantaras, those termed Kalpas, and their subdivisions, and the four ages: the events that happen at the close of a Kalpa, and

16 Ibid., pp.1-2.
17 Ibid., p.3.
the terminations of the several ages; the histories, O great Muni of the gods, the sages, and kings. 18

Maitreya asks, in addition, about "the duties of the Brahmans, and the other tribes, as well as of those who pass through the different orders of life". 19 Book One of the Visnu Purāṇa gives an account of the primary and secondary creations, the genealogy of the gods and patriarchs and begins an account of the kings who rule during the first Manvantara.

The cosmological scheme of the Visnu Purāṇa roughly parallels the cosmological and evolutionary theory of the Sāmkhya-Yoga philosophy. 20 Although the Sāmkhya later became atheistic and dualistic, in its earlier forms, when it was inextricably bound to Yoga, it was theistic and monistic, like the Visnu Purāṇa. Viṣṇu is the supreme god who creates, preserves and destroys the world. He is the efficient and material cause of the universe. In his highest form, 'his pure and supreme condition', he exists as purusa or spirit; pradhāna or prākṛti, indiscrete substance or matter; vyakta or discrete substance or matter; and as Kāla or time.

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18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
20 For a detailed discussion of the Sāmkhya system see G. J. Larson, Classical Sāmkhya and A. B. Keith, The Sāmkhya System.
These four forms, in their due proportions, are the causes of the production of the phenomena of creation, preservation, and destruction. Vishnu being thus discrete and indiscrete, spirit and time, sports like a playful boy, as you shall learn by listening to his frolics.  

In his role as creator of the universe Vishnu is known by the name, Brahma; in his role as preserver of the universe he is known as Vishnu; and in his role as the destroyer of the universe he is known as Siva or Rudra. During the period of universal dissolution spirit is not associated with matter, the three components of matter—the three gunas or qualities; sattva, goodness; rajas, passion; and tamas, darkness—remain in their indiscrete state, in equilibrium, and time abides.

Then the supreme Brahma, the supreme soul, the substance of the world, the lord of all creatures, the universal soul, the supreme ruler, Hari, of his own will having entered into matter and spirit, agitated the mutable and immutable principles, the season of creation being arrived, in the same manner as fragrance affects the mind from its proximity merely, and not from any immediate operation upon the mind itself: so the Supreme influenced the elements of creation.

The gunas, being agitated by the presence of purusa, no longer remain in equipoise. Through the evolution of the three gunas in unequal proportions, all the phenomena of the

\[21\text{Vishnu Purana, p.9.}\]
\[22\text{Ibid., p.12.}\]
world are created. The first evolute caused by the conjunction of spirit and matter, is the Great Principle, Mahat or intellect. From Mahat, Ahamkāra, the principle of indi
dualization, arises in three forms—that characterized by sattva, that characterized by rajas and that characterized by tamas. From the three-fold Ahamkāra arise the five senses: eye, ear, nose, tongue, skin; the five organs of action: voice, hands, feet, organs of excretion, organs of generation; the five subtle elements: smell, taste, form, touch, sound; and the five gross elements: earth, water, light, air, ether.

Intellect and the rest, to the gross elements inclusive, formed an egg, which gradually expanded like a bubble of water. This vast egg, O sage, compounded of the elements and resting on the waters, was the excellent natural abode of Vishnu in the form of Brahmā; and there Vishnu, the lord of the universe, whose essence is inscrutable, assumed a perceptible form, and even he himself abided in it in the character of Brahmā. Its womb, vast as the mountain, Meru was composed of the mountains; and the mighty oceans were the waters that filled its cavity. In that egg, O Brahman, were the continents and the seas and mountains, the planets and divisions of the universe, the gods, the demons, and mankind.23

With the production of the five gross elements primary creation is completed and Visnu abides in the form of Brahmā in order to bring about the secondary creation.

The account of the secondary creation by Parāśara

23Ibid., pp.17-18.
commences with a description of the pralaya theory. According to the pralaya theory this world is just one emanation of Brahmā in the eternal cycle of universal creation and destruction. When Brahmā wakes a universe comes into being and when he sleeps at night on his serpent bed the universe dissolves. During a day of Brahmā the cycle of the four yugas or ages, which lasts for 12,000 divine years, is repeated 1,000 times. One day and night of the gods is equal to one human year. Three hundred sixty human years is equal to one divine year. The Kṛta Yuga lasts for 4,000 divine years; the Tretā Yuga, for 3,000 divine years; the Dvāpura Yuga for 2,000 divine years; and the Kali Yuga, for 1,000 divine years. The remaining 2,000 divine years are taken up by the Śāndhyas (the periods that precede a yuga and which contain as many hundred divine years as there are thousand divine years in the yuga) and the Sandhyaṅsas (the periods which follow a yuga and which are of the same duration as the Śāndhyas).

One day of Brahmā comprises a kalpa or great age. During a kalpa fourteen Manus reign. At the end of a day of Brahmā the dissolution of the universe occurs and the worlds of men and the gods are consumed by fire. During the night of Brahmā the universe remains in a state of dissolution but with the next day the whole process is repeated.
Brahmā, however, 'only' lives for one hundred Brahma years. With his death the mahāpralaya occurs. Purusa separates from its association with Prākṛti and Viṣṇu resumes his supreme form. At the end of one hundred Brahmā years Viṣṇu resumes his frolics and the entire cycle is repeated; primary creation begins again; a new Brahmā is born and the secondary creation commences to follow its pre-ordained course. This pattern of creation and destruction eternally repeats itself. This purānic description of primary creation represents a blending of many of the ancient cosmogonic myths found in the Vedas and some myths which are unique to the purānas. In this description mythic material from diverse sources has been systematically unified. However, the whole assumes the attributes of its parts: this account of primary creation is recognized as containing the sacred truths which recount the activities of the gods in sacred time and sacred space.

After Parāśara has discussed the pralaya theory and explained that Brahmā is only the instrumental cause of secondary creation, Prākṛti being the material cause, Maitreya poses another question:

Now unfold to me, Brahman, how this deity created the gods, sages, progenitors, demons, men, animals trees, and the rest, that abide on earth, in heaven, or in the waters: how Brahmā at creation made the world with the qualities,
the characteristics, and the forms of things
(svarupas or the distinctions of biped, quadruped,
brute, bird, fish, etc.)²⁴

Parāśara replies that the immovable things, char-
acterized by tamaś, are created first; then the animals,
characterized by rajas; next the gods, characterized by satt-
va; and fourthly, men.

They abound with the light of knowledge, but the
qualities of darkness and of foulness predominate.
Hence they are afflicted by evil, and are repeatedly
impelled to action. They have knowledge both exter-
nally and internally, and are the instruments (of accom-
plishing the object of creation, the liberation
of the soul).²⁵

Although created beings are destroyed in their in-
dividual forms during the periods of dissolution they con-
tinue to be affected by the good or evil acts which they
performed in their former existences. According to the
consequences of their actions they will be reborn to an
appropriate existence which is assigned to them by Brahmā.

All the created beings proceeded from the limbs
of Brahmā. The gods were produced from his mouth, the Pītra
or fathers from his side, the demons from his thigh, the
birds, from his vital vigour, the sheep from his breasts;
herbs, roots and fruits from the hairs of his body and so
on. In like manner the four main social classes were

²⁴Ibid., p.30.
²⁵Ibid., p.32.
produced; the brāhmans, in which the quality of goodness predominates, were born from the mouth of Brahmā; the ksatriyās, characterized by passion, were born from the breast of Brahma; the vaiśyas, pervaded by passion and darkness, from his thighs; and the südras, pervaded by darkness, from his feet. Brahmā created the four classes for the performance of sacrifices—the four classes "being the fit instruments of their celebration". The sacrifices are mutually beneficial to the gods and to men. The sacrifices provide nourishment for the gods and in return the gods bestow mankind with rain. By performing the sacrifices and piously performing their duty men attain to the heavenly sphere which is appropriate to their station.

The means of subsistence having been provided for the beings he had created, Brahmā prescribed laws suited to their station and faculties, the duties of the several castes and orders, and the regions of those of the different castes who were observant of their duties. The heaven of the Pitrās is the region of devout Brāhmans. The sphere of Indra, of Kshatriyas who fly not from the field. The region of the winds is assigned to the Vaiśyas who are diligent in their occupations and submissive. Südras are elevated to the sphere of the Gandharbas. Those Brāhmans who lead religious lives go to the world of the eighty-eight thousand saints: and that of the seven Rṣhis is the seat of pious anchorets and hermits. The world of ancestors is that of respectable householders: and the region of Brahmā is the asylum of religious mendicants. The im-

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26 Ibid., p. 39.
perishable region of the Yogis is the highest seat of Vishnu where they perpetually meditate upon the supreme being, with minds intent on him alone; the sphere where they reside, the gods themselves cannot behold. The sun, the moon, the planets, shall repeatedly be, and cease to be; but those who internally repeat the mystic adoration of the divinity shall never know decay. For those who neglect duties, who revile the Vedas, and obstruct religious rites, the places assigned after death are the terrific regions of darkness, of deep gloom, of fear, and of great terror; the fearful hell of sharp swords, the hell of scourges and of a waveless sea.  

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In this account of secondary creation the social world of man is related to the divine sphere of the gods. Not only did Brahmā create the physical realm and all that it contains but he also created the social realm, its classes and institutions. He then composed the sacred institutes by which man must govern his world in order to keep the two realms in harmony.

After giving the account of the primary and secondary creations Parāśāra recounts the genealogy and exploits of the gods and the patriarchs and the kings who ruled during the first Manvantara. This section takes up the body of Book One and continues into Book Two. In addition Book Two outlines the geographical system of the Visnu Purāna. In its main features—"the seven Dvīpas (continents), seven seas, the divisions of Jambu-dvīpa, the situation and the extent of

27 Ibid., pp.41-42.
Meru, and the sub-divisions of Bharata (India)"—it corresponds exactly to those outlined in the other purānas which give a geographical description of the earth.

The seven great insular continents are Jambu, Plaksha, Salmali, Kusa, Krauncha, Saka and Pushkara: and they are surrounded severally by seven great seas; the sea of salt water (Lavana), of sugar-cane juice (Ikshu), of wine (Sura), of clarified butter (Sarpi), of curds (Dadhī), of milk (Dugdha), and of fresh water (Jāla). Jambu-dvīpa is in the center of all these: and in the centre of this continent is the golden mountain Meru. The height of Meru is eighty-four thousand Yojanas; and its depth below the surface of the earth is sixteen thousand. Its diameter at the summit is thirty-two thousand: so that this mountain is like the seed-cup of the lotus of the earth.29

On the summit of Meru the most renowned city in heaven, the city of Brahma is located. Around it are the stately cities of Indra and the other regents of the heavenly sphere. The river Ganges issues from the foot of Brahma, washes the heavenly orb and falls from the skies encircling the capital city of Brahma. After circling the city it divides into four directions and flows into the ocean of salt water. At the base of Mount Meru the four countries of Jambu-dvīpa—Uttarakuru to the north, Ketumala to the west, Bharata to the south and Bhadrasva to the east—lie "like leaves of the lotus of the world".30 The country which lies north of

28 Ibid., p.135.
29 Ibid., p.135.
30 Ibid., p.139.
the ocean and south of Mount Meru is Bharata, so named because the descendents of Bharata reside there. It is the country of works "in consequence of which men go to heaven, or obtain emancipation."\textsuperscript{31}

Bharata is therefore the best of the divisions of Jambu-dvīpa, because it is the lands of works: the others are places of enjoyment alone. It is only after many thousand births, and the aggregation of much merit, that living beings are sometimes born in Bharata as men. The gods themselves exclaim, "Happy are those who are born, even from the condition of gods, as men in Bharata-varsha, as that is the way to the pleasure of Paradise, or the greater blessing of final liberation.\textsuperscript{32}

Parāśara goes on to discuss the mountains, rivers, the people and the realms of Bharata. It is a system based on the number seven, in which the original monarch, Bharata, had seven sons, each of whom presided over a realm. The seven realms were divided by seven mountain ranges and each had a river running through it. The seven island continents are successively encompassed by seven seas. Each continent and each ocean is twice the extent of the continent and ocean which immediately precedes it in the circle. The topography and realms of Plaksha, Salmali, Kuśa, Krauncha and Śaka corresponds to that of Bharata. In each of these five continents there was a monarch who had seven sons who ruled seven kingdoms which were bounded by seven mountain ranges and through

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., p.141.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., p.145.
which ran seven rivers. In each continent there are four classes corresponding to the Brāhmans, Ksatriyas, Vaiśyas and Śudras in Bharata. Pushkara, the seventh continent is the exception to this scheme. Here the monarch had only two sons and their kingdom was divided by one great range of mountains. Here there are no other mountain ranges nor are there any rivers. In each continent men are successively more virtuous and in Pushkara

there is neither virtue nor vice, killer nor slain: there is no jealousy, envy, fear, hatred, covetousness, nor any moral defect: neither is their truth or falsehood. Food is spontaneously produced there, and all the inhabitants feed upon viands of every flavour. Men there are indeed of the same nature with gods, and of the same form and habits. There is no distinction of caste or order; there are no fixed institutes; nor are rites performed for the sake of advantage.33

After giving a description of the surface of the earth Parāśara proceeds to describe the seven hells which lie beneath the earth, the seven heavenly spheres which rise above it and the dimensions and situation of the sun and other luminaries.

The world is encompassed on every side and above and below by the shell of the egg of Brahmā, in the same manner as the seed of the wood-apple is invested by its rind. Around the outer surface of the shell flows water, for a space equal to ten times the diameter of the world. The waters, again, are encompassed exteriorly by fire; fire by air; and air by

33 Ibid., p.166.
Mind; Mind by the origin of the elements (Ahamkāra); and that by Intellect: each of these extends ten times the breadth of that which it encloses; and the last is encircled by the chief Principle, Pradhāna, which is infinite, and its extent cannot be enumerated; it is therefore called the boundless and illimitable cause of all existing things, supreme nature, or Prakriti; the cause of all mundane eggs, of which there are thousands and tens of thousands, and millions and thousands of millions, such as has been described.34

With the completion of this geographical discussion Book Two of the Visnu Purāṇa ends. According to this geographical description Bharata is the physical center of the universe. It is the central continent on the earth and it lies between the upper regions of heaven and the lower regions of hell. However, Bharata is also the moral center of the universe. It is the land of works; the land where the force which sustains the universe is preserved if men are good; the land where the force which sustains the universe is destroyed if men are evil.

Book Three contains an enumeration of the series of the Manvantaras, a description of the division of the Vedas into their present form and an outline of the duties of man according to his varna or class and his āśrama or stage of life. Since this discussion corresponds closely to the rules found in the Laws of Manu, which is discussed in

34Ibid., pp.176-177.
Chapter Three, it is not necessary to recount the details here. Book Four contains an account of the ancient history of India, given in a partly historical, partly mythical, discussion of the kings of the solar and lunar races that have ruled over Bharata. Book Five is solely occupied with a description of the life of Kṛṣṇa, one of the avataaras or incarnations of Visnu, and his escapades with the gopīs, the 'cow girls' or 'milk maids'. Book Six concludes the work appropriately with a description of the dissolution of the world—the dissolution which occurs at the end of a kalpa and the dissolution which occurs at the end of the life of Brahma, the great or elemental dissolution, the Mahāpralaya or Prakṛti pralaya.

IV. THE DEFINITION OF DHARMA

Implicit in all the accounts of secondary creation given in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa is the importance of dharma in its cosmic aspect. Dharma is virtually impossible to translate precisely. "The word is clearly derived from root dhr (to up-hold, to support, to nourish)."35 "The basic meaning of dharma, . . . is the moral law, which sustains the world, human society,

and the individual."\(^{36}\) However, dharma is most commonly used to mean "the privileges, duties and obligations of a man, his standard of conduct as a member of the Aryan community, as a member of one of the castes, as a person in a particular stage of life."\(^{37}\) It also refers to the spiritual discipline which a man must exercise in order to gain personal salvation or religious liberation. Dharma has, therefore, three aspects: cosmic, social and individual or religious. It is the cosmic aspect of dharma which is of prime importance in secondary creation.

During the Kṛta Yuga the world emerges fresh from its creation by Brahmā and the sacred cow of dharma stands on four legs. As the inevitable process of destruction sets in, dharma gradually declines, standing on three legs in the Tretā Yuga, two in the Dvāpara, and only one in the Kali Yuga. During this yuga 'four-footed virtue' suffers total extinction.

The observances of caste, order, and institutes will not prevail in the Kali age, nor will that of the ceremonial enjoined by the Sama, Rik, and Yajur Vedas. ... Women will follow their inclinations, and be ever fond of pleasure. Men will fix their desires upon riches, even though dishonestly acquired.

Oppressed by famine and taxation, men will desert their lands, and go to those countries which are fit for coarser grains. The path of

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\(^{36}\) V. Raghavan, "The Four Ends of Man", in de Bary, op.cit., p.206.

the Vedas being obliterated, and men having deviated into heresy, iniquity will flourish, and the duration of life will therefore decrease; . . . A man will be grey when he is twelve; and no one will exceed twenty years of life.  

Dharma supports and sustains creation and as it declines so does creation. In its cosmic aspect dharma assumes all the characteristics of the Vedic concept rta. In the Vedas rta also has a threefold character: "It means 'the course of nature' or 'the regular and general order in the cosmos'; with reference to sacrifice it means 'the correct and ordered way of the cult of the gods'; and thirdly, it also means the 'moral conduct of man'." Rta ensures that the sun will rise and set at the appointed times; that the stars will remain in their fixed stations; that the seasons will succeed each other in the proper order; that the rivers will flow downstream; that cows will continue to provide milk; and so on. In the Vedic pantheon Varuṇa and Mitra are the lords of rta. They preserve rta and govern the universe through its powers and according to its dictates.

The ethical qualities of rta are indicated by the close association which rta had with satya or truth. Originally rta had a wider connotation than satya, which was

38 Vishnu Purāṇa, pp. 487-490.
40 See, for example, Rig Veda, Book IX, Hymn 118.
41 See, for example, Rig Veda, Book V, Hymn 63.
reserved to mean only "truth or static order". However, _satya_ gradually took over the cosmic associations of _rta_ and by the end of the Vedic period _satya_, for the most part, replaced _rta_. The close association of the two words is also demonstrated linguistically. The antonym of these two words is given by one word, _anrta_. That which supports and sustains the cosmic order is _rta_ or _satya_; that which upsets the cosmic order or that which is untrue is _anrta_. In the _smrți_ literature these same ideas are expressed by the terms _dharma_ and _adharma_.

V. ANALYSIS OF THE _VISNU PURĀNA_

The accounts of secondary creation in the _Visnu Purāna_ presuppose, in addition to the functioning of _dharma_ in its cosmic aspect, the operation of the _karma-samsāra_ cycle. _Karma_ literally means action, either good or bad. According to the _Karma_ theory every action that is performed will result in the 're-action' which is appropriate to the original action. _Karma_ operates as a moral law of cause and effect.

42 _History of Dharmaśāstra_, Vol. IV, p.4.
43 Ibid.
44 See, for example, _Rig Veda_, Book X, Hymn 10; X, 124; VII, 49.
The effects of action may result immediately, that is, in the present existence of the person who performed the action, or they may accrue to him in a future life. His actions determine the level of existence in which he will be reborn according to the will of Brahma, from an inanimate object to a god, or to which heaven or hell he will go. If he is reborn as a man his actions determine his class and his nature, that is, his predilection for good or evil action. Samsāra is the name given to this eternal cycle of rebirth. Rebirth or samsāra, then, is caused by karma. However, this karma-samsāra complex has cosmic ramifications. In order for individuals to work out their karma properly every level of creation is required. Thus the entire universe becomes the stage on which the eternal drama of karma-samsāra is enacted. This dilemma is summarized in a Vedic hymn which is quoted in the Mahābhārata.

Time is a wheel spinning fruits of Karma.
Time is a wheel obeyed by the gods.
Because I am trapped,
0 Aśvins,
Because I am tied to the wheel,
0 Aśvins,
Because I suffer,
0 Aśvins
free me from the wheel!45

The human being is therefore perenially presented with a fundamental problem: his rebirth indicates that he is compelled to work out the consequences of his past karma but in doing so he inevitably produces more karma which in turn necessitates rebirth.

The fundamental proposition is that cause and effect are as inseparably linked in the moral sphere as assumed in the physical sphere by science. A good action has its reward and a bad act leads to retribution. If the bad actions do not yield their consequences at once or in this life, the soul begins another existence and in the new environment undergoes suffering for its past bad deeds. The theory of karma and the theory of transmigration of souls (or pre-existence and post-existence) are inextricably mixed up in Indian thought from at least the ancient times of the Upaniṣads. The general rule is that karma, whether good or evil, cannot be got rid of except by enjoying or undergoing its consequences.  

The early Vedic concept of reward for actions was that they would be reaped in heaven which was conceived to be a place where men would eternally enjoy sensual gratification. The concept of punishment in hell is present in the Rig-Veda but it is not as clearly defined as the rewards to be enjoyed in heaven. This early theory was later incorporated into the karma-samsāra theory.

We have here a complicated blending of two theories. The original theory of early

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Vedic times was that of Heaven and Hell which is also that of most religions. Later on when the doctrine of karma and punarjanma (rebirth) came to be universally believed in India the theory of Heaven and Hell came to be modified by holding that the pleasures of heaven and the torments of Hell both came to an end some time or other and the author of sins was born again as an animal or a tree or a human being suffering from diseases and defects.48

That this theory of the eventual end to existence in heaven (svarga) and hell (naraka) is endorsed in the Visnu Purāna is obvious from the passage previously cited on page 69. The gods themselves exclaim, 'Happy are those who are born, even from the condition of gods as men in Bharata-varsha, as that is the way to the pleasure of Paradise, or the greater blessing of final liberation'.

Bharata is the land of works—the land where dharma in its social aspect is practiced.49 By fulfilling the social duties that are prescribed for him a man may greatly reduce his accumulation of karma. By performing his duties without regard to the fruits that such action will bring (niś-kāma-karma) a man will accumulate no new karma and his old karma will eventually run down. When the consequences of past action have all been suffered a man achieves liberation.50

48 Ibid., p.158.

49 For a detailed discussion of the social aspect of dharma see Chapter Four.

50 For a detailed discussion of the religious aspect of dharma see Chapter Four.
Thus there is a path whereby individuals may release themselves from the dilemma of the *karma-samsāra* complex. Although men are presently living in the *Kali Yuga* the sacred institutes of *dharma* were revealed by Brahmā at the beginning of the *kalpa* and they have been carefully preserved in their original form through the centuries by their oral transmission from knowledgeable teacher to worthy pupil. In time each pupil, having mastered the contents of the teaching, becomes a teacher himself and in his turn he passes the teaching on to other pupils. This manner of preserving sacred texts and doctrines is called *guruparampara*.

Although the practice of *dharma* is literally tottering on its last leg, the institutes of *dharma* have been preserved in their pure form. By following these institutes—by fulfilling the prescribed social duties—the cycle of the *yugas* may be reversed in individual cases, and a man can win the indescribable state of union found in the *Mahāpralaya*—the state which occurs at the end of the life of Brahmā. Just as Jaratkāru's ancestors were saved by his decision to marry, to have sons, and to carry out the duties of the householder faithfully, so may all men who make a similar decision be saved from the miserable prospect of endless rebirth in this world or from suffering the torments of *naraka*.

From the preceding discussion of the nature of *dharma* it is obvious that it has all the attributes by which Durkheim
and Eliade characterize the sacred. In its cosmic aspect \textit{dharma} is a force, an exalting power, which is outside man, and with whose dictates man feels compelled to comply. It is, therefore, a physical and moral force.

When we say that these principles are forces, we do not take the word in a metaphorical sense; they act just like veritable forces. In one sense, they are even material forces which mechanically engender physical effects. . . .

But in addition to this physical aspect, they also have a moral character. When someone asks a native why he observes his rites, he replies that his ancestors have observed them, and he ought to follow their example. So if he acts in a certain way towards the totemic beings, it is not only because the forces resident in them are physically redoubtable, but because he feels himself morally obliged to act thus; he has the feeling that he is obeying an imperative, that he is fulfilling a duty.\footnote{Elementary Forms, pp.218-219.}

Religious forces are therefore, human forces, moral forces. It is true that since collective sentiments can become conscious of themselves only by fixing themselves upon external objects, they have thus acquired a sort of physical nature; in this way they have come to mix themselves with the life of the material world, and then have considered themselves capable of explaining what passes there.\footnote{Ibid., p.466.}

The concept of \textit{dharma} conforms to Berger's definition of cosmization; it relates the order of the social world to the universal pattern of things. Just as all the phenomena of creation emerged from Brahmā's limbs so was the social order produced: the class of \textit{brāhmans} emerging from the mouth of
Brahmā, the ksatriyas from his breast, the vaiśyas from his thighs, the śudras from his feet. The supremacy of the brāhmans is thus explained by the origin of the classes, the mouth being at a higher and purer level of being than feet. Furthermore, a hierarchical social order is in accord with the cosmic pattern since the pantheon of the gods and the spheres over which they rule are also hierarchical. The existence of different classes is necessitated for the preservation and perpetuation of creation. The four classes are required for the performance of the sacrifices which provide nourishment for the gods who in return send the rain which provides sustenance for men and other living creatures.

The cosmization function of dharma is most prominent in the explanation of the relationship between cosmic dharma and social dharma. The sacred institutes of Brahmā, revealed at the beginning of the world, are in accord with cosmic dharma, the force which supports and sustains creation. As long as the social actions of men accord with the sacred institutes men are acting in harmony with the universal order, thereby serving to preserve and perpetuate this order themselves. This harmonious relationship of mutual support is exhibited perfectly in the Krta Yuga when the sacred cow of dharma is standing on four legs. It is for this reason that the Krta Yuga lasts longer than the yugas which follow. How-
ever, the exigencies of *karma* eventually bring about the decline of this relationship. Because of *karma* men fail to perform their social duties properly and because they fail in this the order and harmony of the universe is itself disturbed and eventually destroyed. The state of the social order corresponds exactly to the state of the universal order. The condition of social *dharma* parallels the condition of cosmic *dharma*.

This microcosm-macrocosm relationship is not limited to the social and cosmic order. The association of spirit and matter which brings about the creation of the universe and which furnishes the fundamental dynamic of the cycle of universal creation, preservation and destruction is also the association which produces the human being and which animates his life, death and rebirth. The association of spirit and matter produces the embodied universe and the embodied individual. The individual is comprised of the same elements as the universe. Each man has his own personal *dharma* to perform. If he performs his duty according to the sacred institutes his *karma* will run down and he will no longer be subject to rebirth. His personal liberation brings about the destruction of the association of *purusa* and *prakrti*. The destruction of the association of elements in the case of the individual corresponds exactly to the elemental dissolu-
tion which occurs in the universe at the end of a life of Brahmā and the individual achieves the indescribable state of union which occurs during the Mahāpralaya.

The concept of dharma, therefore, provides individuals with a unified view of the world in which cosmic, social and individual events have a systematic and coherent meaning. According to the extent to which they conform to this pattern, actions, institutions, policies, etc. may be evaluated. In addition, the integrated world view provides the goal towards which all life must be oriented if it is to bring about salvation. Thus the concept of dharma provides man with an ordered expression of meaning and value in accord with which he must organize his practical way of life. Therefore, dharma admirably illustrates Weber's concept of rationalization.

In addition dharma illustrates Eliade's thesis that the discovery of the center of the world is the equivalent of the founding of the world. Bharata is located at the geographic center of the surface of the earth. It lies at the southern base of Mount Meru in the central continent of Jambu-dvīpa. Not only is it located at the center of the surface of the earth but it also inhabits the sphere which separates the lower realms of naraka and the upper realms of svarga. Bharata is the land of works—the land where social
dharma applies—the land where karma is built up. It is the place where the force that sustains the universe is destroyed and the place where the force that destroys the universe comes into being. Therefore Bharata is the physical or material center of things. It is also the spiritual center of the universe since it is the place where liberation is won. And, as the Visnu Purāna informs us, the universe was founded in order that men may win their salvation.

The Visnu Purāna is an excellent illustration of how religious beliefs provide men with an explanation of social processes. Whether or not these explanations will be accepted as authoritative by the men to whom they are addressed depends primarily upon their continuing recognition that the knowledge which the beliefs impart is sacred. The sanctity of the Visnu Purāna is indicated by the use of the convention of the opening and closing prayer, the use of the sacred syllable, Om, and Parāśara's re-affirmation at the end of the purāna that he has indeed recited a purāna "which is equal to the Vedas in sanctity". The largest portion of the purāna is devoted to the account of events and actions of the gods which took place in the beginning, in sacred time. This fact is testified to by the term purāna itself. In addition the purity and hence the sanctity of the text has

53 Vishnu Purāna, p.517.
been carefully preserved by the tradition, from the time of its original revelation to the present, primarily through the institution of guruparampara. By fulfilling the requirements of a sacred text and by discussing the five topics the Visnu Purāṇa offered the individuals to whom it was addressed an authoritative explanation of the social processes which they were required to perform by giving them a meaningful and unified picture of their world and their position in that world. It is, therefore, with good reason that Maitreya makes the following announcement at the conclusion of the Visnu Purāṇa:

Holy teacher, you have indeed related to me all that I wished to know, and I have listened to it with pious attention. I have nothing further to inquire. The doubts inseparable from the mind of man have all been resolved by you, and through your instructions I am acquainted with the origin, duration, and end of all things; with Vishnu in his collective fourfold form; his three energies; and with the three modes of apprehending the object of contemplation. Of all this have I acquired a knowledge through your favour, and nothing else is worthy to be known, when it is once understood that Vishnu and this world are not mutually distinct. Great Munī. I have obtained through your kindness all I desired, the dissipation of my doubts, since you have instructed me in the duties of the several tribes, and in other obligations; the nature of active life, and discontinuance of action; and the derivation of all that exists from works. There is nothing else, venerable Brāhman, that I have to inquire of you.54

54 Ibid., pp.516-517.
CHAPTER IV

THE MANU SMRTI AND THE MAHĀBHĀRATA

I. THE DEFINITION OF DHARMAŚĀSTRA

The earliest treatises on social dharma are the dharmasūtras. "It seems that originally many, though not all, of the dharmasūtras formed part of the Kalpasūtras and were studied in distinct sūtracarāṇas (Vedic schools of sutra literature)."\(^1\) However, "it is only in the case of the Apastamba, Hīranyakeśin and Baudhāyana Sūtracarāṇas that we have a complete kalpa tradition with its three components of Śrauta, Grihya and Dharma sūtras."\(^2\)

The Śrauta sūtras were composed to clarify the sacrificial instructions of the Brāhmaṇas, whose meaning had become obscure during the course of the centuries. As the name of the sūtras indicates they were based on śruti or revelation. The śrauta sacrifices were elaborate affairs and were usually performed on the three sacred fires and required the presence of from one to sixteen priests and other minor officiaries.

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\(^2\)Ibid., p.11.
The *Grhya* sūtras, in contradistinction, were believed to be based on *smṛti* or tradition. They outlined the daily sacrifices which the householder was required to perform on the domestic fire. These sacrifices were called *pakayajñas* (offerings of cooked food on the domestic fire), and they were distinguished from the Soma sacrifices and the *haviryaññas* (burnt offerings of grain, *soma*, milk or butter) of the śrauta ritual. The domestic fire was established at the time of the householder's wedding and then carried from the ceremony to the young couple's home where it was to form the center of their household worship. Each *Grhya* sūtra generally "presupposes a Vedic Samhīta whose Mantras it quotes only in their *pratīkas* (initial words)" and "a previous knowledge of the ritual which is acquired through the study of the proper Śrauta sūtra."³

The *Grhya* sūtras begin to treat of the events of the daily life of the household but they do not yet undertake to exhaust the great mass of this subject matter; on the contrary they confine themselves principally to the ritual or sacrificial side of household life, as is natural owing to their connection with the older ritualistic literature. Then the Dharma sūtras take an important step further; their purpose is to describe the whole rites and customs which prevail in private, civic, and public life. They naturally among other things touch upon the ceremonies treated in the *Grhya* sūtras, but they generally merely mention them and discuss the question of law and

custom which are connected with them, without undertak­ing to go into the technical ordinances as to the way in which these ceremonies are to be performed.  

According to Kane the principal extant dharmasūtras, those of Apastamba, Baudhāyana and Gautama, were composed between 600 and 300 B.C. The dharmasūtras were generally written in archaic prose; they usually presuppose a knowledge of the Grhya sūtra with which they were most intimately connected; as a rule they were associated with a particular Vedic school and, therefore, the authoritativeness of their teaching was primarily sectarian; they do not claim to be the work of inspired seers or gods; and the topics which they discuss are not arranged in an orderly manner. The dharmāsāstras, on the other hand, are generally later than the sūtras. Most of the dharmāsāstras other than the Manu, Yajñavalkya, Parāśara and Narada were composed between 400 A.D. and 1,000 A.D. These older smṛtis claim to be the work of superhuman beings or inspired seers; they claim to be authoritative for all members of the Aryan community; and they treat their topics in an orderly and systematic fashion.

4 Ibid., p.xxxiv.
6 Ibid., p.12.
7 Ibid., p.134.
II. SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF THE MANU SMRTI

Buhler and Kane agree that the Manu Smrti is the oldest dharma śāstra and that it was regarded very early by the tradition as the most authoritative text on dharma śāstra. The exalted position which the text won for itself was likely due to its ascription to Manu, who, according to the many myths which surround his name, was the father of mankind. He was regarded as a being both divine and human, as the original institutor of the sacrifices, as the founder of the social and moral order, and as the author and teacher of

8Kane notes that the word dharma śāstra occurs in the dharma sūtras of Gautama and Baudhāyana. (Vol. I, p. 8). On the basis of this evidence he concludes: "that works on dharma śāstra existed prior to Yakṣa or at least prior to the period 600–300 B.C. and in the 2nd century B.C. they had attained a position of supreme authority regulating the conduct of men." (Vol. I, p. 9) Buhler and Kane agree that the Manu Smrti is the most ancient dharma śāstra. They both place the composition of the extant work between the 2nd century B.C. and the 2nd century A.D.—from which time the Manu Smrti was regarded as the most authoritative dharma śāstra by the tradition. (See footnote 9.) However, in order to account for the earlier material in the work Buhler construes that there must have been a Mānavadharmasūtra upon which the author of the Manu Smrti drew. Kane rejects this theory claiming that the original kernel of the Manu Smrti was composed even earlier than the oldest portion of the Mahābhārata. (Vol. I, pp. 153-156). This original kernel was later recast between 200 B.C. and 200 A.D., probably by Bhṛgu.

the sacred law. All of these characteristics of Manu are present in the creation myth which comprises chapter one of the *Mānavadharmaśāstra*.

1. The great sages approached Manu, who was seated with a collected mind, and, having duly worshipped him, spoke as follows:

2. 'Deign, divine one, to declare to us precisely and in due order the sacred laws of each of the (four chief) castes (*varṇa*) and of the intermediate ones.

3. 'For thou, O Lord, alone knowest the purport, (i.e.) the rites, and the knowledge of the soul, (taught) in this whole ordinance of the Self-existent (*Svayambhu*), which is unknowable and unfathomable.'

Manu, thus addressed, responded to the questions of the sages by recounting a description of the primary and secondary creations, similar to that found in a fuller form in the *Visnu Purāṇa*.

The world view of the *Mānavadharmaśāstra* is virtually identical to that found in the *Visnu Purāṇa*. The *Manu Smṛti* assumes the same evolutionary theory. It endorses the *karma*

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11 Buhler incorrectly translates the word *varṇa* as caste. It should be translated as 'class'. The Sanskrit word for caste is *jati*.


13 See Appendix D for an abbreviated account of this creation myth.
theory. It affirms the divine origin and cosmic importance 
of the four classes and the supremacy of the Brāhmans. And 
like the Visnu Purāṇa the Manu Smṛti maintains the liberating value of the performance of social dharma.

Having completed the creation of the world Svayambhū composed the Institutes of the sacred law and taught them to Manu, who in turn taught them to other sages. Bhṛgu, upon assuming the role of instructor from Manu, gives a brief description of the pralaya theory and the decline of the dharma in the four yugas. According to Bhṛgu's account there is a different set of duties enjoined in each yuga: in the Krta Yuga the chief virtue is the performance of austerities; in the Treta Yuga the chief virtue is the acquisition of divine knowledge; in the Dvāpara, the performance of sacrifices; and in the Kali Yuga, generosity.

87. But in order to protect this universe He, the most resplendent one, assigned separate (duties and) occupations to those who sprang from his mouth, arms, thighs, and feet.

88. To Brāhmans he assigned teaching and studying (the Veda), sacrificing for their own benefit and for others, giving and accepting (of alms).

89. The Kshatriya he commanded to protect the people, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifices, to study (the Veda), and to abstain from attaching himself to sensual pleasures;

90. The Vaigya to tend cattle, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifices, to study (the Veda), to trade, to lend money, and to cultivate land.

91. One occupation only the lord prescribed to the Śūdra, to serve meekly even these (other) three castes.  

14Ibid., p.24.
These latter four verses contain the essence of the transcendent law which Manu revealed concerning the rules of conduct for the four classes. As long as these laws are obeyed the preservation of the universe is ensured.

All of the dharmasūtras discuss their subject matter under three principal headings or sections: ācāra (rules of conduct), vyāvahara (administration of justice) and prayaścitta (expiation or penance). In accord with this scheme the Manu Smṛti begins with the dictation of the rules of conduct which guide the actions of individuals depending upon their class (varna) and stage of life (āśrama). The Manu Smṛti asserts that there are five sources of dharma by reference to which individuals may learn their duties: the Veda, the tradition (smṛti), the virtuous conduct of those who are well-versed in the Veda, the customs of holy men and, finally, self-satisfaction.15

The discussion of ācāra in the text proceeds in a chronological order. The duties and rites incumbent upon parents at the birth of a child are discussed first; then, the duties of those in the brāhmaṇacarya-āśrama (the stage of studentship); next, the duties of those in the grhaḥasthā-āśrama (the stage of the householder); then, the duties of those in

15Ibid., p.30.
the vanaprasthāśrama (the forest dweller stage); and, finally, the duties of those in the samnyasāśrama (the wandering mendicant stage). Only male brāhmans, ksatriyas, and vaiśyas are eligible to enter the first stage of life and commence the study of the Veda. After undergoing the student initiation ceremony the child is symbolically 'reborn' as a member of these twice-born classes and he then assumes the responsibilities of the student life.

146. Of him who gives natural birth and him who gives (the knowledge of) the Veda, the giver of the Veda is the more venerable father; for the birth for the sake of the Veda (ensures) eternal (rewards) both in this (life) and after death.16

During this first stage of life the student lives at the home of his teacher. Here he must tend the domestic fire, fetch water and fuel, garden, and obey every command which his preceptor gives him. He is expected to rise before his teacher and go to bed only after his preceptor has retired. Each day he must bathe and purify himself, offer libations of water to the gods, sages and fathers and beg for food. He must always treat his teacher with the utmost respect, neither mimicking his gait, speech or deportment nor censuring him even when there is just cause to do so.

16 Ibid., p. 57.
1. The vow (of studying) the three Vedas under a teacher must be kept for thirty-six years, or for half that time, or for a quarter, or until the (student) has perfectly learnt them.\footnote{17}{Ibid., pp.74-75.}

4. Having bathed, with the permission of his teacher, and performed according to the rule the Samāvartana (the rite on returning home), a twice-born man shall marry a wife of equal caste who is endowed with auspicious (bodily) marks.\footnote{18}{Ibid., p.75.}

With the marriage and the establishment of the domestic fire a man enters the second stage of life, the householder phase. The discussion of the duties incumbent upon the householder comprises the longest and most detailed account of ācāra in the Manu Smṛti. This emphasis illustrates the high value which is consistently placed on the householder in all the smṛti texts.

77. As all living creatures subsist by receiving support from air, even so (the members of) all orders subsist by receiving support from the householder.

78. Because men of the three (other) orders are daily supported by the householder with (gifts of) sacred knowledge and food, therefore (the order of) householders is the most excellent order.\footnote{19}{Ibid., p.89.}

In addition to the social importance of the householder, his activities are believed to have cosmic significance as well.

75. Let (every man) in this (second order, at least) daily apply himself to the private recitation
of the Veda, and also to the performance of the offering to the gods; for he who is diligent in the performance of sacrifices, supports both the movable and the immovable creation.20

By teaching and studying the Veda the householder ensures that the order and harmony of the universe will be preserved. His daily offerings to the manes, the fathers or the ancestors, sustain the realm of the fathers and guarantee that the souls of the departed members of the householder's family will reach heaven. The householder's daily sacrifice to the gods provides mutual nourishment for the gods and men alike. The offerings to the Bhūtas (the elements which comprise creation, that is, the physical world) support the physical realm.

The ordinances which are outlined in the Manu Smṛti for the grhaṇa cover every aspect of the householder's life. They state who a man should marry, which types of wedding ceremony are lawful, which occupations a man may engage in, what food is permitted to him; they advise a man on the sort of company which he may keep, the appropriate subjects upon which he may converse; they outline the times when a man may make love to his wife, when he should bathe, what dress he should wear, and they even tell him when, where and in what position he should void his faeces and urine.

20Ibid., pp.88-89.
During the householder stage a man is expected to pursue three of the four ends of man (purusārtha): dharma (the performance of duty and virtuous and moral conduct), artha (the pursuit of material wealth) and kāma (the pursuit of pleasure in all its forms, from the aesthetic to the sensual). Of these three dharma is the most important as it encompasses the ends of artha and kāma. A man is expected to perform his social responsibilities conscientiously throughout the householder stage. One of the most important duties incumbent upon him is to bear children, preferably sons. At the appropriate time sons are expected to assume all responsibilities previously borne by the father.

When a man retires to the forest he commences the third stage of his life. The vanaprasthāśrama is supposed to prepare a man for the achievement of moksa (liberation), the fourth purusārtha. During this stage of life the greater part of a man's activity is to be spent in the submission to extreme hardships, the practice of austerities and the study of the Vedas. By concentrating on these three activities the forest dweller learns to renounce the world and all its cares and pleasures.

21 For a comprehensive discussion of artha and kama see Kautilya's Arthaśāstra and Vatsyayana's Kāma Sūtra.
Having passed the third stage of his life in the above fashion a man may then proceed to the fourth and final stage of life, the samnyasāśrama. During this stage a man is to wander alone in silence, indifferent to the pleasures of the world, meditating only on the Self, desiring neither to live nor to die, waiting patiently for his appointed end. In this way the righteous man finally achieves liberation.

The Manavadharmaśāstra provides us with an excellent illustration of Weber's conclusion that religion has attempted to organize practical behavior into a direction of life in accord with its view of the world. The Manu Smṛti establishes normative patterns in accord with the transcendent laws which operate in the divine or cosmic sphere as described in the creation myths and beliefs found in the purāṇas. This assertion is supported by the remaining section of the ācāra portion of Manu in which the specific duties of the king and of husbands and wives is discussed.

The section on the duties of the husband and wife again re-emphasizes the importance of the householder stage of life. It is during this stage of life that human beings are the most directly involved with the processes of social action. By scrupulously fulfilling their duties the householders ensure that the social order will be supported and that the mixture and pollution of the classes will not occur.
89. . . . in accordance with the precepts of the Veda and of the Smrti, the housekeeper is declared to be superior to all of them (the other three orders); for he supports the other three.

90. As all rivers, both great and small, find a resting-place in the ocean, even so men of all orders find protection with householders.22

And as we have seen, the actions of the householders have a cosmic importance as well since by their daily performance of sacrifices they support the physical realm.

The ordinances concerning the duties of the king are outlined with great care and detail.23 They state how the king should conduct his business, how he should organize his day, what type of ambassadors he should employ, what sacrifices he must perform, what taxes he may levy and so on. However, the king's overriding duty, in accord with his position as the foremost ksatriya, is the protection of his

22Ibid., pp.214-215

23"The ancient Indian concept of dharma as religiously ordained duty touched all aspects of man's relation with the society. One such aspect was political in character and often manifested itself in the form of relation between the subject and the state. In view of the fact that the state in ancient India was mostly monarchical, this aspect of dharma was known as the Rāja-dharma, the dharma (duty) of kings . . . which . . . formed but one of the many topics dealt with in the larger scheme of Dharma shastra. . . . In the course of time, however, polity came to be considered important enough to be recognized as an independent branch of knowledge, under the name of Artha Shāstra, the science of profit or material gain." R. N. Dande- kar, "Artha, the Second End of Man" in de Bary, op. cit., p.231.
kingdom. His exalted status results from his exalted duty. Manu states that the king was created for the protection of this entire creation by the Lord:

4. Taking (for that purpose) eternal particles of Indra, of the Wind, of Yama, of the Sun, of Fire, of Varuna, of the Moon, and of the Lord of wealth (Kubera).

5. Because a king has been formed of particles of those lords of the gods, he therefore surpasses all created beings in lustre;

6. And, like the sun, he burns eyes and hearts; nor can anybody on earth even gaze on him.24

The king is the earthly counterpart of the great deities Yama, the lord of justice; Varuna, the guardian of rta; and Indra, the supreme warrior and the bestower of benefits. Composed of the particles of these great deities, the king must never be regarded as a mere mortal but as a great deity in human form.

To aid the king Manu declares that the Lord created his son, Danda or Punishment, as protector of all creatures and as an incarnation of the law. Through fear of Punishment all created beings, movable and immovable, adhere strictly to their duties. Indeed, Manu affirms, Punishment is the king and through fear of him the four orders obey the law.

18. Punishment alone governs all created beings, punishment alone protects them, punishment watches

over them while they sleep; the wise declare punishment (to be identical with) the law.

19. If (punishment) is properly inflicted after (due) consideration, it makes all people happy; but inflicted without consideration, it destroys everything.25

As long as the king judiciously punishes all offenders who fail in their duty or who attempt to corrupt the purity of the classes he and his kingdom will prosper. And as long as the social order is preserved in Bharata, the land of works, the whole creation will prosper. If the king administers punishment unjustly he will inevitably bring about the destruction of himself and his kingdom by the very instrument of the unjust punishment which he has unleashed. Unjust punishment, corruption of the classes, failure in the performance of duty result in the creation of adharma, the force which brings about the destruction of the universe. Therefore, Manu warns:

335. Neither a father, nor a teacher, nor a friend, nor a mother, nor a wife, nor a son, nor a domestic priest must be left unpunished by a king, if they do not keep within their duty.26

The rule of thumb which guides the king in his administration of justice is, therefore, that all those who fail to do their duty must be punished. However, the vyāvahara section of the Manu Smṛti deals, in addition, with civil and criminal law, the payment of debts, the laws of partnership, the rules of buying and selling, inheritance, theft, murder, defamation,

25Ibid., p.219.
26Ibid., p.313.
adultery, etc. The proper procedure for all these matters is outlined and the penalties which the king must administer for breaking these laws are stated. The penances for major and minor offences are then described in the final pryaścitta section of the lawbook.

The Manavadharmaśāstra contains the prescriptions for the establishment of a social order which is in tune with the cosmic order as explained by the Viṣṇu Purāṇa and the creation myth found at the beginning of the law book. The emphasis on the punishment function of the king underlines the fact that these rules for social action were meant to be binding upon the individuals in the social order and that they constituted a desirable model for the citizens to imitate. Thus, in Weber's terms, the Manu Smrti enjoyed the prestige of legitimacy, since deviant behaviour would be met with the employment of physical and psychic sanctions administered by the king and his officials. The recognition of the legal authority of the law book in turn was based on traditional grounds, through its ascription to Manu and through the belief that the norms it stated represented an inviolable sacred mode of conduct.

III. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SOCIAL ASPECT OF DHARMA

The Manavadharmaśāstra is primarily concerned with
the social aspect of dharma, that is, with the description of "the privileges, duties and obligations of a man, his standard of conduct as a member of the aryan community, as a member of one of the castes, as a person in a particular stage of life." Social dharma is described under two main categories—varna dharma, the duties which a man must perform according to his social class, and āśrama dharma, the duties which a man must perform according to his stage of life. As Dandekar points out, the word dharma commonly came to be regarded as synonomous with the social aspect of dharma.

In spite of the comprehensive character of dharma, in its most common connotation it was limited to two principal ideals, namely the organization of social life through well-defined and well-regulated classes (varṇas) and the organization of an individual's life within those classes into definite stages (āśramas). Thus, in popular parlance, dharma almost came to mean just varṇa-āśrama-dharma, that is the dharmas (ordained duties) of the four classes and the four stages of life.\textsuperscript{28}

Social dharma is a moral force, the social counterpart of dharma in its cosmic aspect which governs the physical realm. Dharma in its two aspects forms one inviolable law governing all action and supporting and sustaining a sacred cosmos. Failure to perform social dharma upsets the social order and the cosmic order through the production of adharma,

\textsuperscript{27}History of Dharmaśāstra, Vol. I, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{28}R. N. Dandekar, "Dharma", \textit{op. cit.}, p. 213.
the force which brings about the physical and moral deterioration of the universe. Therefore, Manu advises that "It is better (to discharge) one's own (appointed) duty incompletely than to perform completely that of another." As long as citizens recognize the authority of dharma the legitimacy of the societal order remains intact. In Berger's terms, the entire society will continue to serve as a plausibility structure for the religiously legitimated world since "all the important social processes within it serve to confirm and reconfirm the reality of this world."

It is at this point in our discussion that we can most clearly see the inter-relationship of religion and society. Religious beliefs provide an ordered system of meaning and value by which individuals explain their world and make the value judgments which direct their actions. Religion tends, therefore, to organize the direction of practical life and in so doing it exercises a profound influence upon social processes. By legitimating those social processes which further the achievement of the goals of life, as defined by its beliefs, religion attempts to bring the entire social world within its sphere, within the divine sphere. In the case of

29 Laws of Manu, trans. G. Buhler, p.423. See also Bhagavadgita, III, 34.
30 Sacred Canopy, p.45.
ancient Indian society this relationship was formulated through
the concept of dharma with the intimate relationship of its
cosmic and social aspects.

IV. SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF THE MAHĀBHĀRATA

The epics were early recognized by the tradition as
forming an integral part of smṛti literature.31 In the case
of the Mahābhārata there are many sections which deal specifi-
cally with the elucidation of social dharma; for example, the
epic contains much material which is identical to that found
in the Manu Smṛti32 particularly in the Anu-gītā, and the
Rāja-dharma section of the Śāntiparvan (The Book of peace)
"constitutes a veritable compendium of political theories,
rules of diplomacy, and details of administration."33 However,
in both epics, the emphasis on dharma is central, not peri-
pheral.

The great epic, the Mahābhārata, carries dharma
as its burden, for it states at the end as the
essence of its teachings: "With uplifted arms

31 "The authors of the Mahā-Bhārata cannot be individual-
ized. Its redaction may be placed sometime between the second
or third century B.C. and the first century A.D." Hinduism,
p.119.

32 Wonder That was India, p.113.

I cry, none heeds; from dharma (religious duty), material gain and pleasure flow; then, why is not dharma pursued? Neither for the sake of pleasure, nor out of fear or avarice, no, not even for the sake of one's life should one give up dharma; dharma stands alone for all time; pleasure and pain are transitory." While this great epic makes its hero, Yudishthira, the very son of the God of Dharma (Dharma-putra) and one who had no enemy (Ajātaśatru), the other epic, the Rāmāyana, makes its hero, Rāma, dharma itself in flesh and blood.34

On a symbolic level Rāma's victory over Rāvana, monarch of the Rāksasas or demons, is the triumph of dharma over adharma. Rāma is the ideal man, the ideal king and his wife, Sītā, the ideal woman. The conduct of both forms a model after which men and women ought to fashion their own conduct.

The main story which the Mahābhārata has to tell is one of the great destruction caused by the war between the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas. The one hundred and one sons of Dhrtarāṣṭra, led by the jealous and wicked Duryodhana, attempt to deprive their cousins, the five sons of Pāṇḍu, of the kingdom which is their rightful inheritance. At the end of the war the Pāṇḍavas are victorious but the destruction resulting from this 'sibling rivalry' is so great that the five sons of Pāṇḍu and Kṛṣṇa are the only rulers of any stature left alive in the whole of India.

34V. Raghavan, "The Four Ends of Man", op.cit. p.207.
On the social or human level the protagonists of the epic are all, in some way or another, guilty of neglecting to perform their dharma. There are many passages in the epic where the characters attempt to determine what the dharma they are expected to perform in a given situation is. In many instances they misinterpret their duty or wilfully neglect to perform it. This misinterpretation and neglect produces the adharma which inevitably brings about their destruction.

A poignant example of this self-inflicted destruction is illustrated by the dilemma of the blind king, Dhṛtarāṣṭra. When this king's brother, Pāṇḍu, died at an early age, Dhṛtarāṣṭra assumed the responsibility for the care of his five nephews and brought them up with his own sons. Throughout the work there is much evidence of the true affection which the king has for his nephews. However, his fondest feelings are lavished on his ambitious son, Duryodhana, and in spite of his better judgment he allows Duryodhana continually to usurp the Pāṇḍavas of their rightful inheritance, assuaging his own conscience with weak rationalizations. By the end of the epic Dhṛtarāṣṭra has lost his kingdom, has witnessed the death of his sons, and is left to die an anguish-laden, lonely death. The realization that there will be no one to carry on the Kuru line upon his death is the bitterest punishment which the old man has to face. It means that his entire existence has been
in vain, that he must suffer eternal punishment in hell, for he has no offspring left to offer sacrifices to the fathers to ensure that the Kurus will attain heaven.

'To have a son', said Brahma, 'is great dharma.' This didactic maxim is continually re-emphasized in the epic. Thus, marriage, sexual union and progeny furnish a main interest throughout the Mahābhārata. Without offspring the family line and the social order inevitably collapse. Yet offspring are the reward of those who conscientiously perform their dharma. The epic is primarily concerned with the elucidation of the dharma of the ksatriya class, the duties of kings and warriors during the householder stage of their lives. However, the authors do not limit themselves to this but proceed to expound on the dharma of wives, fathers, sons, daughters, brahmins, merchants, servants, etc. In short the epic teaches that there is a proper duty to be performed by each person according to sex, class and āśrama. The performance of one's own duty, dharmakriya, results in the accumulation of religious merit, punya, while the failure to do so results in destruction.

An understanding of the social aspect of dharma is essential in order to understand the action which takes place in the epic. However, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the action, the role of dharma in its cosmic aspect must also be appreciated. The heroes of the Mahābhārata are living in the Dvāpara Yuga where the sacred cow of dharma is balancing
on two legs only. Therefore, they are not wholly to blame for the adharma which is produced by their acts. Adharma is a necessary part of the inevitable destruction of all things during the eternal cycle of the pralayas. Indeed, the massive battle which finally takes place at Kurukṣetra ends the Dvāpara Yuga and ushers in the final, Kali Yuga.

Yet there is another, more specific interpretation whereby the events of the epic may be seen as an earthly reflection of cosmic activity. Like the Rāmāyaṇa, the Mahābhārata recounts the triumph of dharma over adharma, of the gods over the anti-gods. Vyāsa, to whom the tradition attributes the composition of the epic, endorses this interpretation of the events at the beginning of his recital of the story to Janamejaya, the great-grandson of Arjuna.

The Kṛta Yuga, your majesty, came to the earth. Earth produced her best creation.

Best of the Bharatas, it was in this happiest of times that anti-gods took birth in royal families.

The anti-gods, sons of Diti, defeated by the gods, deprived of heaven and power, started taking birth on earth.

... ... ... ... ...

Some sons of Diti and Danu, cast off from heaven, took birth as men, as haughty and cruel kings.

... ... ... ... ...
Protector of the earth,
Earth, frightened and oppressed,
approached Brahmā Pitāmaha
for protection.

...

Many-named Lord,
Īśa, Sambhū,
Prajāpati,
said to the earth:

"Vasundhara,
queen of wealth,
I will instruct the gods
to come to your rescue."

And he bid her farewell.
Turning to the gods,
he instructed them, saying,
"Go, all of you,
Be born on earth,
save her from sorrow,
each according to rank
fight the anti-gods."35

Thus it happened that the five sons of Pāṇḍu were sired by the gods. Yudhiṣṭhira was the son of Dharmā; Bhima, the son of Vāyu, the Wind;36 Arjuna, the son of Indra; and the twins, Nakula and Sahadeva, were the sons of the twin gods, the Aśvins.37 The one hundred and one sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra were fathered by the anti-gods.

36 According to Lal's translation Bhima was the son of Marut. See Vol.XII, p.33.
Ill-minded and implacable Duryodhana, destroyer of the good name of the Kuru dynasty, was born as an incarnation of Kali Yuga.

He was the cause of the massacre of innumerable creatures and the ruin of the world.

He fanned the fire of hate. The sons of rāksasa Pulastya became on earth the brothers of Duryodana.

They were a hundred in all—Duḥsasana, Durmukha, Duḥsaha, and others, impossibly wicked. 38

Thus, as Lal notes, "The Kaurava-Pāṇḍava war was actually a terrestrial display of divine conflicts, for the gods and antigods busily go about donning earth-forms in preparation for the ensuing carnage." 39 Although the Pāṇḍavas win the major battles and the war, the forces of adharma unleashed in the context are so formidable that the Kali age commences.

In the Mahābhārata the Hindu world achieves its most powerful, artistic expression. The epic presupposes the facticity of this world as explained by the Visnu Purāṇa and as legitimated by the Manu Smṛti. Yet the epic also serves itself to enhance the reality of this world for the story which it recounts, although mythologized to immense proportions, is based on historical fact. To the audiences to whom the epic was (and is) recited the events which it described were believed, therefore, to have had a direct influence on

39 Ibid., Introduction.
their own lives. By teaching that society is integrally related to a transcendent reality and that to contravene the social laws which harmonize the social world with this reality can only lead to the destruction of the universe, society, the family and the individual, the epic promotes the perpetuation of those social processes which reinforce the Hindu world.

V. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE INDIVIDUAL ASPECT OF DHARMA

The Mahābhārata accomplishes its didactic purpose not only by emphasizing the destructive consequences of adharma but also by stating the rewards which accrue to those who perform their duty faithfully. It is in this context that the individual or religious aspect of dharma becomes apparent. By building up religious merit the individual ensures that he will obtain successively favourable rebirths and ultimately achieve moksa. The most famous expression of this aspect of dharma is found in the Bhagavadgītā portion of the epic.

In form, it (the Bhagavadgītā) consists mainly of a long dialog, which is almost a monolog. The principal speaker is Kṛṣṇa, who in his human aspect is merely one of the secondary heroes of the Mahābhārata, . . . But, according to the Gītā itself, he is in truth a manifestation of the Supreme Deity in human form. Hence the name—the Song (gītā) of the Blessed One of the Lord (Bhagavad). The other speaker
in the dialog is Arjuna.\textsuperscript{40}

This dialogue is inserted^41 into the epic immediately before the commencement of the battle. Arjuna, seeing his kinsmen arrayed on the field ready to do battle against the forces of his brothers, is suddenly overcome with despair and lays down his arms, refusing to engage in the battle. He confides the reasons for his surprising action to his chariot driver, Kṛṣṇa.

\begin{quote}
I wish no victory, Kṛṣṇa,
Nor kingdom nor joys;
Of what use to us were kingdom, Govinda,
Of what use enjoyments or life?

For whose sake we desire
Kingdom, enjoyments, and happiness,
They are drawn up here in battle,
Giving up life and wealth:

Teachers, fathers, sons,
Grandsires as well,
Uncles, fathers-in-law, grandsons,
Brothers-in-law, and (other) kinsfolk.\textsuperscript{42}
\end{quote}

To engage in battle against kinsfolk, Arjuna argues, can only lead to evil consequences. With the destruction of the family the holy laws of the family perish; with the destruction


\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{41}For a discussion of the problems connected with the dating and authorship of the Bhagavadgītā see R.N. Dandekar, "The Bhagavad Gītā", in de Bary, op.cit., pp.277-278; and Hinduism, p.109.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{42}Bhagavad Gītā, trans. Edgerton, p.6.}
of these laws the women of the family become corrupted and mixture of classes results. This in turn leads to hell for there is no one to offer the sacrifices to the gods which sustain family, society and universe.

Krsna upbraids Arjuna for his unmanliness and for his ignorance, stating that the Lord, the source of all life, is indestructible; the body alone is perishable. Therefore, in reality there can be neither slayer nor slain. The only true sin is the neglect of one's own duty, svadharma. To refuse to perform your duty as Arjuna has done is to admit a concern for the consequences of action. It is not action itself which is the root of evil but rather the desire for or the avoidance of the fruits of action which is evil. Through the desire to obtain or to avoid the consequences of action karma is built up and the cycle of rebirth is perpetuated endlessly. Only by acting without desire, in accord with one's dharma, is it possible for a man to free himself from this wheel.

Therefore unattached ever
Perform action that must be done;
For performing action without attachment
Man attains the highest.43

The Hindu world, once established and recognized as legitimate won for itself a high degree of stability.

43Ibid., p.20.
With the conferring of legitimate status upon this religiously created world the perpetuation of this world became a relatively simple task. The citizens conformed to the social laws in the knowledge that these laws were in accord with the universal pattern of things, in the knowledge that their forefathers had always acted in a like manner and in the knowledge that deviant behavior would be punished. However, to the process of world-maintenance, the *Mahābhārata* adds another important dimension. By teaching that the performance of *svadharma* leads men to heaven and that the avoidance of *svadharma* leads to destruction the epic helps to provide individuals with a positive motivation for perpetuating the Hindu world.

The esteem in which the teachings of the *Bhagavadgītā* were held is indicated by the insertion of the *Gītā* into the epic at the most dramatic point in the story. The uniqueness of the *Gītā*, in comparison with the teachings of Brāhmanism, the *upanisads*, Buddhism and Jainism, lies in its proclamation of salvation by the path of *karma yoga*—the path of activity. Since each person has his own *dharma* to perform this path is open to all. The *upanisads*, Buddhism and Jainism announce the promise of salvation only for those who are prepared to renounce the world and all its activities. Hence the liberating

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44 For an excellent discussion of *karma yoga* and the two other major paths to liberation, *jñāna yoga* and *bhakti yoga*, see K.H. Potter's *The Pre-suppositions of India's Philosophies*.
rewards of these doctrines tend to be restricted to those few who are able to do this. The rewards in heaven which Brahmanism promised were restricted to a minority of people who could afford the elaborate sacrifices outlined by the brāhmanas and to the highly specialized priesthood who were the only ones qualified to perform them. However, the path of karma yoga is open to all since it does not require anyone to neglect his social responsibilities but rather places a religious value on the performance of these very duties.

Unlike Buddhism and Jainism, the developing Hinduism did not deny the authority of the Vedas. It was, therefore, able to win the support of the Brahmin elite. However, it devised its own theory of salvation and enshrined this teaching in an additional body of sacred texts, the smṛti literature, which was believed to contain the undefiled statement of dharma. Although the citizens of ancient India believed themselves to be living in the Kali Yuga they affirmed that it was still possible for them to attain mokṣa by following the dictates outlined in smṛti.

The literary form of all the smṛti texts examined was dialogue. Throughout the smṛti texts it is continually emphasized that the recital of smṛti will result in the accumulation of much religious merit for the reciter and his audience.

126. A twice-born man who recites these institutes, revealed by Manu, will be always virtuous
in conduct, and will reach whatever condition he desires.\textsuperscript{45}

Only the poem of Vyāsa brings virtue: it is virtue and holiness itself. It destroys sin. What need for the man who hears the \textit{Bharata} to bathe in the sacred waters of the \textit{Puskara}?\textsuperscript{46}

It is sacred, it is splendid, as holy as the Vedas, worthy-of-being heard, pleasing to hear, sin-cleansing, virtue-increasing.\textsuperscript{47}

A reader of the \textit{Bharata} is like a student of the Vedas.\textsuperscript{48}

Since \textit{smṛti} may be recited to all members of the Indian society, while the study of the Vedas is reserved only for the twice-born classes, it becomes possible for everyone to be 'like students of the Vedas'.

\textsuperscript{45}\textit{Laws of Manu}, p. 513.
\textsuperscript{47}\textit{Ibid.}, Vol. XI, p. 28.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

In each of the representative types of smruti literature which have been examined in the body of this paper one cannot fail to notice the prominence of myth. This feature is most clearly distinguishable in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa but it is also immediately apparent in the Mānavadharmaśāstra and the Mahābhārata. The law book opens with a creation myth which closely corresponds to the world view established by the myths in the purāṇa, and the societal laws which are expounded in Manu make comprehensive sense only in this mythic setting. Throughout the epic the gods continually participate in the events of the story. However, in a larger context the events portrayed in the epic are only the earthly counterpart of cataclysmic events in the cosmos, occurring at the end of the Dvāpara Yuga and announcing the commencement of the Kali Yuga. Hence the action of the epic becomes fully intelligible only if it is interpreted within the larger mythic framework.

In Eliade's terms these myths may be seen as the record of hierophanies, as the accounts of the irruptions of the sacred into the profane world of men, as the revelation of the sacred activities of the gods at the beginning of time.
With the revelation that the same laws which govern the cosmic sphere also control the human sphere meaningful patterns of value can be established and rules for the achievement of these values created. In the specific case of Hinduism the revelation of the inviolable laws of dharma identifies the central cosmic principle and makes possible the founding of the Hindu world.

Dharma exhibits the physical and moral attributes of sacred forces which Durkheim described. In one sense dharma means the physical law which creates and sustains the universe. In another connotation it means the moral law which governs and sustains society. Yet these two properties of dharma are not separate and distinct; they complement each other. The condition of dharma in the social sphere is naught but the moral reflection of the physical state of dharma in the universe. Thus cosmic dharma and social dharma are two aspects of one sacred force. According to the religious beliefs of ancient India the center of the cosmic drama is Bharata, the land of works. It is only in Bharata that dharma may be preserved through the conscientious actions of men performed according to the sacred institutes of smrti. Thus the social activities of men are given a cosmic dimension and importance.

Once the religiously-created world has won the status of legitimacy the maintenance of this world is virtually en-
sured. As long as men recognize the authority of this world it will tend to perpetuate itself. However, Hinduism helps to ensure the perpetuation of the social processes which it has explained and legitimated by providing individuals with an additional incentive for performing the prescribed action. Throughout smṛti literature there is a continuing emphasis upon the liberating rewards accruing from the performance of dharma. The man who governs his life by the dictates of dharma will inevitably achieve mokṣa. He will win the sacred by the practice of the sacred. The cycles of the pralayas can be reversed in the individual case and he will win the indescribable state of union found in the mahāpralaya at the beginning and end of time.

Hinduism offers us one of the most consistently rationalized views of the relationship of the cosmos, society and the individual human being ever devised by man. It accomplishes this unification primarily through the concept of dharma with its three-fold aspect. With its proclamation of religious liberation through the performance of social duties Hinduism presents an organic picture of religion and society. In Berger's terms the entire society serves as a plausibility structure for the religiously defined and legitimated world since all the major processes within the society serve to reinforce continually the reality of this world.

For the purpose of analysis the three phases of this
study of the sacralization of social processes have been treated as though they were distinct and as though they had developed in a logical, chronological order from explanation to perpetuation. In each section the branch of smrta literature which most consistently illustrated the phase under examination was discussed in isolation. Although the different branches of smrta do exhibit differing emphases, each of the texts analysed is, nevertheless, concerned with all three phases in the creation and maintenance of the Hindu world. The three phases are inseparable aspects of the single process of the sacralization of social processes.

One of the advantages of the adoption of the type of functional-sociological approach outlined in the paper is that it allows us to gain an insight into some of the reasons for Hinduism's emergence and rise to prominence during the period we have studied. The composition and final redaction of the major smrta texts coincides with this phenomenon. The centuries between the fifth century B.C. and the fifth century A.D. were an era of immense turbulence and creativity in ancient Indian society. The decline of the ritualistic Brahmanical religion of the Vedas created a vacuum which the newer religions of Buddhism, Jainism and the developing Hinduism competed to fill.¹ In the long run Hinduism won out and its success

¹For an excellent discussion of this phenomenon see A. Yarrow's "Hinduism" in de Bary, op.cit., pp.200-205.
may, to a great extent, be due to its creation of a world in which the social duties of the individual were organically bound to his religious salvation. In order to survive religion must win the approbation of the society in which it is born. It must secure for itself a social base. In the case of Hinduism, through its development of the concept of dharma elucidated in the smrti literature, this base was extended to encompass the entire society.

Another advantage of this type of approach to smrti literature lies in its ability to point out the relationship of the purānas, the lawbooks, and the epics. This relationship is recognized by the tradition itself. It is not, therefore an arbitrary framework imposed upon the material from the outside. The Indians have classified this literature together under the rubric of smrti because of its primary concern with the elucidation of dharma. Smrti contains the sacred institutes for the governing of the world which were first revealed to men by Manu, the founder of the social order. Therefore, a sociological approach to this material seems to be one of the best ways to gain a better understanding of these religious texts.

Nevertheless our understanding of smrti must always remain a partial one. As observers, viewing the tradition from without, we shall never fully appreciate the emotive associations which these religious myths and symbols hold for
the believing members of the tradition. In other words, our study of dharma will never take us by the path of the gods to:

That world of Brahmā which is the third in the order of heavens from here, and in which there are two seas (of nectar) . . . a lake which consists of food which is intoxicating, an ashbattha tree oozing Soma, (and) a city of the Gods . . . in which there is a golden palace built by the Lord.  

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APPENDIX A

Society

Religion
APPENDIX B

Durkheim's Theory of Religion and Society

1. At 'time' of origin

2. Later Development
APPENDIX C

Berger's Theory of Religion and Society

1. At 'time' of origin

2. Later Development
8. He (Svayambhû), desiring to produce beings of many kinds from his own body, first with a thought created the waters and placed his seed in them.

9. That (seed) became a golden egg, in brilliancy equal to the sun; in that (egg) he himself was born as Brahman, the progenitor of the whole world.

14. From himself (âtmanâh) he also drew forth the mind, which is both real and unreal, likewise from the mind egoism, which possesses the function of self-consciousness (and is) lordly;

15. Moreover, the great one, the soul, and all (products) affected by the three qualities, and in their order, the five organs which perceive the objects of sensation.

26. Moreover, in order to distinguish actions, he separated merit from demerit, and he caused the creatures to be affected by the pairs (of opposites), such as pain and pleasure.

28. But to whatever course of action the Lord at first appointed each (kind of beings), that alone it has spontaneously adopted in each succeeding creation.

30. As at the change of the seasons each season of its own accord assumes its distinctive marks, even so corporeal beings (resume in new births) their appointed course of action.

31. But for the sake of prosperity of the worlds, he caused the Brâhmaṇa, the Kshatriya, the Vaisya, and the Sûdra to proceed from his mouth, his arms, his thighs, and his feet.

93. As the Brâhmaṇa sprang from (Brahman's) mouth, as he was the first-born, and as he possesses the Veda, he is by right the lord of his whole creation.

94. For the Self-existent (Svayambhû), having performed austerities, produced him first from his own mouth, in order that the offerings might be conveyed to the gods and manes and that this universe might be preserved.